

# Reporting on

## Gender- Based Violence in the Syria Crisis



A JOURNALIST'S HANDBOOK





“The media can amplify Syrian women’s voices, counteract myths, and stimulate dialogue and action. I hope this Handbook on Reporting on Gender-Based Violence will help to shine a stronger light on these human rights violations and lead to greater support and services for survivors. It is important to ensure that perpetrators are not only brought to justice, but seen to be brought to justice by the wider community.”



**Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin,**

*UNFPA Executive Director*

# Table of contents

4 <sup>5</sup>	Introduction	20	Covering GBV
6	Common Misconceptions about GBV	21	Common Mistakes
7	Terminology and its Importance	22 <sup>23</sup>	GBV and the Law
8	Defining GBV	24 <sup>25</sup>	Human Rights and GBV
9	GBV in Humanitarian Settings	26 <sup>27</sup>	GBV Programming: Prevention and Response
10 <sup>11</sup>	GBV and the Syrian Crisis	28 <sup>29</sup>	GBV Data
11	Consequences of GBV	30 <sup>31</sup>	Producing GBV Content: things to think about
12 <sup>13</sup>	Ethical Principles	32	Case Study: Child Marriage
14 <sup>15</sup>	Story Ideas	33	Media Impact
16	Interviews	34 <sup>35</sup>	Approaching Organisations
17	Informed Consent	36 <sup>37</sup>	Organisations
18 <sup>19</sup>	During the Interview	38 <sup>39</sup>	Glossary

The images used in this handbook portray a mixture of UNFPA activities at work, and participatory photographs taken by Syrian refugees themselves. Whilst they feature refugees who have given consent for their images to be used, they have not been chosen for any reason connected to GBV.

All images by David Brunetti for UNFPA or Fatima for the 'Do you see what I see?' project, led by photojournalist and educator Brendan Bannon for UNHCR.

We would like to thank senior journalist Shahina Maqbool for adding value to the quality of this handbook.

A woman wearing a black hijab is shown in profile, looking out of a window. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The word "Introduction" is overlaid in large red letters across the middle of the image.

# Introduction

Covering gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most difficult tasks a journalist is likely to face.

GBV is a complicated and sensitive subject involving the use of terms such as 'rape,' 'sexual abuse,' 'child marriage,' 'domestic violence' and 'harassment,' to name a few. All of these terms immediately provoke strong feelings.

Reporting on GBV means discussing issues that are often considered 'taboo,' and talking publicly about intimate and distressing matters. This can be particularly challenging in countries where tradition and religion play an important role in everyday life. There is often a difference between the way traditional practices are viewed by 'the international community' and by communities themselves; this can cause conflict.

In addition, there are several practical issues that journalists should consider when covering the subject of GBV.

For instance, we don't want to cause further trauma to survivors through insensitive interviewing techniques. Yet, if our interviews lack depth or consistency, we may find that allegations can be more easily denied by their perpetrators.

This is because journalists can give evidence in certain GBV cases, and evidence collected by journalists can be used in the trials of perpetrators.

Since reporting on GBV can be daunting for media persons, and therefore it can be all too easy for us to avoid the topic completely. However, the consequences of ignoring GBV in the media are far worse.

If journalists ignore violence against women we contribute to a 'culture of impunity' in which perpetrators of horrific crimes can avoid punishment or censure. If we don't mention gender-based violence in the media we limit the available information for its survivors who will miss out on medical and legal support.

We can negatively influence the way in which judges and juries perceive the issue if we either avoid covering GBV, or report on survivors of it in a pejorative way.

By choosing to avoid GBV issues we also ensure that the subject stays off the public and political agenda, which means that resources are not allocated to programmes aimed at its prevention and support services for survivors.

Simply stated, journalists have an important role to play in ensuring that women have a voice in the media.

In doing so those guilty of GBV can be brought to justice; we can help

UNFPA believes that every Syrian woman and girl has the right to have access to affordable reproductive health care and be effectively protected from gender-based violence. UNFPA and partners are scaling up efforts to empower and improve the lives of Syrian women and youths and impacted communities in host countries, including by advocating for human rights and gender equality, to better cope with and recover from the crisis.

play a role in improving services for survivors; and we can contribute towards its prevention by encouraging a 'zero tolerance' attitude to violence against women.

This handbook is designed to help journalists take on this challenging topic, with a particular emphasis on Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey, those countries most affected by the Syrian crisis.

The handbook has been developed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). It sets out to examine some of the terminology, ethical questions, and practical concerns associated with covering GBV, and to provide an overview of some of the organisations involved in combating GBV and providing support services for survivors.

Whilst effective reporting on GBV requires a certain amount of extra effort to get it right, doing so involves building upon internationally-recognised ethical principles which all journalists should be familiar with: accuracy, fairness, as well as respect for and protection of your interviewees.

# Common Misconceptions about GBV

In most cultures, gender-based violence is not openly discussed. This is true of Syria and many of the countries where Syrian refugees have been forced to make their home. As a result, several myths about GBV remain in circulation.

Inaccurate perpetrator profiles, and a focus on the behaviour of GBV survivors can also influence access to justice. The media has a role to play in counteracting these inaccuracies.

## **Myth: GBV only affects certain kind of people**

GBV can affect anyone. It cuts across class, race/ethnicity, religion, educational level, or personal history. Negative assumptions about GBV survivors make it difficult for them to reach out for help.

## **Myth: Sexual assault is usually committed by strangers**

According to World Health Organization estimates, almost a third of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner, and up to 70% of sexual assaults are committed by an intimate partner.<sup>1</sup>

## **Myth: Perpetrators of violence are 'monsters' or 'sick outsiders'**

Perpetrators come from all walks of life. As a result, when survivors report violence perpetrated by their partner, an influential figure in the community, or someone who does not conform to the stereotype of a perpetrator, they are often not believed.

1. World Health Organisation, Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women, 2013, [bit.ly/1oTfGVG](http://bit.ly/1oTfGVG)

2. Tia Palermo, Jennifer Bleck, and Amber Peterman, Tip of the Iceberg: Reporting and Gender-Based Violence in Developing Countries, American Journal of Epidemiology, 2013.

## **Myth: The way a woman dresses or acts causes GBV**

Abusers often blame their victims in order to make excuses for their behaviour. This is in itself abusive and shifts the focus away from the perpetrator. It is important that abusers take full responsibility for their actions, and that reporters challenge any attempt to blame those who are abused.

## **Myth: Poverty and conflict are the cause of attacks on women**

There are many men living in conditions of poverty or conflict who are not violent towards women, just as there are many individuals in wealthy countries and in times of peace who are violent towards women.

Whilst some studies have found poverty and violent conflict to increase the likelihood of certain kinds of GBV, it is seen as a global problem.

## **Myth: A person who has been raped or abused will be visibly upset when discussing her ordeal**

Each person reacts differently to GBV. It is important to be aware of the wide range of reactions to such traumatic events; some survivors never talk about what happened to them, or they may do so after several months or years, while others will disclose immediately.

## **Myth: False reporting is widespread or used by women in order to access services and resettlement**

Overall false reporting is rare: a much bigger issue is under-reporting. Recent estimates indicate that only around 7% of survivors in developing countries officially report incidents of GBV, and research suggests that a fear of losing out on housing and other services, or losing custody of children, prevents many GBV survivors from coming forward to report incidents.<sup>2</sup>



# Terminology and its Importance

Coverage of issues related to gender-based violence can be improved through careful use of language. For example, it is common to refer to 'survivors' rather than 'victims' in most contexts, because this implies resilience.

The term 'honour killing' assigns a positive adjective to certain kinds of family murders, and is neither accurate nor impartial. Whilst a range of alternatives has been suggested (including 'family femicide', 'shame killings', and 'patriarchal killings'), none has become dominant. A common solution is to add a prefix, quotation marks, or both (as in so-called 'honour killing').

The term gender-based violence (abbreviated to GBV) is used throughout this handbook. It includes domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, sexual violence, and early marriage.

Euphemistic terminology to describe GBV acts is often confusing and inaccurate: for example, 'He forced himself on her' is vague, and could be used to describe a wide range of assaults. The term 'rape' has a far more specific meaning, i.e., non-consensual penetration. This handbook includes a full glossary of terms on pages 38-39.

Ultimately, journalists will need to use language that their audience understands, and explain terms that they may be unfamiliar with. It is considered good newsroom practice to agree on a form of words for certain key terms. Large media organisations have a style guide - sometimes as part of editorial/producers' guidelines - to ensure conformity of language, and define a 'house style.' Such guides can serve as a valuable tool in improving output generally, and not just for defining words related to GBV.

# Defining GBV

Gender-based violence (GBV) has been defined as 'any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially-ascribed (i.e., gender) differences between males and females.' Acts of GBV violate a number of universal human rights protected by international instruments and conventions (see page 24).<sup>1</sup>

Many GBV acts break national laws, although both definitions and practical implementation of laws and policies varies widely (see pages 23-24). GBV includes acts that 'inflict physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, or other deprivation of liberty.'<sup>2</sup>

The term GBV is most commonly used to refer to violence perpetrated against women and girls. The subordinate role of females in society is seen as a root cause of GBV, and gender discrimination contributes to acts of GBV being ignored and a lack of support for survivors.<sup>3</sup>

GBV is also used by some people to describe the 'gendered dimensions of certain forms of violence against men and boys, particularly sexual violence committed with the purpose of reinforcing socially constructed ideas of what it means to be a man and male power.'<sup>4</sup>



## GBV Worldwide

- More than one in three women worldwide has experienced either physical and/or sexual violence.
- It is estimated that almost half of all homicides in which women were the victims in 2012 were committed by intimate partners or family members.
- Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children (below 18 years of age), and of those, more than one in three were married before 15 years of age.
- More than 133 million girls and women have experienced some form of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the 29 countries in Africa

1. Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings, 2005, [bit.ly/1lja17j](http://bit.ly/1lja17j)

2. Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR), DRAFT - Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, 2014. The GBV AoR coordinates prevention and response to GBV in humanitarian settings globally ([gbvaor.net](http://gbvaor.net))

3. Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings, 2005, [bit.ly/1lja17j](http://bit.ly/1lja17j)

4. GBV AoR, DRAFT - Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, 2014.

5. All 'GBV Worldwide' statistics taken from UN Women, [bit.ly/1x3l4oT](http://bit.ly/1x3l4oT) and World Health Organization, Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women, 2013, [bit.ly/1oTfGVG](http://bit.ly/1oTfGVG)



# GBV in Humanitarian Settings

A humanitarian crisis, conflict, or natural disaster increases the risk of gender-based violence. As women become separated from their families and protective communities, norms that govern social behaviour are disrupted, and displacement leads to increased violence.

However, the underlying causes of GBV are associated with attitudes, beliefs, and structures in which there is gender discrimination and an imbalance of power between genders.

In recent decades, efforts have been made to address sexual violence in emergencies; at the same time, there is growing recognition that populations affected by conflict and natural disaster experience different forms of GBV.

Domestic violence, early marriage, and sexual exploitation are increasingly recognized as major concerns in such environments.

## GBV in humanitarian crises around the world

- It has been estimated that approximately one in five refugees or displaced persons in a complex humanitarian setting experienced sexual violence.
- Between 50,000 and 64,000 women who were displaced during the civil war in Sierra Leone reported war-related assaults.
- Domestic violence in India was widely reported to have increased in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami; one NGO reported a three-fold increase in cases brought to them.
- Between 2001 and 2009, around 500,000 women experienced sexual violence in Colombia as a result of conflict.<sup>1</sup>



1. All statistics cited in GBV AoR, DRAFT - Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, 2014.

# GBV & the Syrian Crisis

- In Jordan, the prevalence of early marriage among all registered marriages for Syrians increased from 25% in 2013 to 31% in the first quarter of 2014.<sup>1</sup>
- A third of female-headed households surveyed by UNHCR said they left the house never, rarely, or only when necessary. Women are heads of households for one in four refugee families.<sup>2</sup>
- In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, one in five women surveyed said they had directly been offered money for sexual services, and one in 10 women indicated that they had been pressurized by government officials, organised gangs, police and other security personnel, NGOs, and by members of both the Syrian and non-Syrian communities to engage in physical relationships.<sup>3</sup>

The risks facing women and girls affected by the Syrian crisis vary significantly; however, there are some common areas of concern.

## Access to support

In some places, services for GBV survivors either do not exist at all or are very limited, and survivors are reluctant to report GBV due to fear of stigma, social exclusion, so-called 'honour killings,' and other reprisals. This prevents many survivors from seeking life-saving support.

## Domestic Violence

Syrian women report that violence in the home has increased with displacement and conflict. In Jordan, around half of all survivors accessing GBV services suffered some form of domestic violence.<sup>4</sup>

1. UNCEF, A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan, 2014, [uni.cf/1yjqwLU](http://uni.cf/1yjqwLU)

2. UNHCR, Women Alone, The fight for survival by Syria's refugee women, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1n2LUFQ>

3. UN Women, We just keep silent: Gender-based violence amongst Syrian refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1rUWPLu>

4. SGBV Sub-Working Group, SGBV Briefing note, March 2014, [bit.ly/1rZSkJO](http://bit.ly/1rZSkJO)

5. IRC, Are We Listening? Acting on Our Commitments to Women and Girls Affected by the Syrian Conflict, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1ujZtAY>

6. HRW, Syria: Extremists Restricting Women's Rights, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1cbQc8G>

7. IRC, Are We Listening? Acting on Our Commitments to Women and Girls Affected by the Syrian Conflict, 2014, [bit.ly/1rZSkJO](http://bit.ly/1rZSkJO)

8. Ibidem

9. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, <http://bit.ly/1mS7WMU>

10. MADRE, Seeking Accountability And Demanding Change, <http://bit.ly/1stxDGq>

## Child Marriage

Child marriage of girls was practiced in some Syrian communities even before the war, but the conflict has contributed to girls getting married younger and under different conditions – for example, to older men not known to the family of the bride. Economic insecurity, the perception that marriage will provide protection for girls in an unstable environment, and lack of alternative opportunities are all factors contributing to this issue.<sup>5</sup>

## Harassment and Restricted Movement

In Syria itself, women's mobility has been curbed significantly. Many women and girls have limited movement outside the home due to fear of sexual violence and harassment. In some cases, extremist armed groups have placed restrictions on women and girls, including strict dress codes, denial of access to education and employment, and limitations on engagement in public life.<sup>6</sup>

While freedom of mobility was somewhat limited for many women and girls prior to displacement, increased fear of sexual assault and harassment has placed even further restrictions on displaced women and girls.<sup>7</sup>

GBV has serious immediate and long-term consequences on the sexual, physical, and psychological health of survivors.

Health consequences include unwanted pregnancies, complications from unsafe abortions, and sexually transmitted infections including HIV. Injuries caused by GBV can cause both acute and chronic illnesses. Mental health and psychosocial effects of GBV include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and suicide. Violence also affects children's survival, development, and school participation.

Survivors of GBV may suffer further because of the stigma associated with this kind of abuse. When ostracised by their family or community, survivors are affected both economically and socially.

1. World Health Organization, Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1oTfGVG>

## Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

There has been an increase in reports of women and adolescent girls being sexually harassed and exploited by individuals charged with delivering humanitarian aid, or by those in positions of relative economic or political power in their own communities. Many have reported<sup>8</sup> being asked to engage in 'special friendships' with leaders in camps, religious leaders, community leaders, employers, landlords, and others. These often include being asked for sex or an agreement to marry, and sometimes involve men working in community organizations and distributing goods.

## Sexual Violence

Sexual violence has been perpetuated by some parties to the conflict during house searches, as well as at checkpoints and in detention centres. Syrian women have been detained, tortured, and physically abused.<sup>9</sup>

Upon release from detention and after house raids, women who are believed to have been sexually assaulted can be alienated from their families. Viewed as 'unfit for marriage,' some have been divorced or killed. The fear of sexual violence and its consequences is also a trigger in the displacement of many families.<sup>10</sup>

## Consequences of GBV

The impact of GBV extends to families and communities. Families can also be stigmatised as a consequence of GBV. For example, when children are born following a rape, or if family members choose to stand by a survivor, some in their community may avoid them.

GBV adds to the cost of public health and social welfare systems, and reduces the ability of many survivors to participate in social and economic life. It also contributes to a culture of fear, where women and girls are less likely to get involved in public life.

The consequences of GBV might not be recognised by health or psychosocial service providers as evidence of exposure to GBV. For example some survivors may not show any physical signs of violence but experience chronic headaches. As a result, their diagnoses is never seen as related to their experience<sup>1</sup>

# Ethical Principles

Even for the most experienced and senior journalist, filing a story on GBV is likely to be one of the most challenging assignments. This is particularly true when attempting to adopt a survivor-centered approach i.e., putting the best interests of GBV survivors first, and adopting a 'do no harm' strategy.

However, the ethical principles which underpin journalistic best practice should also guide the way in which gender-based violence is covered.

## Accuracy

Getting your facts right should be at the core of all journalism, and this is true of covering GBV as well. Whilst your interviews should be sensitive, you should also ensure that your reporting is factually correct. You should be specific when mentioning crimes, and not attempt to report on criminal proceedings unless you understand the legal processes involved. Some reporters try and use euphemistic language (e.g., 'had his way with her') rather than accurate language (e.g., 'he raped her'). This leads to misleading reports.

## Fairness

You should always be fair with people you interview, and when speaking to people who have experienced GBV, you have an extra duty of care to protect potentially vulnerable sources.

In this context, the concept of 'informed consent' is particularly important: this means that the person you interview should be made fully aware of the consequences of appearing in the media. Many GBV survivors who have spoken 'on the record' have later faced a range of problems resulting from being identified, including attacks and community rejection. For your interview to be fair, you need to inform your interviewee of these potential risks.

## Impartiality

It is not the job of a responsible reporter to judge or discriminate. It is particularly important to ensure that you do not mention details that can be interpreted as implying blame towards the GBV survivor. If you mention the clothes worn at the time of an attack, for example, or other aspects of a survivor/victim's appearance, this can be seen to imply judgment of them. This can be particularly true of features: some journalists may attempt to add detail and 'colour,' which can unintentionally focus the onus of blame away from the perpetrator.

## Duty to Inform

When reporting on GBV, it is important to distinguish between what is 'in the public interest' and what is 'of interest to the public.' Some GBV stories feature high-profile figures and contain lots of personal detail: this tends to treat the subject in a sensationalist way, with no useful information given for GBV survivors.

## Respecting Privacy

Principled, ethical journalism means respecting the privacy of both GBV survivors and bereaved families. You should also be wary of 'jigsaw identification' when granting anonymity. This happens where audiences piece together details - such as location, age, clothing, or family members - even though you don't name a survivor, or show t



## A Survivor-centered Approach

A survivor-centered approach seeks to empower survivors by putting them at the centre of the healing process. It recognises that each person is unique, reacts differently to GBV, has different strengths, resources and coping mechanisms, has the right to decide who should know about what has happened to them, and what should happen next.

GBV is a manifestation of power inequality: if people around survivors in a position of power (such as reporters and service providers) impose their perspective, they can unintentionally create another experience where the survivors feel further disempowerment.

Dealing with GBV survivors in a survivor-centered manner involves prioritizing their best interest, and applying the guiding principles of safety, confidentiality, respect, and non-discrimination.

## Sources

You should always protect your sources. For reporters unfamiliar to the region, it is particularly important to gain relevant local knowledge as to how to ensure this, usually through local organisations and agencies. You should also ensure that you extend this protection to your fixers, translators, drivers, interviewees, and others helping you with your story.

Some communities have been known to shun those who have spoken openly about gender-based violence, and in some cases, so-called 'honour crimes' have been carried out in retribution for speaking out.

## Payment for Interviews

Many Syrian refugees are poor, so it may seem tempting to pay cash or offer gifts in exchange for interviews. However, payment for this kind of interview is considered poor ethics; not only is this likely to influence the nature of the interview, it can also make it harder for other journalists to get an interview. Offers made in cash or kind can also pressurise survivors into speaking to the media.

It is recommended that journalists contact organisations working on GBV issues in the first instance before attempting to secure an interview.

Officials at local and international NGOs may be able to talk more freely about GBV, and are likely to have a useful overview of the topic. Rather than paying an interviewee directly, reporters may feel that a discreet donation to an organization working with GBV survivors is appropriate.

## Do No Harm

As a general rule, journalists should be guided by harm limitation principles; this includes showing sensitivity to people who have experienced grief or trauma, and a respect for their privacy; an awareness that subjects and interviewees may be inexperienced in dealing with the media; an understanding that there is a balance between the public's right to information, and a criminal suspect's right to a fair trial.

# Story Ideas

Responsible reporters will seek to avoid stereotyping, sensationalism, and cliché when covering GBV. They will also be aware that reporting on this topic brings with it, certain constraints. For example, there will even be occasions when it is inappropriate to carry out interviews.

In practice, this means that journalists covering this issue are likely to have to **work hard when generating story ideas and finding angles**, and think creatively about sources in order to produce the kind of news and features items that will be relevant for their audiences.

**Personal experience and observation** is an obvious starting point; and you are likely to hear stories from friends, neighbours, even shopkeepers and taxi drivers. In some countries, a wide range of myths has sprung up around Syrian refugees: rather than ignoring or repeating these, journalists should seek to explore whether these are actually true.

By **addressing community concerns** about refugees, journalists can help counter some of the stereotypes that have come to negatively affect their day-to-day life.

When it comes to **official sources**, the resources section (pages 36-38) of this handbook is a good place to begin although you should, of course, nurture your own contacts. There are a number of local and international NGOs and UN agencies working with refugee

communities; many are listed in the resources section. Places like the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) data portal can be a useful resource.

The humanitarian response network in Syria is a fairly broad alliance, which includes NGOs, UN agencies, governments, civil servants, community organizations, and leaders. It is, therefore, a good idea to **cultivate a range of sources**.

Naturally, some may have a vested interest in promoting certain aspects of their work, and certain officials may seek to cover up, for example, incidents of GBV for which their teams are either responsible or have failed to prevent. Journalists should naturally hold service providers to account.

Generally, it is good idea to speak with official contacts on a regular basis. Such official contacts may be able to arrange field visits to camps, although it's important to remember that the majority of refugees does not live in them: this, in itself, is an angle that may be of interest to your audience who are used to seeing images of refugees in larger, more 'famous' camps like Zaatari.

You should also **speak to refugees and displaced people** themselves: it is only by giving them a voice that journalists can ensure that their stories are told with compassion and humanity.

This will involve **building up a certain level of trust**: some journalists have reported that many Syrians are reluctant to be interviewed for the fear of being targeted, or because of mistrust of the media.

Whilst you should not rely on it, **desk research has its place**. You can look at what other media organisations are producing on this topic, and keep up to date with the wires and social media. It can be particularly useful to keep across blogs and Facebook pages created by refugees and displaced people themselves.

Many organisations produce useful reports, surveys, and campaigns that can be a useful source of data and story ideas: many also have mailing lists.

There are also a number of 'participatory' programmes involving refugees themselves; these include photography, theatre, and video projects. While also providing an interesting angle, you may be able to source images and footage this way.

**Follow-up features and 'diary stories'** allow for in-depth analysis of GBV issues. So you could write a feature on the anniversary of the start of conflict, or make a package in advance of a planned event, such as the '16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence' campaign, which starts each November, or International Woman's Day in March.

Inevitably, these will be features rather than 'hard news' items. Such planned items give journalists the advantage of extra time in which to carry out research or record additional interviews. Some editors welcome such pre-prepared 'behind-the-news' material on their running orders and pages, and in some cases, these can be used later in a bigger news story on the intended day of publication or broadcast.

When thinking about ideas for GBV features, **think about 'news pegs'**, i.e., items already on the news agenda you can 'peg' your story to. This will help when you are pitching your story or convincing your editor to include the item.

**Think about new themes**, and not merely those that have already been covered extensively; early pregnancy and marriage, for example, have frequently appeared in many media outlets, particularly in the West. In some host countries, there has been a greater focus on sex work and trafficking, which has led to an

assumption amongst some men that all Syrian women are sexually available, and to increased levels of harassment.

However, there are other GBV topics which have somewhat been overlooked by sections of the media. These include things like domestic violence, privacy issues faced by refugees living in cramped conditions, access to services, the role of men in combating violence, unemployment, and poverty and its impact on GBV.

As well as alternative subjects, **media coverage of GBV can be improved by exploring the issue from different angles**. Journalists can explore the issue from a survivor perspective or by



Syrian refugees are often reluctant to speak to journalists. They were more open when the conflict began, they were trying to rise their voices. But now, many are disappointed and think that media using them. They've become more defensive.

**Maurice Aaek,**

*Syrian journalist based in Beirut*



examining its impact on families, whilst approaching the topic from a legal or health perspective is likely to lead to a more informational piece.

And finally, sometimes unusual or quirky stories can put a **human face to the Syrian refugee crisis**. These may not be directly about GBV, but more about the representation of Syrian girls and women. For example, there is a Syrian girls football team at Zaatari camp: you could use a big international football game as a 'news peg' to tell this story, which can help show the world that refugees are ordinary people getting on with their lives.

# Interviews

'Who can I speak to about this?' is likely to be your natural instinct when covering any topic as a journalist.

Interviews are at the heart of journalism; you will only understand the issue of GBV if you speak to people who have knowledge or experience of it. This clearly raises some serious ethical issues. When is it appropriate to interview a GBV survivor? How detailed should your questions be? If your interviewee becomes upset, should you stop the interview?

The interview process should **begin with research**: speak to people who work at the relevant services (see pages 30-31) to get an idea of nature of GBV in the area. This will give you some guidance as to whether it is appropriate to interview a **GBV survivor**.

You should be **fully aware of the potential risks** to the person you

- Find out where survivors can go for help or ask for help
- Protect your sources
- Ensure that consent for interviews is 'informed'
- Fully inform the survivor on how the interview will be used
- Always offer anonymity to your interviewee

are interviewing: will they become victims of revenge attacks for speaking out publicly? Will their community shun them for doing so? Will the interview be traumatic for the survivor?

Your interviewee may not fully appreciate these risks. Consequently, if you go ahead with the interview, **you must obtain 'informed consent,'** i.e., consent with full knowledge of the consequences of the interview, or the survivor's name being publicly identified.

You should **involve your interviewee in decisions** about the interview, and be aware that in an interaction with a journalist or NGO media team member, there may be a power differential between a reporter and a GBV survivor: **they may feel that they should consent to speaking**, even if this is not something they feel comfortable with.

**You should always seek permission to take photographs**, video, or voice recordings and explain how you will be using these.

This does not suggest that you should never interview GBV survivors: many have given powerful testimonies that have brought the issue to public attention.

It is only when the issue of GBV is in the public eye that adequate resources will be allocated towards services to help survivors, and campaigns aimed at its prevention.

However, you may be able to produce an equally effective story by speaking to local organisations working with GBV survivors, or UN agencies. It is good practice to find out about the local medical, legal, and psychosocial support services available for GBV survivors, and to share this information - both with your audience as well as with the people you contact for an interview.



## Informed Consent

In the context of interviewing a GBV survivor, 'informed consent' occurs when someone, without coercion, fully understands the consequences of their decision to speak, and consents freely. For this to happen, you must avoid putting pressure on a survivor to agree to an interview, as well as explaining what will be kept confidential and the limits of confidentiality, the objective of your interview, and the potential risks and benefits of speaking out.

There is no consent when agreement is obtained through deception or misinterpretation, or if the power dynamic between the interviewer and interviewee means that right to decline or refuse any part of the interview is in any way limited.

---

Adapted from Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR),  
Media Guidelines for Reporting On Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian  
Contexts, 2013

<http://bit.ly/1uNd5te>



# During the Interview

If you go ahead with an interview, **you should discuss with the GBV survivor, where it should be conducted and who will be present** during the interview: for example, they may wish to have a friend, family member, or a social worker present. Since many Syrian refugees live in cramped housing, this may require some **forward planning**.

**A female reporter and interpreter** should preferably carry out interviews of female GBV survivors; it is important that **everyone understands and agrees on the sensitive and confidential nature** of the process. This includes interpreters, fixers, security teams, and any production crew accompanying you.

**Beware of the effects of questioning** that can reactivate the pain and grief associated with a survivor's exposure to GBV: they have been through traumatising experiences, so you need to be mindful not to intentionally cause additional trauma with your questions.

Your interviewee has the right to decline answering any question you ask, and **may choose to end the interview early**.

There can be a high level of mistrust amongst GBV survivors. You will need to explain why you are carrying out the interview, and to **treat your interviewee with respect**. Explaining when and where an interview will appear is part of this process.

**Be specific and accurate in your language**, and avoid euphemistic expressions whilst remaining respectful in your manner. Ask open rather than closed questions. And remember to **allow plenty of time for this type of interview**. It would clearly be disrespectful to 'rush' GBV interviewees. As such, you will need to plan your time effectively, taking into account **travel time, which in some areas can be unpredictable** owing to security reasons.

**Payment for this type of interview, whether in cash or gifts of any kind, is considered poor ethics**; not only is it likely to make it harder for other journalists to cover the story, it will cloud the content of the interview. It could also put potentially vulnerable GBV survivors in a position of reliving traumatic events in exchange for money.



Everybody reacts differently to violence and trauma. It is important to remember this when interviewing survivors, because no two reactions will be the same. If you are looking for the 'classic victim' response, you will find that it does not exist, and you might miss out on the importance of a story because your interviewee does not conform to your idea of which emotions are 'appropriate' to the situation.

**BBC**

*iLearn guide to sensitive and traumatic interviews*

GBV survivors experience psychological symptoms in very different ways. Some (though not all) survivors have described the experiencing the following

These may include:

- Rage
- Emotions: despair / anger
- 'Freezing' while being attacked
- Memory lapses
- Self-disgust and self-harm
- Resignation
- Panic attacks
- Depression
- Dissociation

# Covering GBV:

## Rana Husseini Interview

**Rana Husseini is an award-winning Jordanian journalist, author, and human rights activist who has been influential in bringing so-called 'honour crimes' against women to public attention, as well as securing changes to the law in Jordan to bring stronger penalties for this kind of crime. She works at the Jordan Times.**

**Where do story ideas come from?** It varies; from sources, reading newspapers, sometimes from people telling you stories. I expand on them.

I work on the issue of so-called 'honour crimes' and violence against women.

**I talk to people;** they include families, neighbours, forensic experts, psychologists, former judges, lawyers, and social workers, depending on the kind of story.

In addition to reporting on murders against women, I do features on women who are running hotlines, or interview women to convey their story. Unfortunately, there is always something going on.

**In the beginning, I faced challenges, you have to build credibility for people to get to know and trust you.** It is not easy. In our community, people are not always open to journalists; there is always fear that they may not convey the right message, or convey their own point of view.

After some time, sources started trusting me because of the credibility of my reporting, and some people even started helping me.

We talk about issues we never dreamed of discussing. We have started covering issues related to gender violence and other social issues: rape, molestation, incest, abortion, prostitution, violence against women, and so-called 'honour crimes.'

It is right to approach people and ask if they can be interviewed. But in the case of so-called 'honour crimes,' when people kill, the concern is to stop other people from talking and to halt rumours. They don't

want people to know about the story; as such, the last thing they want is for a reporter to come and talk to them about it.

Sometimes, they put pressure on authorities and it makes the investigation secretive. For certain murders, they say 'coverage is banned, and anyone who writes will be subjected to prosecution.'

**To what extent can journalists change things?** Journalists can change things. They can shape public opinion.

The amount of coverage about so-called 'honour crimes' in the local media has increased.

The public debate and exchange in the press made it an issue; people's ideas about these murders are changing. More people are rejecting these murders and the minimum sentence that used to be given to killers.

**My advice is to continually report about GBV.** It's a problem worldwide, not something that's going to end anytime soon. Now they are talking about gender violence affecting one in three women; the number is increasing. There's a lot of awareness.

**People have to be very objective, but they also need to project this as a 'human' issue. Talk to several people and use a range of resources, use statistics.** Be careful. Sometimes people have an agenda so always check with more than one source, depending on what you are covering.

**It's a continuous battle.** I don't like to talk about myself but it is something I've been doing for 20 years, and it's not going to end.

**Don't focus on any religion, culture or class. Don't demonize.** This won't get you anywhere. It's not about Sunni, Shiite, Iraqi, Yazidi. Just talk about the problem.

Our duty as a journalist is to raise awareness, and to empower women by telling them there is help. That's what I feel we should focus on.

# Common Mistakes



## Focusing on details of GBV victims/survivors

When reports focus on details such as the dress, personal habits, or physical appearance of GBV survivors, the focus tends to shift away from the perpetrator; at worst, this can result in blaming the survivor, which contributes to an atmosphere where it becomes more difficult for women to report GBV crimes or access services, and easier for perpetrators to go unpunished.

## Inappropriate language

Using vague or euphemistic language (see page 8) leads to inaccurate journalism, which is misleading for your audience. Have a look at the glossary (see page 38) in order to understand the terminology used when describing GBV. Choice of vocabulary is particularly important when covering this topic.

## Identifying details of GBV survivors

There will be many occasions when you will speak to GBV survivors, and it will be inappropriate to publish or broadcast their name or any other detail that can reveal their identity. Putting interviewees at further risk can have damaging consequences; you should avoid details that could enable 'jigsaw identification' (see page 14).

## Lack of research

From your initial story idea, through to reporting during criminal proceedings and following up on stories, journalists need to research GBV thoroughly. This means speaking to experts, carrying out desk research, and understanding the medical, legal, and social angles to GBV.

# GBV and the Law

Writing about GBV requires a clear understanding of certain aspects of criminal, civil, and traditional law. These vary greatly from country to country - you should carry out your own research on the laws in your area, and where possible, seek further advice from your organization's legal team.

Having lawyers amongst your contacts is also useful – not just for GBV stories. Laws relating to GBV are changing, so you'll need to keep up to date. This, in itself, can be a news story, as with Lebanon's 2014 Law on Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence. The first convictions relating to a new law provide a follow-up story.

Negative attitudes and practices of police and judicial staff towards GBV survivors prevent many from seeking legal redress. There is often a lack of resources to pursue legal action and challenges in providing corroborating evidence from witnesses for crimes relating to GBV.

There are several areas of controversial legislation in countries affected by the Syrian refugee crisis: for example, a rapist in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria can escape punishment by marrying his victim, and marital rape is not criminalized in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria.

Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and Syria criminalize non-penetrative sexual contact, sometimes called 'indecent assault.' Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon have a specific law against domestic violence. Provisions around physical assault exist in the other countries, and whilst they do not refer specifically to issues around GBV, they can sometimes be used to prosecute cases of domestic violence.

However, in Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan, the penalties for physical violence are determined in accordance with the number of days of hospitalisation faced by the victim. In Jordan, for example, if the victim requires less than 10 days of hospitalization, the judge has the authority to dismiss the case at his own discretion as a 'minor offence.' Mandatory prosecution is only required when the survivor is hospitalised for more than 20 days.

Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq have legislative provisions providing reduced sentences for a man who kills his wife if she is caught in the act of adultery, or who kills a female relative for 'illicit' sexual conduct – so-called 'honour crimes.' However, in recent years, both Syria and Jordan have increased the required sentence around so-called 'honour crimes.' In Egypt and Iraqi Kurdistan, where female genital mutilation (FGM) is still common, laws have recently been passed to criminalise the practice.



Country	Minimum Age of Marriage		Minimum Age of Marriage With Court approval	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Syria	17	18	13	15
Jordan	18	18	15	15
Iraq	18	18	15	15
Turkey	18	18	16	16
Lebanon	Varies according to religion			

In Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey, the legal age for marriage is 18 years for both girls and boys, as indicated in Table 1, but courts can allow boys and girls to be married earlier: as early as 13 years for girls in Syria. In Lebanon, there is no standard minimum age of marriage as this depends on the individual's religion.

There are other elements of a particular country's legal system that are important to consider when writing about GBV, and these relate more broadly to the status of women and girls.

Adequate knowledge about laws gives a good indication of the challenges that might further discourage women from seeking justice

when subjected to violence. For example, in Sharia courts in Jordan and Syria, and in family courts in Egypt, the testimony of two women is equal to that of one man.

### For more information on GBV related-legislation

<http://www.arabwomenorg.org/>; UNICEF, MENA Gender Equality Profile, 2011, <http://uni.cf/1vrYfg2>

The Due Diligence Project, Due Diligence and State Responsibility to Eliminate Violence Against Women, Middle East and North Africa, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1zo1HZ9>



# Human Rights and GBV

GBV is a human rights issue. It violates the right to life, security of the person, health and equal protection under the law; it includes actions that contravene both norms of international human rights law and international criminal laws themselves.

Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey, like most countries of the world, are signatories to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR). As such, these states 'assume obligations and duties under international law to respect, to protect, and to fulfill human rights'.<sup>1</sup>

Since 2000, the UN Security Council has taken up women, peace, and security as a specific thematic agenda item. This emerged out of its broader agenda on the protection of civilians and children, and armed conflict following years of conflict in Sierra Leone, Somalia, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia, where evidence pointed to attacks specifically targeting women, including reports of systematic sexual violence.

Three resolutions<sup>2</sup> address women, peace, and security broadly (women's specific experience of conflict and their contribution to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and peace building); others<sup>3</sup> reinforce women's participation, but focus specifically on conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>4</sup>

In the past two decades, rape and other forms of sexual violence committed against civilians have been recognized as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

This came about through the work of the ad hoc international criminal tribunals for Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, as well as the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the International Criminal Court.

For journalists and programme-makers, covering human rights can seem daunting. However, you are not expected to follow the workings of every UN subcommittee, and the principles of human rights are fairly easy to understand; they are useful for any journalist writing about international affairs and in reporting GBV. International news organizations are more likely to commission items from journalists covering the Syria crisis if there is evidence of international human rights being violated.

Whilst the concept of international human rights has its critics, as does the United Nations itself, the majority of its principles, such as the right to life and liberty, are fairly easy to understand and not controversial to the majority of people.

Journalists have given evidence in bringing perpetrators of war crimes to justice; as 'special witnesses,' they have provided testimonies at a range of international tribunals where war criminals have been tried. Perpetrators of GBV crimes can fall into this category: the testimony of journalists, and therefore the accuracy of their reports, is likely to be of increasing importance in bringing them to justice.

1. UN, <http://bit.ly/1zptEyF>

2. United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1889 and 2212

3. United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1960 and 2106

4. GBV AoR, DRAFT - Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, 2014.





The Universal Declaration on Human Rights is the most translated document in the world, having been translated into more than 400 languages and dialects.

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.”

# GBV Programming: Prevention and Response

Under normal circumstances, the primary responsibility of ensuring that people are protected from violence lies with the state. However, in a humanitarian crisis, UN agencies as well as national and international NGOs become central to this role.

Addressing GBV involves attempting to prevent violence by addressing its causes, and responding to the consequences of violence in order to meet the needs of survivors.<sup>1</sup>

For GBV prevention and response to be effective, all those involved should be aware of the risks of GBV, and collaborate and coordinate accordingly.

Identifying ways to safely deliver services and aid is a responsibility of all humanitarian actors. From organizations working in the water and sanitation sector, to health, to food security, everyone has a role in mitigating the risks of GBV and its consequences. For example, well-designed latrines in a camp, which include locks, lights, and an appropriate distance between female and male facilities, can all help prevent GBV.

Organizations and institutions also collaborate with communities to promote behavioural and social changes around power, gender, and GBV.

A smaller group of institutions, such as health centres and organizations providing psychosocial support and legal aid, provide life-saving response services to GBV survivors.

Case managers, often social workers, describe the services available for survivors, and discuss with them, the pros and cons of accessing each service. In this way, survivors can take an informed decision about what to do in the aftermath of a GBV incident. Case managers also help survivors by accompanying them as they access medical and legal help, and by making official referrals to further services.

Survivors should be able to access health, psychosocial, security, and legal services. Survivor-centered service delivery organizations often offer case management services, which support survivors to learn about their choices, take decisions on the way forward, and access the needed services.

Healthcare interventions help prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and provide treatment for injuries. Psychosocial support provides GBV survivors with counseling, and facilitates the healing process. Since the safety of survivors is paramount, security services including access to safe houses is essential. Survivors may need support to pursue legal action against perpetrators; in case of domestic violence, they are likely to need advice and action around divorce and custody of children.

In Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan, service providers offer 'Safe Spaces,' where women and girls can develop their skills and socialise, and if necessary access specialised response to GBV services. Safe Spaces and the activities offered through them, help organisations to create ties with the community.

1. For more information on GBV programming, please see UNFPA, Managing Gender-Based Violence Programmes in Emergencies, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1vIV6sZ>



## UNFPA's GBV Interventions in the Syrian Crisis

UNFPA works to ensure quality life-saving services are available to GBV survivors in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, and Egypt. UNFPA works with partners, civil society, and governments to establish strategies to prevent and mitigate the risks of GBV.

UNFPA supports Safe Spaces in the region, where women and girls can access psychosocial activities as well as other GBV response services. It works closely with ministries of health and other health providers to ensure the availability of survivor-centered post-rape treatment.

UNFPA, in collaboration with other agencies, is the lead of the GBV coordination groups in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, providing strategic direction, and technical expertise. For more details about UNFPA's strategy on GBV, please see the UNFPA Regional Strategy on Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in the Arab States (<http://bit.ly/1vs3WdT>).

# GBV Data

How common is GBV? Obtaining prevalence data on GBV is a challenge. This is particularly true during humanitarian emergencies, where there are limited services for GBV and its survivors - and security and access constraints can make it difficult to get accurate data. More generally, the stigma associated with GBV often prevents people from coming forward.

Data on GBV usually reflects only reported incidents, which are considered to be a small proportion of the total. A recent study indicated that only 7% of survivors in developing countries actually report to a service, and less than half (46%) of all GBV survivors even tell anyone, including family members, a family, or friends.<sup>1</sup>

Most evidence about the scope and nature of GBV in emergencies derives from qualitative assessments, studies, and service delivery statistics. These mostly suggest that many forms of GBV increase during emergencies.

The need to 'provide some figures' around GBV can lead to flawed

estimates being widely circulated, or statistics being shared without context.<sup>2</sup>

Given the challenges around GBV data collection and interpretation, consulting a GBV specialist on how to interpret the data and figures is likely to be useful.

For example, an increase in reported GBV cases may be the result of a new women's centre opening in a particular region, or a campaign encouraging women to come forward rather than a rise in actual GBV incidents.

There are many reasons why there is an under-reporting of GBV worldwide. Many survivors think that they will not be believed, that they will be blamed, that they will be ostracised by their family, or that they will be rejected by their husbands.

Social stigma, fear of repercussions by perpetrators, and of losing child custody, homes or financial support are amongst reasons given

1. Tia Palermo, Jennifer Bleck, and Amber Peterman, Tip of the Iceberg: Reporting and Gender-Based Violence in Developing Countries, American Journal of Epidemiology Advance Access published December 12, 2013

2. Tia Palermo and Amber Peterman, Undercounting, overcounting and the longevity of flawed estimates: statistics on sexual violence in conflict, Bull World Health Organ., 2011; <http://1.usa.gov/1vUZh3X>

3. The Due Diligence Project, Due Diligence and State Responsibility to Eliminate Violence Against Women, Middle East and North Africa, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1zo1HZ9>



### What is GBV under - reported?

- Fear of losing their homes
- Negative financial consequences
- Social stigma
- Fear of repercussions by perpetrators
- Fear of losing child custody
- Lack of information
- Lack of confidence in the police
- Lack of support services
- Fear of deportation
- High cost of legal action
- Violence against women not being legally criminalised <sup>3</sup>

# Producing GBV content: things to think about

## **In carrying out your interviews, have you been sympathetic to the trauma suffered by a GBV survivor?**

Have you made every effort to interview without causing re-trauma?  
Have you made sure that your interviewee has been made aware of appropriate counselling and support services?

Have you pointed them in the direction of appropriate support services in this region? Do you know what help is available?

## **Have you protected your sources/interviewees?**

Have you made sure that there will be no negative repercussions from your interaction with a GBV survivor?

(Remember that 'informed consent' means that the person you speak to should understand the implications of 'going public' with a story, and you have a duty of care in these cases. Also, that 'jigsaw identification' can be a problem; a false name or 'blurred screen' may not be enough to prevent identification).

## **Have you been specific in your terminology, and avoided vague or ambiguous euphemisms?**

For example, 'The guard molested her' has a different meaning from 'the guard raped her.'

(This is because terms like 'molest,' and 'sexual activity' are vague, while rape is a specific crime that tells us what happened).

If you are covering a court case, have you referred to the specific alleged crimes and sentence as they relate to the law?

For example, 'He was found guilty of rape which carries a death sentence under Jordanian law.'

Have you avoided prejudicial descriptions of the victim?

For example, 'She was wearing make-up at the time of the attack' (this description is not relevant, and could imply judgment of the person who has suffered from an attack).

## **If you are hosting a discussion or call-in programme on GBV, have you included guests with 'expert' knowledge, and challenged inaccurate comments made by contributors?**

For example, if a caller claims that a woman 'did not report an incident of GBV to the police immediately and must therefore be making it up,' have you explained the reasons that might be behind this?

(This is because there are many enduring myths about rape that often go unchallenged. A woman may not report a GBV incident for fear of reprisals from her attacker, because she was disorientated following her trauma, or because of inadequate legal systems. Lack of immediate reporting does not imply she has made up the incident).

## **Where appropriate, have you made sure that you have quoted all your 'expert sources,' and included a direct link to the relevant page of any organization you have mentioned?**

For example, if you mention a particular NGO working with GBV survivors, have you linked to their material? If you work for a radio station, have you given details of how people can access services?

Have you avoided 'single source' journalism?

For example, if you have quoted a government official talking about GBV, have you also spoken to a local NGO about the issue?

## **Have you used plain language that your audience can understand, and explained unfamiliar language?**

The glossary (see pages 38-39) explains some of the terminology used by people who work on GBV issues: you are likely to have to explain or rephrase some of these terms in plain language for a general audience.

Print and web journalists may need to explain to sub-editors, the reasons for specific terminology used in a particular article; more generally, you may need to explain to colleagues why you have covered GBV stories in a particular way.



# Use of Images

Whether you work online, in the print media, or for a TV station, it is likely that you will not get coverage for your GBV story without striking images. This presents an ethical dilemma. Without informed consent, you should not identify the GBV survivor; therefore, you should beware of filming details that might identify.

Be careful about using pixelated images, scrambling voices, or filming into light as these techniques are not always failsafe. Anything distinctive - such as a headscarf, wedding ring, furniture in a home, or a family member - can give away the identity of an 'anonymous' source and cause a problem. Clear labelling of images is vital.

You will need to be creative in your solutions: for example, photographs or video of a busy marketplace or public area are likely to be less easily associated with a GBV survivor than similar shots of their home or street.



# Case Study: Child Marriage

Children and young people often suffer in times of conflict; they form a vulnerable group whose rights are frequently violated with impunity.

Part of the reason for this is that they are not listened to: often, adults don't believe children and young people when they are victims of violence; this can lead to a culture of silence. They are often powerless, and it can be much easier to ignore, for example, child sexual abuse within a community than it is to face up to it and deal with the problem.

In some countries, parents encourage children, and girls in particular, to get married at a young age in the hope that marriage will benefit them both socially and economically. In reality, this has serious repercussions on the lives of children who experience it. For example, the risk of maternal death for mothers aged under 15 years in low- and middle-income countries is double that of older females.

Child marriage in refugee communities in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, and Egypt is one of the main GBV concerns in the area. The issue has received a lot of media attention during the past few years, with mixed consequences.

The coverage has helped focus attention on the problem, and has contributed to efforts of the humanitarian community to mobilize resources and to establish services to work on the issue. However, this media attention has also perpetrated the idea that any Syrian girl is ready to get married very young. Syrian girls and their families reported feeling that the media contributed to a negative perception of Syrian women and girls, and sometimes reacted by increasing isolation and control over young women in particular.

Furthermore, because of the perception that child marriage is not a 'real' form of GBV, some journalists have been unscrupulous in sharing details, including pictures of young brides, potentially placing them at risk of possible retaliation by other members of the community.

“Some people may say that marrying off a young girl can help resolve some of her problems. Even some naïve girls themselves may think so, and get excited at the prospect of having their own house and family. But the truth is that girls my age know nothing about life, responsibilities, and what it takes to run a home or raise a family. They'll wind up escaping one set of problems and falling into new ones. There is no way that child marriage resolves anything, and more girls need to be told that.”

## Female 16

*Shatila Camp, Lebanon.*

Child marriage (sometimes called 'early marriage') is defined as marriage before an individual reaches the age of 18 years.

Despite near-universal commitments to end child marriage, one in three girls in developing countries - excluding China - will probably be married before they are 18 years of age.

One out of nine girls will be married before their 15th birthday. Most of these girls are poor, less-educated, and living in rural areas.

In the next decade, 14.2 million girls aged below 18 years will be married every year; this translates into 39,000 girls married each day.

---

UNFPA, *Marrying too Young*, 2012, <http://bit.ly/120AFLg>



# Media Impact



The link between 'cultural' and 'direct' violence was observed by Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung in the 1960s, and has subsequently been an influential area of academic study.

Syrian refugees have sometimes been criticised or stereotyped in the media; this has led some people in host communities to carry out acts of violence against them.

Representation is an important issue: where particular voices are absent, it becomes easy to negatively stereotype them.

This can be rectified. For example, broadcasters can make sure that discussion programmes actively encourage both Syrians male and female callers to participate.

If you only include negative opinions of people who call in, or post messages to complain about refugees, then you can contribute to a culture of intolerance, which affects how people are treated, and towards an atmosphere in which violence is normal.

“I hear locals bad-mouthing Syrians from the minute I step out of my house to the minute that I get back home at night. Even when they know I’m Syrian, that doesn’t stop them. Can you imagine what that feels like? It’s honestly so upsetting, but I don’t say a word. Sometimes, I just don’t want to leave the house because I can’t bear the thought of more humiliation.”

**Syrian refugee**

*Northern Jordan (from khatwah.org research)*

# Approaching Organisations

You are much more likely to be successful in both securing an interview and producing an effective GBV story if you can show that you understand the ethics of working with GBV survivors.

A common complaint of people working with GBV survivors is that journalists 'phone up in order to speak to a child bride' or make similar inappropriate requests; in fact, those field workers may choose not to deal with such requests as they can be harmful for those involved.

Peter-Bastian Halberg worked as Senior Mass Communication Officer at UNHCR Jordan, and dealt with the press regularly in his work. He says:

"You will need more time than you usually would when speaking to UNHCR on protection issues. We are generally pretty good at timely responses to journalists, but when it comes to protection issues, things take longer. Because our first principle is to protect the refugees and our second is to help the journalist.

A lot can be achieved by doing your homework and investigating the matters thoroughly. Journalists need to come to us with an open mind, learn from the organization and knowing that we have a protection mandate.

A public discourse can only be altered if there is public scrutiny of stories on the ground. GBV related stories are often portrayed in a pre-judged manner.

There is a tendency that some people see harassment based on gender as part of Arabic culture, but in my opinion, it isn't, and that should be told."

Journalists covering GBV will need to think closely about who they interview. The UN regional humanitarian coordinator may be an authoritative and trustworthy source; however, they are likely to be too busy to deal with frequent press calls. A press officer for an international NGO might want to talk about the particular initiative they are promoting, rather than the particular issue that you want to cover.

Officials at local and international NGOs may be able to talk more freely about gender-based violence: they are likely to have a useful overview of the topic.

Bear in mind that they may use language and terminology which is unfamiliar to your audience. You should not be afraid of asking your interviewees to explain their language if it will confuse your audience.



UNFPA aims to deliver a survivor-centered approach in all parts of our work, including supporting media to cover gender-based violence. Before we answer a request to meet survivors, we think about their best interest: can we guarantee the safety, confidentiality, and dignity of survivors, their families, and communities? At times, these requests cannot be accommodated. Usually, UNFPA will provide information and expertise, and where possible, facilitate visits to project sites to ensure that important stories about GBV can be told from different angles.

**Daniel Baker**

*UNFPA Syria Regional Response Advisor*

# Organizations

Table 2 lists some of the main organizations working on GBV response in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, and Egypt in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis.

●	Organisation operating in this country
■	Organisation leading GBV coordination mechanism

Organization	Syria	Lebanon	Jordan	Iraq	Egypt	Turkey
<b>GBV coordination Mechanism</b>	●	●	●	●	●	●
<b>ABAAD Lebanon</b> www.abaadmena.org		●				
<b>Arab Women Organization (AWO)</b> www.awo.org.jo			●			
<b>Danish Refugee Council (DRC)</b> www.drc.dk		●				
<b>Institute for Family Health / Noor Al Hussein Foundation (IFH/NHF)</b> www.nooralhuseinfoundation.org			●			
<b>International Medical Corps (IMC)</b> www.internationalmedicalcorps.org		●	●	●		■
<b>International Rescue Committee (IRC)</b> www.rescue.org		●	●	●		●
<b>International Relief &amp; Development (IRD)</b> www.ird.org		●	●	●		
<b>Jordanian Women Union (JWU)</b> www.jwu.org.jo			●			
<b>KAFA Lebanon</b> www.kafa.org.lb		●				
<b>The Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (RDFL)</b>		●				
<b>Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women (LECORVAW)</b> www.lebanesewomen.org		●				
<b>United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)</b> www.unfpa.org	■	■	■	■	●	■
<b>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)</b> www.unhcr.org	●	■	■	■	■	■
<b>United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)</b> www.unicef.org	●	■	●	●	●	●
<b>United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian in the Near East (UNRWA)</b> www.unrwa.org	●	●	●	●	●	●
<b>UN Women</b> www.unwomen.org	●	●	●	●	●	●



GBV coordination groups, also called GBV sub-working groups or GBV task forces, are groups of organisations whose objective is to coordinate GBV prevention and response work. GBV working groups meet regularly to design, establish, and evaluate action to prevent and respond to GBV. For example, they work together to facilitate GBV survivors' access to services, and to implement awareness raising campaigns, as well as working to ensure that GBV risks are taken into account in all aspects of aid delivery.

Coordinating agencies, which are responsible for leading these groups, are often a good starting point to get an overview of the situation, key resources, and contacts. More information about these mechanisms can be found on the UNHCR/inter-agency information-sharing portal. Speaking to coordinators themselves will give you a good picture of what is happening 'on the ground' in the region you are reporting.

## Additional Resources

1. Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR), Media Guidelines for Reporting On Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Contexts, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1uNd5te>
2. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings, 2005, [bit.ly/1lJa17J](http://bit.ly/1lJa17J)
3. Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR), Handbook for Coordinating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings, 2010, <http://bit.ly/12V0htv>
4. UNICEF, Reporting Guidelines to Protect At-Risk Children, <http://unicef/1170F8Z>
5. IFJ, Guidelines for Reporting on Violence Against Women, Ethical Journalism Initiative, <http://bit.ly/1stB2Fp>
6. WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies, 2007, [bit.ly/1oTfGVG](http://bit.ly/1oTfGVG)
7. Learning Resource Kit for Gender-Ethical Journalism and Media House Policy, World Association of Christian Communication (WACC) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), 2012, <http://bit.ly/13qsJEp>
8. Many tools and resources on GBV can be found at the GBV AoR website: <http://bit.ly/1zwbUSv>
9. More information on the response to the Syria crisis can be found on the UNHCR regional portal <http://bit.ly/Wh105k> and on the OCHA (Office for the

# Glossary

## Child Sexual Abuse

Any incident involving rape or sexual assault that is perpetrated against a minor, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

## Coercion

Forcing, or attempting to force, another person to engage in behaviours against her will by using threats, verbal insistence, manipulation, deception, cultural expectations, or economic power.

## Confidentiality

The right of every survivor to have their identity kept private and unidentifiable. There is an implicit understanding and obligation on those providing services that any information disclosed by a survivor will not be shared with others, unless the person concerned gives explicit and informed consent to do so. Confidentiality involves, not only how information is collected, but also how it is stored and shared.

## Coordinating Agencies

The organizations (usually two working in a co-chairing arrangement) that take the lead in chairing GBV working groups and ensuring that the minimum prevention and response interventions are put in place. Coordinating agencies are selected by the GBV working group and endorsed by the leading United Nations entity in the country (i.e. Humanitarian Coordinator, SRSG).

## Domestic Violence

Intimate Partner or Other Family Members: Domestic violence takes place between intimate partners (spouses, boyfriend/girlfriend) as well as between family members (for example, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law). Domestic violence may include sexual, physical, and psychological abuse. In any reference to domestic violence, it is important to be clear whether the violence is perpetrated by an intimate partner, or another family member. Other terms used to refer to domestic violence perpetrated by an intimate partner include 'spousal abuse' and 'wife battering.'

## Child Marriage

Child marriage is defined as the marriage of a boy or a girl before the age of 18 years. It is sometimes referred to as early marriage. The preferred UNICEF style is to refer to 'child' instead of 'early' marriage, since the word 'early' does not immediately convey the fact that this practice affects children below a specified age. UNICEF, <http://uni.cf/1lVmxCD>

## Emergency

Generally used to refer to situations of armed conflict or natural disaster, often involving the displacement of populations, sometimes as refugees, other times as internally displaced people (IDPs). For the purposes of these guidelines, humanitarian 'emergencies' include the period of instability, which often leads up to an acute crisis and ends at some point after 'return' or 'resettlement.' Emergencies are

often cyclical, with periods of stability followed by recurrent violence and/or instability. In some emergencies, populations flee, find refuge that later becomes unsafe, and are thus forced to flee again to another location. This cycle can repeat itself multiple times throughout an emergency.

## Female Genital Cutting /Mutilation (FGM)

All procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or any other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

## Forced Marriage

The marriage of an individual against her or his will.

## Gender

Refers to the social differences between males and females that are learned, and though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time, and have wide variations both within and between cultures. 'Gender' determines the roles, responsibilities, opportunities, privileges, expectations, and limitations for males and for females in any culture.

## Gender-Based Violence

Any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially-ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females.' Gender based violence is also sometimes referred to as sexual and gender based violence (SGBV).

## Host Community

Host community is an area in which many refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) reside during displacement, whether in nearby camps, private accommodation, or integrated into households.

## Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

IDPs are people who have been forced to flee their homes as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights or natural or manmade disasters, and who seek protection elsewhere within their country of origin or residence and have not crossed internationally recognised state borders.

## Informed Consent

Refers to approval or assent, particularly and specifically after thoughtful consideration. Informed consent occurs when someone fully understands the consequences of a decision, and consents freely and without any force.

## Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence takes place between intimate partners (spouses, boyfriend/girlfriend) as well as between former intimate partners (for example, ex-husband or boyfriend). Intimate partner violence may include sexual, physical, and psychological abuse. It is sometimes referred to as IPV.

## Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)

An organised entity that is functionally independent of, and does not represent a government or State. It is normally applied to organizations devoted to humanitarian and human rights causes, a number of which have official consultative status at the United Nations.

## Perpetrator

Person, group, or institution that directly inflicts or otherwise supports violence or other abuse inflicted on another against her/his will. Perpetrators are in a position of real or perceived power, decision-making and/or

authority, and can thus exert control over their victims.

## Persons With Disabilities

Persons with Disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

## Psychological / Emotional Abuse

Infliction of mental or emotional pain or injury. Examples include threats of physical or sexual violence, intimidation, humiliation, forced isolation, stalking, harassment, unwanted attention, remarks, gestures, or written words of a sexual and/or menacing nature, destruction of cherished things, etc.

## Rape

Non-consensual penetration (however slight) of the vagina, anus, or mouth with a penis or other body part. Also includes penetration of the vagina or anus with an object.

## Refugee

A refugee is a person who is outside his or her country of origin or habitual residence, and has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.

## Sexual Exploitation

Any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another

## Sexual Violence

Any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes;

this includes profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

## Survivor/ Victim

A person who has experienced gender-based violence. Whilst the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' are sometimes used interchangeably, 'victim' is a term often used in the legal and medical sectors while 'survivor' is a term generally preferred in the psychological and social support sectors because it implies resilience.

## Trafficking In Persons

Trafficking in persons is defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Adapted from the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System glossary





UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund

Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential fulfilled.



UNFPA would like to acknowledge the generous support of UK aid from the UK Department for International Development for funding the development of this publication.

We would like to thank the UNFPA Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey Country Offices, along with the UNFPA Humanitarian and Fragile Context Branch and the UNFPA Arab States Regional Office for their contributions and review of this handbook.

Writer

**Nick Raistick**

Researcher

**Margherita Maglietti**

Production Managers

**Ruba Hikmat** UNFPA Regional Communications Specialist

**Jennifer Miquel** UNFPA Regional Gender Based Violence Specialist

[www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org)

2014