UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

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

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The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.
The role of media is crucial for increasing awareness and changing harmful attitudes towards gender-based violence (GBV), especially in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Through gender-sensitive reporting, media have the opportunity to dismantle gender myths and stereotypes on GBV. However, a failure to adhere to basic ethical principles when reporting on such sensitive issues can further victimize, endanger and stigmatize GBV survivors, aggravate their trauma and reinforce the stereotypes and misunderstandings of this form of violence.
Four questions about gender-based violence

What is gender-based violence?

Gender-based violence is a manifestation of discrimination and a grave violation of a person’s human rights and fundamental freedoms. GBV is a term for any harmful act that is perpetuated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed gender differences between women and men.¹

In Ukraine women are disproportionately affected by GBV. In the conflict-affected regions of Ukraine, for example, women constitute about 80-90% of GBV survivors. Gender-based violence can take many different forms, including sexual, physical, psychological, emotional or economic violence and can occur anywhere, anytime: at home, in public, during conflict and in peacetime.²

Why does gender-based violence occur?

Gender inequalities between women and men are root causes of gender-based violence. Traditional attitudes in which women are considered to be subordinate to men, and social norms and stereotypes that prescribe men and women’s roles in society, are often used to justify GBV as a form of protection or control. This desire to maintain power and control, over predominantly women, may include actions such as intimidation or harassment, physical or sexual violence, limitations on freedom of movement, and restrictions on the right to work or manage one’s own finances, among

¹ “Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You”, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women.
other rights and liberties. Gender-based violence (GBV) may become more acute in times of armed conflict and post-conflict due to increased levels of insecurity, lack of rule of law, lack of access to shelter and services, and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Internally displaced and refugee women and girls are particularly vulnerable to GBV.

Who is affected by GBV and how often does it occur?

Gender-based violence cuts across age, socio-economic, educational and geographic boundaries, and affects all societies and social groups.

Normalized or hidden GBV affects everyone, including individuals, families, communities, the economy and society as a whole. In Ukraine, every fourth woman aged 15-49 has experienced physical or sexual violence at least once in her lifetime.³

GBV is common to any group, however evidence suggests that certain characteristics of women, such as sexual orientation, disability status or ethnicity, and some contextual factors, such as humanitarian crises, including conflict and post-conflict situations, may increase women’s vulnerability to violence.⁴

³ Національне репрезентативне опитування на тему поширеності насильства щодо жінок і дівчат, проведене Фондом народонаселення ООН/GfK Україна у 2014 році.
Many cases of GBV go unreported due to social stigma and a lack of trust in the police and justice systems.

Therefore, statistics may actually underestimate the problem. Furthermore, many types of GBV, such as emotional and economic violence, are often not recognized as crimes, even by those affected. Many GBV survivors remain silent due to lack of understanding that violence is a crime and violation of their human rights. Often survivors do not know about the available services. They are afraid of further violence against themselves or their family members. They fear social stigma or victimization by the authorities or community.

This leads to GBV being sustained by a culture of silence and denial of the seriousness of the consequences of abuse.

Why is GBV underreported?

Gender-sensitive media reporting

The media can play an influential role in raising awareness on GBV, advocating for necessary changes in legislation and practices, holding Government accountable to protect all women and men from violence, and breaking social taboos and stigma. However, in practice women’s voices, concerns and experiences are often marginalized or misrepresented in the media.

It is therefore important that journalists provide unbiased comprehensive narratives on gender equality issues and women’s lives, particularly women survivors of violence and women living in conflict and post-conflict situations. The following may be used as basic guidelines for reporting on GBV.
How to avoid victimization

- Do not identify the survivor with any details unless they have chosen to go public with their identity (secure consent).

- Do not insist on taking videos/photos of injuries or scars or describe them; do not include photos/illustrations that depict scenes of violence; choose neutral pictures.

- Do not insist on excessive descriptions, details or circumstances of the violence.

- If a survivor shares more details, think about the possible risks of perpetuating stereotypes in publishing them. For instance, is it important what a survivor of rape wore? How late (s)he was returning home? That (s)he declined to be accompanied or had been drinking? None of these circumstances justify the aggressor’s violent actions.

- **Do not try to defend the aggressor.** Either intentionally or unintentionally, do not normalize violent behaviour. Whether a man or woman was intoxicated, was jealous, served in the army, lost a job, or has a serious health condition does not justify the violence.

- Avoid using the word “victim”; survivors of violence who come forward should be commended not victimized; for example, when reporting on sexual violence, note the difference in wording: “she is a victim of rape” and “she survived sexual violence”.

- Report on GBV survivors as people and empowered individuals; the image of a strong woman or man can be conveyed both in text and in a TV or radio piece (without revealing their identity).
Ask yourself:

- What risks does the piece bring to those involved in your story, to their relatives, or the social group they belong to?
- What risks does the piece bring to your editorial office and to you personally? Evaluate the risks and the ways to respond to them, and only then start to work on the material.
- Are photos and videos of survivors and their injuries really necessary for telling the story? If in doubt, do not use them. Under no circumstances use any images of children involved. Pay special attention to the risks related to publishing stories involving children.
- What is the point of publishing this piece? Apart from being interesting to readers, will it bring any public benefit? It is important not only to tell the story, but also to make a clear point that any violence is unacceptable and to direct readers where to go for help if they suffer from violence.
- Do I have enough knowledge of the topic? Consult with GBV experts that work in the social services, gender experts or call the national hotline. Comments of experts can be included in the piece, increasing its public benefit and credibility.
- Have you selected an appropriate and safe place for the interview? It should be a comfortable and private space.
- Have you provided enough information to the individuals being interviewed? The individuals in your stories should know the possible risks (they may not be able to assess these themselves), the context, the content of the story and the media where the piece is to be published.
Violence survivors being interviewed have the right to:

• Decline to identify themselves/to publish their names.
• Decline to continue the interview at any time.
• Decline to answer any question.
• Decline to be photographed.

Ensure privacy

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

Before publishing

• Show the final edited version of your piece to those involved in your piece.
• Be understanding if a GBV survivor does not allow you to publish your piece, even if you have invested much work in your story and you think it is beneficial for the public. **Consent for publication is always the most important consideration.**
• Publish detailed information on available services where GBV survivors can access help.
After publishing

- Be open for further contact in case those involved in your story or people in similar situations wish to contact you.

- In any piece you publish, indicate where men and women can ask for help if they find themselves in a similar situation.

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

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

Further resources:

- Global Protection Cluster. Media Guidelines for Reporting on Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Contexts.

- UN Women. Ending violence against women.
  http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women