

Learning Resource Kit
for **Gender-Ethical Journalism**
and **Media House Policy**

Book 2: **Practical Resources**



Resource Kit for Gender-Ethical Journalism and Media House Policy

Book 2: Practical Resources



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1. Gender portrayal guidelines in Canadian broadcasting. *Dr. Kathleen Cross*
2. Media Gender Code of Ethics in Tanzania. *Gladness Munuo Hemedi*
3. Getting voice, visibility and impact for gender equality. *Sabina Zaccaro*

Book 2

Guidelines on gender-ethical reporting

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WACC

communication FOR all



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Preamble



This *Learning Resource Kit for Gender-Ethical Journalism and Media House Policy* is the result of collaboration between the World Association of Christian Communication (WACC) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) to redress gender disparities in news media content.

Little progress has been made since the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action called for more gender sensitivity in the media and self-regulatory mechanisms to eliminate gender-biased programming. Research such as the Global Media Monitoring Project shows just how marginalised women remain in the news. In 2010, the GMMP¹ revealed that women make up only 24% of the people heard, read about or seen in the news.

The IFJ launched the Ethical Journalism Initiative² to confront on-going discrimination in the news and reconnect journalists to their mission by enforcing core ethical standards. Challenging sensationalism and stereotypes, checking facts, abiding by codes of conduct, supporting independent self-regulatory bodies are some of the actions identified to uphold media quality and rebuild the public's trust in the news. Fair gender portrayal is one of the issues to be given priority if media hope to fully reflect the role women play in society. The widespread use of social media, blogs and the development of online news should not be overlooked. Numerous cases reveal a failure to portray gender issues fairly and accurately and very few initiatives exist to develop ethical standards and avoid unfair and outdated stereotypes.

This learning resource kit aims to provide an answer to the current gender gap in news content and lack of existing self-regulatory mechanisms to confront gender bias. It is organised in two books that may be read independently of each other. *Book 1* discusses conceptual issues pertaining to gender, media and professional ethics, while *Book 2* presents gender-ethical reporting guidelines on several thematic areas.

In what ways are gender ethics critical to media professional practice in democratic societies? What is the impact of adopting a gender lens when reporting a news story? What does a snapshot of gender in the world news media look like presently and how has this changed since 1995? To what extent do media codes of ethics prescribe the integration of gender concerns in media practice? These and other questions are addressed in *Book 1* centred on conceptual issues regarding gender, media and professional ethics. *Book 1* also contains case studies of experiences in the adoption and implementation of gender-focussed media codes in 2 countries – Canada and Tanzania. A third case study profiles the experience of the Inter-Press Service in a groundbreaking initiative to cover stories on gender equality and women's empowerment related to the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG3). All case studies distill lessons learnt through the processes. *Book 1* will appeal to media decision makers as well as to civil society actors interested in gender media policy adoption or improvement.

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1. The GMMP is a longitudinal research and advocacy initiative on gender in the world news media, globally co-ordinated by WACC. The research has been carried out in 5-year cycles since 1995 to monitor change in selected indicators of gender in news media content. Data was collected in 108 countries for the fourth research in the series, in 2010. The report is available at http://www.whomakesthenews.org/images/stories/website/gmmp_reports/2010/global/gmmp_global_report_en.pdf
 2. <http://ethicaljournalisminitiative.org/en>

Book 2 will be of interest to media practitioners – journalists, reporters and editors – including educators and civil society engaged in gender-focussed media monitoring. It provides practical guidelines for gender-ethical reporting on eight thematic areas, namely: climate change; disaster reporting; economic news – accounting for women; sexual and reproductive health; human trafficking; peace and security; political news – reporting on women in government; and, sexual violence. What are the gender dimensions of climate change that a journalist should be conscious about when covering a related story? What is the gender angle in seemingly “gender-neutral” economic issues stories? What are the common pitfalls to avoid when writing about women in public office? How can a journalist integrate a gender perspective when writing about sexual and reproductive health issues? What are the challenges in reporting on violence against women? The guidelines provide direction on these and other questions. The guidelines can be adapted for different social contexts and realities, and the basic principles running across them may be used to inform the development of gender-ethical approaches to covering stories in other thematic areas.

Gender and media experts from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean region, Europe, Latin America, North America and Oceania/Pacific region have made this kit a reality. The resource brings together their knowledge and insights as media practitioners, educators or communication researchers committed to playing a role in professionalizing journalistic practice from a gender-ethics perspective. In this regard, we thank Dr. Kathleen Cross (Canada), Lic. Marcela Gabioud (Argentina), Prof. Maximiliano Guzman (Puerto Rico), Lic. Claudia Florentin (Argentina), Gladness Munuo Hemedi (Tanzania), Ammu Joseph (India), Suvendrini Kakuchi (Japan), Mindy Ran (The Netherlands), Sharon Bhagwan Rolls (Fiji) and Sabina Zaccaro (Italy) for contributing to different sections of the kit and/or providing critical comments to improve it.

A number of well-established media guidelines and journalists’ ethical codes specify the need not to discriminate on the basis of gender. This resource kit will not replace them. Rather, it will provide media professionals, media accountability bodies, journalists’ unions and associations and employers with practical guidelines, where they do not exist, to enhance women’s representation in media content, improve the gender balance reflected in by-lines and encourage dialogue within media structures and self-regulatory bodies together with civil society groups.

Gender portrayal is not a women’s issue. Portraying gender in a fair and ethical manner will only occur when it becomes a concern for everyone in the newsroom and beyond. Journalists, photographers, news editors, camerawomen and cameramen, cartoonists, media employers, self-regulatory bodies, journalists’ schools, associations and unions, all have a role to play in ensuring that media become an effective mirror of society. Civil society actors can support this process through monitoring, dialogue and positive partnerships with media.

The media content production environment is fraught with structural, ideological and practical complexities that work together to generate the resultant visible gender disparities. Creating a gender culture in the media should become a priority to fight the effects that gender-biased content has on the public's perception of women and men, and the relations between them. Adopting guidelines and increasing the robustness of codes from a gender perspective are only initial steps. Attention should also be given to fair and transparent recruitment policies, lifelong training (paid for by management), for all professionals and regular progress monitoring.

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WACC

Guidelines on gender-ethical reporting



1. Climate change

Global climate change has been accepted by most observers as a scientific fact. Increased concentrations of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxides, and chlorofluorocarbons have led to effects on the atmosphere, an alarming reduction in polar and glacial ice, ocean warming, rising sea levels and an increase in the ocean's acidity. Other effects include drought, floods and atmospheric changes.¹

At the same time, reporting on climate change and its consequences is relatively new on the mass media agenda, and the tendency to become overly technical when presenting information is high. A useful way of reporting on this topic is to find cases in which the effects of climate change are being directly experienced and to tell the stories of the people affected. It is important to recognize that women experience the impacts of global climate change in a different manner from men.

The UNDP 2007 Human Development Report indicates that women are particularly affected by climate change because they constitute the greatest percentage of the world's poor and have minimal resources to mitigate the impacts of climate change on their lives. Further, one of the effects of climate change is that—in all cultures—it intensifies already existing gender inequalities.

Clearly, the impact of climate change is not the same for all human beings. It becomes necessary, therefore, to detect the differences, bring visibility to the people most affected, and tell their stories from their perspectives.



Key concepts

Climate justice: “Climate justice” is a call to alleviate the unequal burdens created by climate change and to transform the social relations that lead to inequality, specifically the economic, political and ecological relations that have generated and perpetuated the exclusion, poverty and marginalization of specific groups such as indigenous peoples, women, and other vulnerable groups. The gender dimensions have been absent in major global agreements on global climate change and it is necessary to bring them into focus. Gender justice must be included not only in discourses and policies on climate change, but also in the mass media's editorial policies.

Gender: “Gender” refers to the social roles and relations between women and men. Included are the different responsibilities of women and men in a given culture. Unlike sex which is biologically determined, the gender roles of women and men are socially determined and may change over time or vary according to geographic location and social context. Gender equality is understood in the sense of equitable and equal access to resources, opportunities and entitlements. In situations of gender inequality, girls and women are generally those at a disadvantage, excluded from policy processes and from access to economic and social resources.

“Women’s historic disadvantages—their limited access to resources, restricted rights, and a muted voice in shaping decisions—make them highly vulnerable to climate change. The nature of that vulnerability varies widely ... But climate change is likely to magnify existing patterns of gender disadvantage”.

UNDP Human
Development Report
2007/2008

1. Global Climate Change, <http://cambioclimaticoglobal.com>.

Vulnerability: “Vulnerability” refers to people’s exposure to external risks, shocks and stresses and their ability to cope with, and recover from, the resulting impacts. Vulnerability may differ seasonally or at different times within people’s lives. It differs across groups within communities or individuals within a household, depending on their livelihood activities or social class. People draw on a range of coping strategies in times of stress, although the strategies available to the very poor are likely to be more restricted and less resilient.²



Sample story analysis

Consider the following story.

Title:	“Climate change cause of drought”
Reporter:	Josué Rodríguez
Where published:	Vanguardia (online news, Mexico) http://www.vanguardia.com.mx/causacambioclimaticosequia-1203316.html
Date	25 January 2012

PIEDRAS NEGRAS, COAHUILA. The changes in precipitation and temperatures registered in different regions of Coahuila are a result of the climate change that is affecting the entire planet, according to environmentalist Josefina Sánchez Ponce. She said that while it’s true we don’t know everything about how the atmosphere behaves, the effects have already been experienced in Coahuila, and include tornadoes and severe storms accompanied by hail the size of baseballs.

She said rainfall in the Saltillo area is atypical, different from that experienced in the past. The situation is similar in the central, desert, south-eastern, northern and coal-producing regions, specifically, torrential rainfall leading to floods and at the same time, an intense drought that has caused agricultural production to plummet.

She remembered that years ago, rainfall was recorded for a longer period of time, but currently it has diminished; also, winters used to be colder, and now are less so—which is extremely worrying.

According to Sánchez Ponce, there are reports that forage crops in the northern part of the country have been affected, since there is not enough time for them to adapt, primarily in the winter, when the land in this area is less suitable for growing crops.

“One of the major losses in Mexico is the loss of biodiversity as a result of climate change. Species have moved from one area to another, and those unable to do so tend to disappear,” she commented.

According to the Mexican Meteorological Organization, the drought, which is already severe, will be even more intense in the northern part of the country, as a result of climate change conditions.

2. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/a1395s/a1395s00.pdf>.

Sánchez Ponce also commented that Mexico will experience an increase in sea level, primarily affecting the Gulf of Mexico coastal areas, signifying that populated areas will be severely impacted.

[...]

Analysis

The news article addresses an issue that is prevalent across the region. While the reporter chooses to retain a local focus in the story, he misses an opportunity to write a more informative article; he could have expanded it to include the ways in which the climatic changes and water systems impact the women and men living in this region of Mexico.

Agricultural production is mentioned, but there is no reference to the people who carry out this work, that is, the percentage of women and men involved in production, how they are impacted by the drought, and how their everyday lives and their social and family roles will be altered by these changes over the short and long term. It is stated that climate changes have been occurring for a considerable period of time. It would not be surprising if people were migrating or had already migrated to other places, as a result of the changes and the loss of natural resources. It would be expected that the changes have in turn impacted the social and family arrangements for women and girls. Clearly, a brief history of the area would be helpful in better understanding the issues.

The reporter notes that climate variations lead to a loss in biodiversity, but fails to use the opportunity to explore how this affects life in the most vulnerable local communities that are the most dependent on natural resources.

A news article as simple as this one can serve to bring out hidden stories and enable better, balanced information. The stories can also bring visibility to issues that barely enter into the world of communication, but are vital for a more just society.

Questions to ponder

1. How do the various manifestations of climate change, such as drought and flooding, differently impact women and men?
2. What factors affect vulnerability and the capacity for adaptation?
3. How do women and men differently adapt to climate variations and to extreme phenomena?
4. How do gender roles change when climatic conditions change?



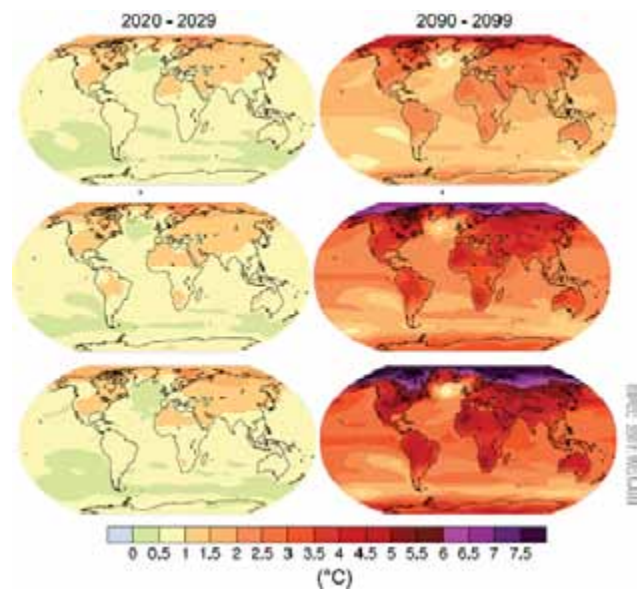
Special focus: The gender dimensions of climate change

To understand the different impacts of climate change on women and men, it is necessary to consider the following issues.

- Women are traditionally responsible for care-giving in families and societies. Thus, when a disaster occurs as a consequence of climate change, women do not have the same possibilities for mobilizing and fleeing. In some cultures, limitations are placed on their opportunities outside the home and on their ability to move about—which are vital for survival.
- After a catastrophe and its consequences, displacements and increased distances from vital resources intensify tasks performed by females. Girls and young women are obliged to abandon or postpone their schooling or job training, with consequences for the future.
- It is clearly documented that women's vulnerability to sexual and domestic violence increases when they live in refugee camps or temporary shelters following a catastrophe.
- Migration as a consequence of climate change affects women who, in many cases, are heads of households yet poor. Women are affected more severely than men when forced to migrate and find new resources, while at the same time responsibility for care-giving falls on their shoulders.
- Food crises associated with climate change have been linked to an increase in early marriages for girls in some parts of the world, who are traded for money to prospective husbands.
- Finding and carrying water, a vital resource for the entire community, is a task traditionally carried out by females. When this resource becomes increasingly scarce, the work load for females increases. School attendance and attention to the health of women and girls drop as the physical distance to this resource increases.
- Nutritional status is a critical determining factor in the capacity to survive the effects of natural disasters. Women are more likely to suffer food deficiencies. When food is scarce women feed their children and other family members first, to the detriment of their own health and nutrition.
- Weaker health generates conditions favourable to the spread of illnesses as well as complications in sexual and reproductive health.
- Changes in agricultural production stemming from global climate change have a crucial effect on the situation of women given their fundamental role in food production. Women produce, harvest and prepare most of the world's food. Women are responsible for 75% of domestic food production in Sub-Saharan Africa; 65% in Asia; and 45% in Latin America.³

3. See video by Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, 'Closing the gap between men and women in agriculture'. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpKF6e8k8MM>.

Projected global warming



Source: www.cambioclimaticoglobal.com



Guidelines: Reporting on climate change

1. Avoid generalizing the effects and impacts of climate change. Rather, distinguish between communities and groups that are more vulnerable, from those that are less so.
2. Identify the conditions that make women more vulnerable to effects of global climate change. Give details on these conditions.
3. It is correct and important to speak of “particularly vulnerable communities” and to identify them clearly.
4. Identify the livelihoods and resources that women have access to in a country or region and that have been affected by environmental phenomena. Doing so will pave the way to describing how the effects such phenomena have on women’s survival.
5. Look for what is hidden or not overtly visible. Provide a context for information. If a case of violence, poverty, low level of schooling or migration emerges as a consequence of the effects of climate change (for example, a major flood that forces women to take shelter or migrate to places where their situation will worsen), it should be identified and articulated. Highlighting the linkages will help to provide a multi-dimensional and informative story.
6. Be cautious about naming persons suffering the effects of climate change and publishing images of them. It is never justifiable, in the intent to portray a tragedy, to fail to respect the right to privacy or to protect women, minors and other vulnerable persons.
7. Prepare a diverse contact list of resource persons or consultants, whether experts or not. There is an evident journalistic bias towards men as providers of expert opinion, but in the case of issues of greater concern to women, female interviewees can provide valuable knowledge and information.
8. When reporting on health and its linkages to the effects of global climate change, it is important to bring visibility to the situation of women and their children, while at the same time taking care to avoid generalizations. Pay attention to sexual and reproductive health, since the consequences will have a present and future impact.
9. Acknowledge women’s role as agents of change in public policy development and in initiatives on adapting to or mitigating the effects of climate change.
10. Make reference to local, regional and international legal frameworks aimed at protecting women. An example is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)⁴.
11. To the extent possible, present specific experiences of women at the local or national level who are influencing policies on climate change or risk mitigation and action plans.

4. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>



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2. Disaster reporting

Natural disasters are no longer confined to a short news brief with statistics of fatalities or economic loss. Today, the story creates international headlines in the media and is documented aggressively—landmarks in recent disaster reporting include the devastation left by the Indian Ocean tsunami (December 2004), Hurricane Katrina in the United States (August 2005) and the triple tragedy that occurred in East Japan from the massive earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident (March 2011). These disasters and their aftermath have become vital news coverage that goes beyond statistics. With the rise of devastating disasters, media coverage has increased, in stories that point to crucial political, economic and social indicators of a country and its society. Indeed, stories by journalists who disseminate diverse information on devastation, disaster risk reduction and mitigation play a vital role in national recovery programs.

The disaster story is about recovery and risk reduction, two crucial themes that can be tackled if the challenges are linked with national development goals. For the journalist this objective is more effectively attained when the stories are recounted through the voices of disaster survivors¹, since they know firsthand the human suffering, the devastation and the consequent endurance and courage in recovery. Their stories not only convey the powerful reality on the ground but also the determination of the people to move on. Media documentation of their experiences is valuable for providing a context in which to understand the effects of disaster on people's lives. A story written with these goals in mind conveys the tragedy to the rest of the world but also builds support and understanding.



Sample story analysis

Consider the following story.

Title:	"Subtle aid for women facing abuse in disaster-hit areas."
Reporter:	Rob Gilhooly
Where published:	Japan Times- Japan`s leading daily. http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/ft20111001a1.html
Date	1 January, 2011.

SENDAI — At a glance, it appears to be nothing more than a hand massage. In a corner of a shelter for survivors of the March disasters in Onagawa, Miyagi Prefecture, members of the NPO Miyagi-Jonet are trying to provide some respite for stressed-out female survivors.

1. "Survivor" is used throughout this kit to convey the agency of those who are enduring or have overcome difficult situations. Rather than being merely passive "victims" as they are often portrayed, "survivor" draws attention to individuals, groups and particularly women undergoing difficulties or different forms of oppression who actively take steps to change their circumstances.

Only, unbeknownst to the residents, one of those members is a lawyer specializing in women's issues, including sexual assault and domestic violence.

“Just a sympathetic ear and sensitive touch can elicit some heartrending revelations,” says Yuko Kusano, cofounder of Miyagi-Jonet (an abbreviation of a more extended title meaning Miyagi Women's Rehabilitation Support Network).

“Many women say that no sooner had they begun to recover from the grief of loss and sense of guilt at surviving the traumatic events of March than they are subjected to a new kind of terror, a different kind of hell,” she says.

That hell includes numerous instances of sexual abuse, harassment and even rape, she says.

One Miyagi Prefecture woman in her 20s, who lost her home and family in the tsunami, has been forced to move to several different shelters after being subjected to sexual harassment, physical and mental abuse and stalking, Kusano says.

“Some shelter residents apparently even broke into the bathroom while she was bathing. She moved to other shelters, but sadly her torture continued.”

Traumatized, the woman eventually was forced to move away from her hometown of Ishinomaki to Kyoto.

A woman in her 30s, meanwhile, was physically abused by her husband while staying at a shelter also in Ishinomaki.

The couple eventually secured temporary housing where, away from the communal shelter environment, the abuse worsened. The woman begged local authorities to let her back into a shelter, Kusano says.

“Like many women in shelters and temporary accommodations, she feared for her life,” she says, adding that with the assistance of a Jonet lawyer, the woman was able to start divorce proceedings. “Without help, their predicament is not going to improve.”

Miyagi-Jonet was established in the wake of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, the brainchild of Kusano and Setsuko Yahata, two members of an existing Sendai-based NPO run by doctors, nurses and other health specialists for victims of domestic violence.

[...]

The news story tackles a crucial but still relatively under-researched aspect of disasters— psychosocial support for survivors. Female activists in Japan and Sri Lanka reported higher levels of post-disaster trauma among women survivors which they attributed to social stereotyping.² The reports from Tohoku document the pressure on women to be stoical, putting the needs of others ahead of their own needs.

2. Japanese website documenting women in disaster areas in Tohoku. <http://risetogether.jp.org:80/?p=1867-->.

The story highlights the lack of security for women in evacuation sites. It covers sexual harassment and domestic violence in shelters. The story exposes the crucial role played by women's groups to support female survivors of the disaster such as offering training and emotional care. The article points to examples of the lack of proper means of livelihood for women living in devastated areas as the work opportunities created to provide survivors with an income were in fact jobs physically suitable for men, such as clearing debris.

While the story focuses centrally on women and highlights gender inequalities in the distribution of resources, as well as inequities arising from the government's response to creating work that, in fact, benefitted men over women, some shortcomings in the journalism approach are evident.

Had the reporter consulted more than one source, the story would have been richer and more informative. The illustrations of domestic violence cases are told in the sole interviewee's voice. No other voices are heard, nor are the many surveys carried out initially at evacuation sites cited. The reporter could have generated a multi-dimensional story had he sought interviews from women who were contributing to the recovery, for instance those providing care, those who had been elected into leadership positions, or the activists who were lobbying to gain access to official recovery platforms.



Special focus: A journalist's personal experience in reporting disaster through a gender lens

Growing evidence of devastation during a disaster indicates the poor are affected disproportionately with women and children representing the most vulnerable sectors.³ So how can journalists approach disaster reporting using a gender lens? Below is a journalist's experience covering two landmark disasters.

Covering the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004) in Sri Lanka and the earthquake and tsunami (2011) in Japan.

Suvendrini Kakuchi

The tsunami devastated one-third of Sri Lanka's coasts wiping out lives and livelihoods of the low-income fishing communities that had lived on the beaches for generations. A month post disaster, I set out to write reports focused on the impact on women who were forced on to the sidelines during the massive media coverage of the major disaster at that time.

3. Social Scientists Association of Sri Lanka, 2009.

My stories soon captured a compelling stream of voices that portrayed the uphill struggle women faced in the recovery process. One major theme was on gaining property rights after the death of their husbands as land and houses are usually registered in the names of the male household head. The process of transferring ownership involved the daunting task of negotiation for the women who had few skills or experience in navigating the bureaucracy. Other stories highlighted gender discrimination in financial compensation; payouts given to women were lower than those given to men. It was also clear that social handicaps placed on females impeded their ability to survive the floods; girls and women died because they had not learnt to swim or climb trees, skills that would have helped them escape the swirling waves. In my stories I prioritized the growing calls for changes, focusing on movements and opinions that represented serious social change in Sri Lanka.

My stories on the Tohoku disaster in Japan uncovered similar issues and new developments to bring social equality into disaster risk reduction and recovery efforts. In Japan the experience of gaining access to female voices for my stories was not easy at the beginning. The March 2011 disaster was massive and wiped out thousands of communities causing enormous chaos. The main challenge for women however was local tradition. Tohoku comprises close-knit farming and fishing communities with a strong patriarchal cultural identity. Women's experiences in the disaster were rarely recorded; women were presented as a vulnerable and stoic group. The spokespersons in evacuation centres were male, as were the local village and town officials. Women, even when asked to provide an opinion, shunned the media spotlight, insisting they had nothing important to publicize. The strategy to find younger women for interviews bore fruit; they were more willing to break social restrictions and told insightful accounts of women's agency during the disaster, as rescuers of the elderly and children, as caregivers during the long and stressful evacuation, and as psychosocial support providers.

Lesson

Approaching the story with an awareness of the different impacts of disasters on women and men helps construct a more interesting and representative story that could influence policy actions.



Guidelines: Reporting on disasters

1. It is important to understand the gender dimensions of disaster situations.
 - Gender inequalities in property rights lead to difficulties for women to claim homes or land following loss of life of male heads-of-household.
 - Patriarchal traditions result in women minimizing or playing down their contributions. The traditions constrict their freedom to speak openly.
 - Material support to survivors is often not equitably distributed: patterns of gender discrimination persist.
2. Look for the female angle, such as the reasons for female fatalities, the role of women in disaster mitigation given their close links to the local community, or the loss of livelihoods.
3. Evidence shows that women find a voice in disaster situations, rising to the challenge to provide leadership or to be at the centre of activism. The stories can be compelling and interesting for readers, as well as professionally rewarding for journalists.
4. Build trust to find the women's voices. Speak to female volunteers at evacuation camps for instance, to break the ice with survivors and locate women to interview.
5. Network with women activists who are supporting the local women and communities.
6. The question of livelihoods is a crucial benchmark for progress in national recovery. Explore this angle in order to bring visibility to it, paying close attention to the different implications for women and men.



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3. Economic news: Accounting for women

The Global Media Monitoring Project 2010 revealed that women's presence in stories on the economy stagnated at 20 per cent worldwide. Across Asia, the corresponding figure was 15 per cent, and in India women appeared in an abysmally low 10 per cent of such stories.

The persistent near invisibility of women in media coverage of economic news mirrors the lack of recognition and underestimation of their contribution to the economy in conventional economics and by many mainstream economists.



Sample story analysis

A news agency report¹ on the inaugural address by the economist prime minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, at the 44th Indian Labour Conference in February 2012 illustrates the gender blindness that still characterises much economic thinking and coverage. The only reference to women in the reported speech reflects a patriarchal, patronising and ill-informed approach to the complex question of women's participation in the labour force.

“Before I end I would like to mention two issues that I consider important. One of the most under-utilised resources in our country is our women. Female labour force participation rates are extremely low in our country and have remained more or less constant over the past decades. In order to bring more women into the work force, it is necessary to understand the constraints that they face in balancing their family and work responsibilities. Although the provision of crèches is now built into our regulations, including those for MNREGA,² this is clearly not enough. We would also need to make provision for part-time work which would have the same characteristics as in full-time employment. If this requires legislative changes, we should be prepared to do so and begin working on a blueprint for making this a reality.”

— Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India (and noted economist), speaking at the 44th session of the Indian Labour Conference, New Delhi, 14 February 2012

By the next day the press had latched onto the prime minister's observations on women workers and featured several stories variously headlined, “PM wants more women to join workforce”³, “PM for equal benefits for part-time women workers”⁴ and even “Reduce her burden”⁵.

1. PTI, “Committed to strengthening labour laws: Manmohan”, The Hindu, February 14, 2012. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article2892291.ece>
2. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, aiming to enhance the livelihood security of people in rural areas of India by guaranteeing 100 days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
3. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article2893934.ece>.
4. <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/industry-and-economy/economy/>
5. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/article2893389.ece>.

However, none of the follow-up stories critically examined the assumptions implicit in the prime minister's remarks. Nor, apparently, did reporters or editors think of consulting women workers, activists involved in organising them, scholars with expertise in gender and labour issues, and/or feminist economists for their views on the subject. As a result, even though the stories were ostensibly about women, they did not offer an informed gender perspective on women and work.

A column by economists CP Chandrasekhar and Jayati Ghosh – “Women's work: Has anything changed?”⁶ – published in a financial daily just six months earlier could have alerted journalists covering the prime minister's speech to the need to dig a little deeper into the issue.

For example, in their view, “Work participation rates as described by official surveys are not really good indicators of the productive contributions of women.” This is because, as Ghosh has pointed out in several articles⁷, papers⁸ and books⁹, including a 2007 piece headlined “Work without pay”, “*Most women work, regardless of whether or not their work is recognised. Indeed, in countries such as India, where the recorded work participation rates are relatively low by Asian standards, it is hardly ever the case that women are not working – rather, it is simply that most of what they do is not recorded as economic activity or as otherwise socially necessary and certainly is rarely rewarded in monetary terms.*”¹⁰

What's more, according to many social scientists, low work participation rates among women serve as proxy indicators of their low social status and lack of empowerment: women's productive contribution is typically less recognised in societies where they are routinely undervalued.

So, far from being “one of the most under-utilised resources,” as Singh would have it, women are among the most under-acknowledged, under-rated and under-compensated workers in society. And this is the case in most parts of the world.

Also, it will probably take more than legally protected, secure part-time work to bring more women into the “work force”. And, while it is all very well to appreciate women's enduring struggle to balance family and work responsibilities, it is important for decision-makers to challenge publicly the prevailing gender-based division of labour, in homes as much as elsewhere.

Clearly, then, the question of women's work calls for rather more than a passing reference in a high level, official speech about labour policies. Even though journalists covering the speech could not alter its content, they could certainly have sought inputs from experts to produce better informed and more informative reports.

The Indian prime minister's specific and limited reference to women workers may

“In the Indian Himalayas, a pair of bullocks works 1064 hours, a man 1212 hours, and a woman 3485 hours in a year on a one-hectare farm.”

Vandana Shiva, “Most farmers in India are women”, United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation, 1991

“Women's contribution to the economy is systematically underestimated;

“There is an informal and hidden economy made up mostly of women;

“There is an unpaid care economy in which women do most of the work...”

— Deborah Walter and Colleen Lowe Morna, eds., *Business Unusual: Gender and the Economy* (Gender Links, 2008).

6. <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/c-p-chandrasekhar/article2337066.ece?homepage=true>.

7. Jayati Ghosh, “Uncovering Women's Work”, Infochange Agenda, September, 2007

8. Jayati Ghosh, “Informalisation and Women's Workforce Participation: A Consideration of Recent Trends in Asia,” in the report Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), 2005.

9. Jayati Ghosh, *Never Done and Poorly Paid: Women's Work in Globalising India* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2009).

10. <http://www.hindu.com/fline/fl2409/stories/20070518001809400.htm>.

“In Liberia, like most other countries, women are an essential backbone to the economy as a whole.”

— Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia (and former banker), in *Foreword to Business Unusual: Gender and the Economy* edited by Deborah Walter and Colleen Lowe Morna, (Gender Links, 2008).

imply that the other points he made in the speech have nothing to do with women. But of course they do. Clues present in the speech can potentially lead to interesting stories that reveal a clearer picture of the work women do (when, where and how), what they don't or can't do, why, and what can be done to lift the barriers that hinder them.

Take, for example, Singh's comments on the need to ensure the welfare of workers in the unorganised sector. According to official estimates, over 90 per cent of employment in India is in the unorganised sector, still characterised by little or no labour protection and social security, although a long-delayed law meant to remedy the situation came into force in 2009. An estimated 90 per cent of women workers in both rural and urban areas belong to this sector: self-employed, engaged in home-based work or casual labour in small enterprises, toiling as agricultural, construction or domestic workers, etc. A similar situation obtains in many parts of the world. So anything to do with unorganised labour is closely connected to women's work.

How can that fact be turned into appealing stories? A 1989 survey identified over 150 types of home-based work done by women in just one Indian city, ranging from stringing flower garlands, supplying *chapattis*¹¹ to caterers, de-seeding tamarind and packing sweets to making *agarbathis*¹², weaving plastic seats for office chairs, and folding paper for the book printing industry. Almost a decade later, a study conducted in some of Delhi's working class areas identified around 48 types of piece-rate work.¹³

A variety of fascinating stories could emerge from such compilations, combining human interest and economics: not only showcasing individual (or groups of) women workers, but also throwing light on their contributions to the economy, and highlighting what needs to be done to promote their welfare.

Indian journalist Ajitha Menon's article, “A train to nowhere”, is a good example of how the issue of women's work in the unorganised sector can be covered in an interesting and insightful manner (page 24). It not only tells a vivid and compelling story about the daily lives and trials of women who commute from distant suburbs and villages to sell a variety of wares to urban consumers, but also weaves in details about their contribution to family finances, and their problems with credit and debt, corruption and unsupportive trade associations.

At a macro level, Singh's comments on the links between rapid economic growth and job opportunities call for interrogation, especially since they are belied by official statistics. According to the International Labour Organisation report, *Global Employment Patterns 2012*, the robust growth witnessed in South Asia in recent times, driven largely by India, has not resulted in an expansion in employment. Significantly, female labour force participation in the region has actually declined in recent years.¹⁴

11. Whole wheat, unleavened bread

12. Incense sticks.

13. Surveys conducted by the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) in Pune and New Delhi, cited in several articles, including by Pamela Philipose, Women's Feature Service, June, 2011.

14. Ashoak Upadhyay, “Jobless growth continues in India,” in Businessline, 21 February, 2012.

As Chandrasekhar and Ghosh point out, the “pressing question [is] why women’s work participation rates have been so low ... and have remained low despite rapid economic growth and many other changes in society.” The search for answers to that conundrum would surely throw up some original economic stories, enriched by a gender perspective.

Clearly, then, even a gender-blind speech can stimulate gender-ethical journalism. So what does a media professional need to practice such journalism? Nothing very extraordinary:

- A willingness to look beneath the surface and dig up remarkable and significant stories;
- An understanding that gender impacts a wide range of events and issues, policies and practices;
- A determination to use a gender lens (among others) to examine every subject he or she covers.

The bonus is that stories resulting from such awareness and action are likely to attract favourable public and professional attention as exceptional and estimable.



Special focus: Women’s work in the unorganized sector.

The story below demonstrates how women’s work can be covered in an interesting and insightful manner.

Title:	A train to nowhere
Reporter:	Ajitha Menon
Where published:	The Hindu, India. http://www.thehindu.com/news/states/other-states/article3323566.ece
Date	April 17, 2012.

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Kolkata (Women’s Feature Service) – It’s still dark when Akhtari Begum, 45, leaves her shanty in rural Kalipara Samsan area of Budge Budge in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. She wakes up at 3 am every day, freshens up and then walks to the auto stand 15 minutes away carrying a heavy load of 30-40 coconuts. After an auto ride of another 15-20 minutes she reaches Budge Budge Station, from where she catches the first local train to Sealdah, Kolkata, at 4.45 am.

“There are 15 women coconut sellers who travel to Sealdah every morning on this train. We return together on the 10.20 am local train after selling the coconuts at the Kole market in Sealdah. We have to travel daily because Budge Budge has a very small market and we have no buyers for the coconuts here,” says Akhtari.

Most women vendors come into Kolkata on the south-eastern local trains and while there is no formal estimate of their numbers, roughly for every 20 male vendors there

would be 2-3 female vendors making their way into the city. Of course, all of them live below the poverty line.

Migration has been a part of Akhtari's life. Born in Muzzafarpur, Bihar, she migrated permanently to West Bengal after marriage to Alam, who works in a jute mill. She then became a daily migrant to Kolkata when she started selling coconuts to augment the family income. "I have been travelling every day for the last 15 years. I have four children and extra money was needed to provide for them," she says.

While two of her older daughters are married now, the youngest is studying in Class VI. Her 18-year-old son is a school dropout and a vagabond. Giving a glimpse into her daily routine, Akhtari says, "All the coconut sellers buy 'roti-sabzi' from a stall near the market and eat before returning. Once back home, I do the household work and cook for the family. I try to wind up work and go to sleep by 8 pm every day so that I can wake up on time."

Life is not easy for the women vendors like Akhtari, who travel from the suburbs and districts to state capital Kolkata daily to sell their wares, which vary from coconuts to vegetables, to fruits, flowers, fish and rice. "We carry heavy loads but are not given space in the vendors' compartments. The male vendors muscle their way in and occupy all the space. We are forced to travel in the ladies' compartment," says Sahida Bibi, 50, another coconut seller in the group, who works to supplement the earnings of her son, who works as a contractual labour. "My husband is blind and unable to work. I contribute the major share to the family income, which averages around Rs 5,000 (US\$1=Rs 51) per month. Of this, around Rs 3,000 goes in the treatment of my husband," she adds.

Harassment and abuse are major problems facing the women vendors, who are regular commuters. "Travelling in the ladies compartment in the early hours is a nightmare. Drunks sleep on the seat and refuse to budge. They vomit and even defecate in the compartment. They pass lewd remarks and often etch obscene graffiti on the walls. The RPF personnel turn a deaf ear to our pleas for help or demand money to act," says Saira Bibi, 40, a flower vendor, who travels daily by Midnapore local to Howrah station.

Most of the produce these women sell is acquired through moneylenders who advance them cash and then charge a heavy interest on the returns. "I earn about Rs 1,400 per week but my loan from the moneylender is Rs 2,300. I keep Rs 700 and give Rs 700 to the money lender every week while the Rs 2300 loan remains intact. It will remain till I die," bemoans Mahiruh Bibi, 49, who is a vegetable vendor hailing from Pokepali area in North 24 Parganas. This mother of seven has a husband who is paralysed. One son is a jute mill worker while another works as a daily labourer.

Many of them have been physically assaulted several times. “We are very poor. Earlier, at times we travelled without ticket and the railway staff and police used to beat us and throw us out of the trains. But now we have managed to acquire the ‘Izzat’ cards issued for BPL passengers for Rs 25 per month. At least, the harassment from railway staff has reduced,” says Usha Pramanik, 42, a fish vendor, hailing from Gordor village in Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas. She brings seasonal fish like ‘boal’, hilsa, ‘puti’ and ‘bhetki’ to the market near Sealdah station every day. Her income is also seasonal, dwindling to a pittance at the end of winter when the water bodies in rural areas dry up.

According to railway officials, women comprise 30 per cent of the total ‘Izzat’ card holders under the Eastern Railway. But the women cannot forget the trauma they had to go through in order to get one. Elaborates Kalpana Mandal, 39, of Mograhat in Diamond Harbour, who sells vegetables in Kole market in Sealdah along with her husband, “Merely showing our BPL cards was not enough. First, there was the harassment to just get the railway forms. We had to run around for almost a month before we got our hands on the forms. Then they had to be signed by the local councillor for which we had to beg and plead and pay touts. That took about three months, a lot of sweat and tears, for the process to be completed.”

Then there is also political harassment under a system called ‘tola neva’, or fixing vending spots in the markets near the station. Local goons, owing allegiance to different political parties, give out spots to the vendors in the train itself after collecting money as ‘hafta’ (weekly protection money). “It’s ‘either pay the demanded rate or lose your spot’. Women vendors are bullied more as they are unable to fight back. If they refuse to pay the rate, the space is allotted to another and they are threatened with physical harm. The market traders’ associations are supposed to issue passes to the vendors but it’s never done and that is why we have no fixed place and have to pay the weekly charge to the goons,” rues Saira Bibi.

Despite the severe odds, the women vendors have taken the necessity of temporary migration from rural to urban areas in their stride. Despite the chains of poverty, they survive, facing harassment in all forms through sheer grit and determination.

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Guidelines: Reporting stories on the economy

1. Keep in mind that the world, and the economy (global, regional, national, state/provincial, local), are made up of persons with different gender identities – women, men, girls, boys, transgender or intersex individuals – which may influence their economic status and the impact of economic realities on them.
2. Remember that society is also made up of people distinguished by class, caste, creed, race, ethnic identity, sexual identity, age, marital status, education, health, occupation, location and many other such factors which often determine their economic status, roles and experiences.
3. Be aware that economic events, policies, programmes, developments, trends, dilemmas, opportunities, challenges, successes and failures affect all human beings, some differently from others. And that gender is one of several variables that determine the difference.
4. For example, although national budgets may appear to be gender-neutral policy instruments, government expenditures and revenue collection do impact women and men differently. Most policies and programmes outlined and provided for in official budgets – at the national, state/provincial and local levels – impact women in particular ways. If you are analysing an official budget, familiarise yourself with the concept and practice of gender-responsive budgeting (<http://www.gender-budgets.org/>). Try to figure out if the financial provisions and commitments in the budget are likely to promote or impede gender equality and equity, whether the proposed distribution, use and generation of public resources are consistent with the human rights of women.
5. While covering the economy and business, always include women as sources of information and/or opinion. Not only is it important to ensure that women's voices are heard on a wide range of topics relating to macroeconomic policy, budgets, trade, financial credit, work and business, but women can be invaluable sources and resources enabling a holistic understanding of these subject areas. Stories incorporating different experiences and perspectives are invariably more interesting, useful and likely to stand out.
6. Note that neither women nor men constitute homogenous groups. Women from different economic classes, races/castes/ethnicities, religions, age groups, occupations, locations (rural/urban, big city/small town, “developed”/“under-developed” areas), educational levels, health status [including ability/disability], etc., are likely to have different experiences and perspectives. Be as inclusive as possible in your selection of sources – all the more so in stories about the economy and business.
7. Gender is not only about women (and girls) – that it is also about men (and boys), as well as persons belonging to sexual minorities.

8. There is a gender dimension to economic developments, including financial distress. For example, official statistics reveal that more men than women commit suicide in India. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, most male suicides can be traced to “social and economic causes” (bankruptcy and sudden change in economic status, professional/career problems, property disputes, unemployment, poverty, etc.). If economic causes predominate among reasons for male suicides it could be due to the social pressure on men to be successful breadwinners – which is, in turn, related to the gender-differentiated roles women and men are expected to perform in patriarchal societies.
9. There is no dearth of sources and resources that can be tapped to figure out whether or not an event or process has any special implications for women, including different categories of women, as well as other vulnerable sections of society whose voices are not commonly heard in the media. Make an effort to seek them out.
10. The media are well placed to remind the government, official agencies, financial institutions and society as a whole about the special economic needs, concerns and problems of various categories of people, including women. Use your position as a journalist to ensure that this happens.



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4. Health: Sexual and reproductive health


Health as a concept should be understood comprehensively as the “right to health”. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

In specialized journalism, reports are often recounted using technical terms that make it difficult for a lay audience to clearly grasp the phenomenon under discussion or that even cause fear or alarm. It is crucial for health-related media coverage to simplify the terminology without neglecting to highlight pertinent topics as well as integrate a gender perspective.

The gender perspective is important. The conventional reporting approach imagines a male audience even when the stories have female subjects or a predominantly feminine readership and listenership. In this sense, the journalist’s objective may not be attained; if the story fails to transmit clear and precise information and if women do not identify with the story and its importance, it is unlikely to influence their lives or promote their right to health.

Sample story analysis

Consider the following story.



Title:	“Santorum believes that contraception is a danger to women and society.”
Reporter:	Agencia EFE.
Where published:	http://www.paraguay.com/internacionales/ee-uu-santorum-cree-que-anticonceptivos-son-un-peligro-79954 , Paraguay.
Date	15 February 2012.

Washington, February 15 (EFE). Republican presidential contender Rick Santorum believes that the use of contraceptives is a danger for women and society and that sex out of wedlock is “immoral”. Today these statements started a commotion on Internet.

Santorum, who currently is in a technical tie with former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney in the polls, has said that sex should be something “special” and that procreation is, in his opinion, “...is the perfect way that a sexual union should happen”.

Santorum commented on sex out of wedlock. “It’s not okay. It’s a license to do things in a sexual realm that is counter to how things are supposed to be. [Sex] is supposed to be within marriage. It’s supposed to be for purposes that are yes, conjugal... but also procreative,” said Santorum in an interview in 2011 that has currently resurfaced in the blogosphere.

Santorum's interview with the "CaffeinatedThoughts.com" website has aroused the condemnation of commentators such as Matt Lewis of The Daily Caller, who described Santorum's comments as "the surprise of October"; in his opinion, these comments have not been accidental.

In turn, columnist Michael Scherer from Time magazine pointed out that only 8% of voters believe that the use of contraception is "immoral", questioning what Santorum seeks to gain with his statements.

[...]

This former senator from the state of Pennsylvania has promised that if he wins the presidency on November 6th, he will ban gay marriage and seek to revert the Supreme Court decision of 1973 that legalized abortion in the United States.

Analysis

This news story is a wire from an international agency but has been handled and reproduced without consideration for the effect that the statements made by the subject of the article (Santorum) could have on women's lives particularly in the country in which it is published. The story does not offer information regarding existing public policy on contraception in the United States, nor does it inform readers about men's responsibility in pregnancy prevention, nor does it even offer the perspective of female politicians regarding a topic that is critical for women, who are half of the American population.

In order to address this story comprehensively, the agency could have included the number of teenage pregnancies or maternal deaths, the current situation of voluntary interruption of pregnancies, policy differences from state to state, and access, among other issues.

The article fails to include the voices of other religions and their views on sexual and reproductive life, limiting its perspective to a smaller percentage of the population in a country where Catholics do not even constitute the majority. The news agency could have addressed the effects of not using contraception and its impact upon vulnerable women, using statistics from neighbouring countries, such as Mexico, where interruption of pregnancy is only legal in the Federal District.

Economic data about the cost of contraception, the cost of subsidies to large families living in poverty and government policy in this field would further put this debate in perspective, as well as including other positions.

Further, since this article is published on an Internet news website in Paraguay, it would have been important to contextualize the story by evoking the local situation and providing useful information to understand, for instance, how the debate may impact countries in which access to contraception is still under discussion. This

story is clearly a missed opportunity; the multiple openings to introduce a gender perspective have been wasted.

The following questions may be asked to analyze the story further.

1. What or who is this news story about?
2. Who is it speaking to?
3. Is it using inclusive language?
4. Given the topic focus, how many women are cited or referenced as experts?
5. Are there any references to gender differentiated statistics?
6. What are the different impacts of this story on women and men?



Special focus: Considerations for inclusive and diverse journalism

- Be careful using terminology in order not to pass judgment or use definitions with negative connotations. An example is to refrain from the use of the word “abortion” in countries where abortion is illegal and to use the concept “voluntary interruption of pregnancy” instead.
- Discussions about pregnancy prevention, sexual health or sexually transmitted diseases should not be the sole responsibility of women. Both sexes are responsible and, therefore, stories should be accompanied by an indication of the tools that are available for everyone. The vulnerability of women and girls to poor sexual and reproductive health continues at particularly high rates in economically impoverished countries.
- When women fall ill, the impact on single-parent homes is greater since they tend to be the only support for the family. In addition, many times women are in precarious employment situations, leading them to depend on public healthcare where available or limiting their ability to access treatment. This harms their personal and family economic situation. As a result, in some cases, they not only suffer poor health, but it also affects their means of subsistence.
- One issue that infiltrates the reproduction of stereotypes is women’s traditional care role. Fulfilling this responsibility has tended to relegate women’s health to the least concern for the family. Moreover, the gender division of labour results in the expectation that women will be responsible for the health well-being of family members, accompanying them to medical care centres when the need arises or taking care of the infirm. This makes the health of family members a factor that affects women’s social and economic lives, independently of whether or not those family members live in the same household.
- Difficulties persist in securing reliable official statistics on women’s health. Community-based or non-profit organizations that work on gender issues can be a reliable source of data. These figures help to create awareness about how women and men are affected differently and to inform the public about the causes of contagion as well as the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Hegemonic medical discourse lacks a social conception of diseases and often doctors do not pay sufficient attention to the context in which women live or to their cultural traditions.

- In countries where voluntary interruption of pregnancy is illegal, statistics show that women who die after terminating pregnancy are those from the vulnerable sectors of society. Women who can afford to pay for a safe, albeit illegal, termination of pregnancy are less likely to put their lives at risk.
- Access to information about women's rights in regard to sexual and reproductive health is often non-existent, even when public programs exist that afford free contraception. This situation restricts women's ability to find and choose appropriate contraception.
- Where possible, provide information about health centres in the region and the type of access afforded to women and men.



Guidelines: Reporting sexual and reproductive health, including voluntary interruption of pregnancy

1. Contextualize the story to facilitate understanding. On many occasions, regions or countries that are the source of a news story have special characteristics such as distinct cultural norms specific to the locality that are not replicated elsewhere.
2. Provide sex-disaggregated official statistics or data from non-governmental organisations. Seek qualitative and quantitative data, further disaggregated by economic status and social class.
3. In cases where access to statistics about voluntary interruption of pregnancy is limited, look for data about other vital statistics, for instance, related hospitalization and maternal deaths.
4. Instead of providing bare statistics, also tell stories that will raise awareness about the topic and its effects on women's lives. Where an individual cannot be named, use a pseudonym or initials.
5. When describing the woman or girl, be careful in the characterization: avoid stereotyping or victimizing her. Give due weight to institutional responsibility and the lack of much needed public policy.
6. Network with female professionals specializing in women's health at hospitals or clinics who can be an important source of information and who may be more sensitive to women's realities.
7. Seek out and network with women's and community organizations that work on issues of women's access to sexual and reproductive rights in the locality and the region.
8. Generate good sources of information by working with researchers and academicians to publish research that is useful as a reference for your articles.
9. Use a diversity of voices from different faith traditions and schools of medical practice in order to demonstrate the diversity of positions on particularly contentious topics.
10. Create a folder of files and alerts with key words regarding the topics usually addressed, in order to have studies or publications readily available for inclusion in an article.
11. Never present a woman based on her family or civil status since this delegitimizes her role as a citizen and as an independent participant of her society beyond her family roles.
12. Incorporate a male view of paternity and responsibility for sexual and reproductive health as a construction of both sexes and not only of the pregnant woman or the woman who has contracted a sexually transmitted disease.
13. Study legal frameworks at an international, regional and national level, and their application in different cases.

14. Interview and include the view of women who are experts on the topic.
15. Be mindful of the images that will accompany the article. In the case of stories on interruption of pregnancy, do not use images of ultrasounds or of women in advanced stages of pregnancy because it creates confusion. Use images that evoke the impact upon women's lives or a problematic situation. Interrupting a pregnancy is a painful decision with immediate and long-term consequences. Show the pain of the situation without being morbid.
16. Provide details about places or hotlines where the public can receive information about the topics addressed.



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5. Women's human rights: Human trafficking

It is generally and broadly accepted that human rights are inherent to each individual and, moreover, are precisely derived from our condition as human beings.

It seems absurd therefore to have to differentiate “women's human rights” but the reality is that in no society do women have the same opportunities as men. Inequalities in gender power relations lead to the vulnerability and violation of the rights of girls and women.

This section takes a women's human rights perspective to address issues on reporting about human trafficking.



Key concepts

Human trafficking is a violation of human rights. Trafficking of women for the purpose of sexual exploitation, forced labour and forced prostitution has reached global proportions; it is an increasingly refined way of enslaving and exploiting women by those with power over them. Next to drugs and arms trafficking, it is one of the most lucrative illicit businesses in the world today due to the profits reaped from exploiting women's bodies repeatedly, even to the point of death.

Human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation threatens the right to life, to physical and psychological integrity, to safety, to freedom and to human dignity. It also places another series of human rights at risk, such as the right to not be sold into marriage, nor subjected to slavery, torture, or inhuman, cruel or degrading treatment; the right to a family and intimacy; the right to health and to safe housing; and the right not be discriminated against on account of being female¹.

It is essential to guarantee comprehensive protection for those who have been victimized and to restore their rights. In this regard and within a gender-ethical journalism framework, journalistic responsibility lies in effective communication of relevant news stories. Considerations include the reporting angle, sensitivity to language that re-victimizes women, and the extent to which the crime is exposed or, alternatively, camouflaged.

1. Asociación para la Prevención, Reinserción y Atención del a Mujer Prostituida (APRAMP). Human Rights and Human Trafficking. <http://www.apramp.org/>.



Sample story analysis

Consider the following story.

Title:	"Person accused of white slavery in Girona states that he treated the women 'very humanely'; Owner of the 'Eden' and 'Eclipse' brothels accused of leading a prostitution network, denies charges"
Reporter:	Agencia EFE.
Where published:	La Vanguardia (online), Spain.
Date	20 February 2012.

Girona. (EFE).- José Moreno, owner of the "Eden" and "Eclipse" brothels, accused of leading a network that brings girls from Brazil to exercise prostitution in his businesses, has denied the accusations filed against him in court and has affirmed that he always treated them "very humanely." In addition to José Moreno, who also owns one of the largest brothels in Europe, "The Paradise", several of his workers are also on trial in the Girona courts: Ceferino V., the chauffeur and messenger; Abraham S., Julià Maria F. and José Manuel C. who managed the clubs; and Thirce Adriana R., who worked for Moreno, and her husband Eduardo O.

With the exception of Ceferino V., the public prosecutor is asking for 12 years in prison and a fine of 6,000 Euros: 8 years for a continued crime against the rights of foreign citizens and 4 years and the fine for the continued crime of prostitution. In the case of Ceferino V., the prosecutor's request is a year and six months in prison for the crime of illegal possession of firearms.

The prosecutor, describing the conditions in which Moreno and his employees made the girls work as "unfair", recounts how they decided to bring over girls from Brazil due to the scarcity of workers in his businesses. They would pay for their airfare and, once here, they would demand payment for a much higher amount than the cost of the trip; each day, they were forced to pay 65 Euros for the first service of the day to keep their "spot" at the brothel; the payment for the second service of the day went towards their debt and they only started keeping a part of the profit starting with the third service of the day or their "pass".

José Moreno states that he always treated the girls "very humanely" and has sought to respect regulations; although he charged between 60 and 70 Euros for the girls' spot at the brothel, he ensures that he never forced them to practice prostitution nor charged them part of the money they earn for these services

[...]

Analysis

First, it is necessary to clarify the use of terms, such as “white slavery” to refer to trafficking. This term was used at the end of the 19th century when European women, exclusively white women, were taken to different parts of Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa with the aim of sexual exploitation. The concept was replaced in 1921 with the “traffic of women and children” to ensure that trafficking in all countries, of races other than “white”, and of male children was recognized.² It is therefore incorrect to use “white slavery” in today’s context where trafficking has no boundaries: women, boys and girls of all ethnic groups and classes fall prey to trafficking. Inappropriate use of the term here betrays a lack of knowledge on the subject.

In addition, the author repeats three times the person’s claim to have treated the women “very humanely”. The choice repeatedly to underscore this claim in effect seems to sanitize, neutralize or white-wash a serious crime.

Referring to adult women as “girls” throughout the article is not only patronizing but it also re-victimizes them by emphasizing their positions as persons in situations of prostitution. This is a criminal trial and the testimony clearly demonstrates oppression has occurred. Use of the term “girls” minimizes the gravity of sex trafficking and works to sow doubt on whether a crime has in fact been committed.

The text paints the women’s involvement in prostitution as a choice, yet, when the women are transported across borders, their documents withheld, and they incur debt to pay for airfare and other expenses, they are no longer acting of their own free will.

2. “International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, League of Nations”, Treaty Series, Vol. IX, 1921, 415.



Guidelines: Women's human rights – reporting on human trafficking

1. In most cases, their conditions of social vulnerability, submission and cultural/social mandates lead women to fall prey to trafficking networks; the networks and the criminals who run them take full advantage of these conditions. The term “consent” cannot be used since there are no true conditions of freedom or reciprocity. Journalists should avoid making judgments in this regard and avoid speculating about the conditions and/or consent regarding the women’s entry into and permanence in these networks.
2. When referring to a woman or a girl who has been drawn into a prostitution or trafficking network, it is important to remember and shed light on the fact that she is the vulnerable link in a chain maintained by complicity, silence and pacts between individuals, governments and security forces.
3. Since the women originally lived in situations of vulnerability, when rescued, they should be given possibilities for a new start, for finding employment and a place in society, with the necessary medical treatment and psychological support. An ethical media approach would be to give visibility to civil society organisations or other institutions that help to support survivors of trafficking, as well as institutions and ways through which the women can file complaints. Confirmation of helpful information and the legitimacy of places said to provide support is necessary before publication.
4. The survivor’s right to security and privacy is non-negotiable and unquestionable. Journalist should always avoid using real names, personal information and/or images that could lead to identification. It is important to remain mindful when selecting general images for these stories so that they do not further stigmatize women or normalize forced prostitution.
5. It may seem natural to incorporate lurid details of the investigations on sex trafficking of women into an article. Rather than help readers understand the crime, such information tends to rebound upon the survivors, generating greater victimization and stigma when the women seek to reinsert themselves to society, in addition to the psychological repercussions.
6. It is worth rethinking the inherent relationship between prostitution trafficking networks and the demands of men in different parts of the world. As is often said, without clients, there would be no trafficking. A complete analysis of the problem should necessarily include the participation of those who are paying for sex in this global crime. Without demand, which is habitually naturalized in all societies as part of the macho, patriarchal substratum, there would be no pimps and no trafficking.

7. Many times the media takes part in normalizing or naturalizing this reality by presenting women as sex objects or commodities and/or by failing to introduce concepts that question this reality. The Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women exhorts media to abstain from presenting women as inferior beings and from exploiting them as sex objects and goods, in order to facilitate their insertion in processes of development and progress³.
8. It is necessary for *all* communicators, female and male, to become familiar with global and regional statistics. Currently, the trafficking business mobilizes 12 million US dollars a year worldwide. According to the International Labour Organization (2005 statistics), over 12.3 million people undergo labour conditions similar to slavery. 4 million people – girls, boys and women – fall prey to traffickers each year. Between 10% to 30% of females trafficked are minors.
9. It is important to guard against allowing this issue to fall off the media agenda. The topic is habitually addressed when extraordinary measures are carried out by security forces, but the daily reality is to a significant extent hidden from the public eye, which reinforces these networks in their clandestine situations and silence. Options include developing regular reports, providing correct coverage of legal processes, as well as campaigns or special initiatives on this issue. Private networks working in relative obscurity all over the world need greater visibility.

3. United Nations, Section J "Women and the media" in the Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 1995.



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6. Peace and security

Women remain relatively invisible in coverage of traditional security issues, despite their active participation on all sides of a conflict. Women are also, if not combatants themselves, the wives, partners or daughters of combatants. Further, they are caught in the crossfire of war and armed conflicts through sexual exploitation including the use of rape as a “weapon of war”.



Sample story analysis

Consider the following story.

Title:	“Konou to end war”
Reporter:	Gorethy Kenneth.
Where published:	Post Courier, Papua New Guinea. http://www.postcourier.com.pg/20111104/ispost01.htm .
Date	4 November 2011.

A BIG official signing of the ceasefire agreement in Bougainville’s estranged Konou area has been planned before Christmas this year.

And the hunger for peace in Konou is now much stronger than the desire for vengeance and violence, according to Autonomous Bougainville Government vice-president Patrick Nisira, who is also the Chairman of the Konou Peace Task Force Committee. Further, there was a big reconciliation meeting at Mogorai, Me’ekamui hardliner Damien Koike’s village in Buin. After a month of constant meetings with chiefs and the warring factions in the Konou area for a possible ceasefire arrangement, three truck loads of WILMO faction from Wisai arrived at Koike’s village for the occasion.

“On this note, let me take this opportunity to thank the conflicting parties in Konou for owning up to negotiate for peace in their area. It has been a long road coming to finally settle down to reconcile with each other. Although, peace in Konou means a lot for the families who have suffered since the conflict began, it further strengthens it,” he said.

“...I can humbly say that the success in the progress of peace in Konou today was instigated by the movement of the Peace Team into Konou areas in late August, 2011, when the situation was still tense. This was the crucial breakthrough that has created venues to negotiate peace between the conflicting factions in Konou. I must also commend the Bougainville Executive Council, chaired by President John Momis for making this important decision in the push for peace in Konou.

“The Konou issue is a complicated issue and those who are involved in the succeeding stages of the reconciliation process must take cautious measures while addressing the issue. For the last six to eight years of the conflict in Konou, there have been killings which have caused insecurity to women and children and displaced a handful of families

from their homes. We heard of killings after killings in south Bougainville/Konnou. Today, you hear people talking about peace, reconciliation and not war.

“The recent reconciliations at Mogoroi in Buin, Hongarai at Siwai, Mongai and Wisai in Buin are all interconnected issues with the Konnou conflict. Although, these reconciliations were dealt with separately, the issues in these areas are very much part of the conflict in Konnou.

“The Konnou issue, which is now in its reconciliation process, has been a hurdle for quite some time for the ABG to deliver the basic Government services to the Konnou people.

“In Koike’s short speech during the ceremony, he said ‘fate has finally arrived for us to put away guns.’”

Analysis

This news item perpetuates the myth that peace-building is the domain of male politicians and armed combatants only. The story appeared as a national report in Papua New Guinea media in late 2011 and, while it was positioned within provincial news pages, it has significant implications for regional and national peace and security as well as provincial government structures within Papua New Guinea (PNG).

It fails to account for the peace-building processes including efforts by women, who contributed to the signing of the agreement. A significant exclusion is a reference to the Minister of Women who is from Konnou and was highly visible in the process.

In 1987 a group of Bougainvillean landowners began campaigning for a better deal – more compensations and tighter environmental controls. The group eventually became the core of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), a guerrilla force fighting for Bougainville’s total independence from PNG. In 1988 the group destroyed the power pylons of the mine and succeeded in closing the operations in 1989. This was the beginning of the 10 years of war – the Bougainvilleans simply call it “the crisis”.

Women greatly suffered the brunt of the crisis. Rape was used as a weapon against women and young girls. A high level of gender-based violence was recorded during the crisis.

Despite the brutality, abuses and marginalisation of women and girls during the conflict, women crossed over conflict lines to negotiate peace with warring factions. Others went into the jungle to plead with their husbands and sons to surrender their weapons and settle the conflict through peaceful means.

During the period 1989-98 the political conflict in Bougainville had a greater impact on women’s lives. To escape the fighting, women took their children to hide in the caves and jungles of Bougainville without access to medicine, electricity, education or communication. They survived in extremely harsh conditions for years. They constructed makeshift dwellings from bush materials, planted vegetable gardens in the jungles and made fuel from coconuts. Up to 12,000 people died during the blockade, mainly through lack of medical attention for preventable diseases.

In 2001 the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement signified the end of the war in Bougainville and the journey towards the staging of the first elections for the establishment of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) in 2005.

This included a substantive United Nations-led weapons disposal programme as part of a broader programme of restoring peace and good governance in the region and embarking on the road to economic recovery and sustainable development. Peace-building programmes have also incorporated reconciliation and confidence-building projects.

The 2011 peace accord is, therefore, part of a broader peace-building initiative. However, specifically in the Southern region of Bougainville, women including the current Minister for Women in the ABG, who is an elected member from the South, were vocal in this regard, but remain invisible in this report.

The Minister and other women leaders worked to pave the way for the peace accord. Women's media gave visibility to women's involvement in the peace process. Women's networks raised the alarm about the armed conflict situation in the south. Analyses based on their expertise and insights were published in successive media reports from the Regional Media and Advocacy Network on UN Security Council on women's participation in conflict management, conflict resolution and peace-building (UNSCR 1325).

UN Security Council Resolution 1325

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 is a landmark legal and political framework that acknowledges the importance of the participation of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives in all aspects of peace-building.

Adopted in the year 2000, UNSCR 1325 obligates UN member states to take special steps to protect women from violence, to promote their increased participation in peace-keeping efforts, to ensure that women's involvement in peace-building is acknowledged, and that women are given formal roles in peace negotiations.

In particular, resolution 1325 calls for:

- The participation of women at all levels of decision-making.
- The protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence.
- The prevention of violence against women through the promotion of women's rights, accountability and law enforcement.
- The mainstreaming of gender perspectives in peace operations.

See: <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/WPS%20S2010%20173.pdf> (UN Security Council, 'Women, peace and security', report of the Secretary-General, 2010.) http://www.iwtc.org/1325_word.pdf. (simplified version of UNSCR 1325)



Special focus: Learning from feminist media initiatives

The report below fills gaps in mainstream media's gender-imbalanced accounts of peace-building in Bougainville at the same time as it demonstrates the role of feminist media initiatives in bringing visibility to women's participation.

Title:	Women played key role in ending Bougainville war – call to end silence
Reporter:	Louise Anne Laris (community media correspondent in Bougainville)
Where published:	<i>Pacific Scoop, New Zealand.</i> http://pacific.scoop.co.nz/2011/09/women-played-key-role-in-ending-bougainville-conflict-now-a-call-to-end-silence/
Date	24 September 2011

A community leader says reviewing the Bougainville Peace Agreement is a “crucial step forward” for civil society and the Autonomous Bougainville government needs to reflect and set positive goals.

Helen Hakena, executive director of Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency and convenor of the Regional Media and Policy Network on UNSCR 1325 in Bougainville, said the government must enhance efforts to prevent future conflicts.

Also a founding member of GPPAC Pacific, Hakena said during an International Peace Day event:

“For the first time a civil society group in Bougainville, in collaboration with partners of the GPPAC, will conduct a reflection consultation with ABG officials to look at challenges and achievements facing the peace process.

“This consultation is a big step calling together church groups, women's groups, ABG officials and ex-combatants to share their views on how ABG can go about the reconciliation processes and the destruction of arms, challenges that hinder peace and security issues,” she added.

She was speaking as convenor of a peace dialogue convened 10 years since the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement to review progress.

The dialogue has considered not only achievements – such as the staging of elections for the establishment of the Autonomous Bougainville Government – but the “everyday challenges confronting the peace process”.

“Unfinished” weapons disposal

In an interview with Radio Australia, Hakena highlighted the need to engage with government bodies to address all underlying issues such as the “unfinished” weapons disposal programme, noting that the lack of arms disposal is the core activity fuelling up the continuous conflict in South Bougainville:

“In the last 10 years the peace process has moved ahead positively but there are some challenges that impede the peace process such as the full engagement of women in

consultations,” she said, adding that investment in women’s participation remains vital in decision making process.

“Yes, women played a key role in bringing the Bougainville conflict to an end, but now at this time, women are silent in formal processes even though they continue to convene programmes and dialogue at events.”

Hakena welcomed the support of the UNDP to assist in convening the dialogue as she called for greater participation of women in consultation processes by supporting education programmes for women to ensure they are empowered and their capacity is realised.

She said Bougainville women could use UNSCR 1325 as a guiding tool and also as advocacy for women in decision-making and “continuing our engagement with governments on the urgency of having women in decision-making processes” and women’s representation in Parliament where they could influence policy makers and where their views were changed into laws.

Questioned whether Bougainvilleans were happy with its government, Hakena said: “We are happy to have our own government particularly the reserved seats that we have for women. Women are able to contest themselves.”

Hakena also stated that independence in Bougainville would only proceed “if we are financially viable” and if the Bougainville government fully addressed the challenges that confronted the peace process.

Meanwhile, Leitana Nehan Women’s Development Agency together with Minister for Women Rose Pihei were having continuous consultations to organise the anniversary of the UNSC resolution 1325 on October 28 in Buka.

This event will once again bring together women’s groups from around Buka and the mainland to participate in this celebration for women, peace and security.



Guidelines: Reporting on peace and security

1. Value the knowledge, expertise and information available from women's networks, especially those with a recognised focus on media/communications, peace and security. Consult them for expert commentary.
2. Ask the question "where are the women?" for all sides of a peace agreement especially if there are no women visible or no women are signatories to an accord.
3. Ask the question "what does this mean for women, young women and children?" Find the women at the local level who can bring a gender dimension to the story. They may not be in visible formally organised groups, but they will no doubt be actively participating in informal collectives.
4. Women are not a homogeneous group. Speak to different women – from different social classes, ethnicities, political affiliations, etc. They will add depth and interest to the story, speaking from their varied perspectives. This is also a strategy to report whether a peace accord does in fact include the demands of all key players.



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7. Politics and government: Reporting on women in public office

Names of powerful men who could be interviewed or quoted on a wide range of issues pertaining to politics and governance come to mind easily. In the current global context however, there is no shortage of women in positions of power who could also be consulted to comment, provide opinions or give expert advice.

Journalistic practice tends to construct stories using conventions and stereotypes that reproduce traditional cultural norms or amplify inequalities in power relations. This in turn projects to media audiences representations of women and men that are in fact removed from present-day realities.

Further, when women appear in the public eye as a result of their political participation or leadership skills, they are often described as having certain masculine behavioural traits that keep them in positions of power.

It is crucial for media stories on politics and government to adopt a vision of equity and integrate a gender perspective without losing focus on the topic. The necessity to incorporate a gender perspective should not be belittled; in many cases, media content is clearly constructed with a male audience in mind even when the actual population accessing the content is predominantly female.

Sample story analysis

Consider the following story.

Title:	"Cristina Kirchner and her path through the labyrinth of power" <i>Politically active since her youth, the President has reached the peak: the intense life of a woman who experienced the oscillations of politics</i>
Reporter:	Lucrecia Bullrich
Where published:	LA NACION, Argentina. http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1413464-cristina-kirchner-y-su-recorrido-por-el-laberinto-del-poder
Date	11 October 2011.

When Alberto Fernández talks about Cristina and Néstor Kirchner as a couple, his expression changes. He gives his verdict, "I have never seen two people so in love before in my life." Nostalgia and sadness mark the story (and his eyes) as he remembers his friend.

As former Chief of the Cabinet of Ministers, Fernández was a first-hand witness to this couple that, in life and in politics, served as President and spouse. He was also a protagonist in the emergence of Kirchnerism, the Santa Cruz government and the transition between these two figures in the Argentinean Presidency. He was a key official in both of their administrations. He saw them exercise power. He saw them coexist in life and in politics.

From this vantage point, Fernández spoke about Cristina Kirchner with LA NACION. In his words, affection and respect blend with disappointment. He doesn't hesitate to describe her as a brilliant, decisive, strong and brave woman. He also doesn't hold back in saddling her with a diminishing capacity to listen to "different opinions"; a capacity that, he emphasizes, Kirchner never stopped having.

Victor Bugge has been the presidential photographer since 1978. Between laughs he admits that he "enjoys" seeing a woman "give orders" and that the arrival of Cristina Kirchner to the Casa Rosada [the Argentinean Presidential Palace] was a huge challenge.

"After photographing 14 men, I had to begin to look at other things. It was a real challenge," said one of the few men who follow the President wherever she goes.

Like Alberto Fernández through mid 2008, Bugge is an everyday witness of Cristina Kirchner, from that rare combination of the closeness and distance that a camera lens provides. He has access to some of the faces of the President's private life, such as her renowned attention to her personal aesthetics or some of the dimensions of her family life, and at the same time, he also photographs her in all official settings. From this (other) combination, some sharp and unforgettable portraits have emerged, such as the shot of the Head of State next to Néstor Kirchner's coffin on October 28, 2010.

Fernández and Bugge know very different facets of the public Cristina Kirchner. But their stories coincide on many points. The particular way in which the President and her husband shared their union is one of them.

[...]

The story goes on to recount the life, education, wealth accumulation and family life of President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. She is described as a person who "never resigned herself to being in the background, as politics tends to situate women. She did this from a frequently criticized personal vindication of her condition as a woman. She combined her role as a sharp legislator with her role as an attentive mother, as an unconditional First Lady and a loving wife, and as a steadfast President and a fragile woman struck by the sudden death of her partner." The story relays her life as a legislator, her election as president in 2007, the controversies of her administration, election defeat in 2009, the death of her husband in 2009 and her re-election in 2010 for a five-year term.

The story is accompanied by a video compilation of photographs and video clips of the President with a voice-over narration. Further down the page is a large photograph of her applying lipstick in front of a mirror.

Analysis

The article addresses the political career of current Argentinean President Fernández, at a time close to the presidential elections in which she was once again the candidate of the ruling party. However, in order to speak about Cristina, the journalist continues to evoke her husband and former president Néstor Kirchner. Even on occasions when she held more important public posts, she is consistently described in the context of her husband and her success is attributed to his influence. The article compares them constantly. Traits associated with masculinity, such as "strong" and "brave" are used to describe her.

In describing the *Casa Rosada*, the photographer stresses that it struck his attention to see a woman giving orders, implying this was unimaginable and an action that could not be carried out by women. The journalist fails to delve further into the photographer's comment that the President's arrival in the presidential palace was a "challenge"; he loses an opportunity to discover what, in the interviewee's opinion, makes President Fernandez different from other leaders. Further, the photograph chosen for the article does not reflect her political activity, rather it portrays a feminine grooming action.

The journalist underscores her family role and the contrast in attitudes between her public and private personas, as if she were two completely different individuals. When mentioning the offices she has held, he says little of the years she served as a member of Congress and a Senator, although he mentions the former President's full trajectory.

Finally, the journalist refers to the President using her first name – a familiar, informal, form of address – and yet when he evokes husband, he unfalteringly uses the latter's last name – a respectful and formal reference.

There is an enormous missed opportunity to develop a gender-inclusive article. Why does the journalist not question the assumption of relegating women to the background in politics? How have relations between women and men changed since a woman ascended to the highest public office in the country?

Gender bias continues in the creation of legislative commissions and in appointments at cabinet and other high levels of office. Rather than demonstrate the disparities, the journalist provides figures that hide them, losing an opportunity for critical reporting from a gender perspective.

There are different ways to tell a female political leader's life story or career trajectory and this example clearly demonstrates an absence of gender consciousness.

Questions for analysis and debate

- How does the journalist refer to women and their relation to power?
- Does the journalist make the same kinds of observations for all genders?
- Does the journalist use inclusive language?
- Which personality traits are highlighted for women? Which personality traits for men?
- Is there an equal number of references to women and men?
- Does the article reproduce stereotypes or challenge them?
- What are the possible impacts on women and men, and on gender relations, of the journalist's approach?



Special focus: Facts, trends and impacts of media coverage about women in government

In order to improve the practice of journalism, to make it more inclusive and diverse, it is necessary to adopt critical forms of journalism and writing, beginning with the following insights:

- Society took a long time to take the struggle for women’s rights seriously. The lack of consideration for history and the progress made hinders understanding and access of women to public office, particularly to the highest public office of the presidency or prime minister.
- Women began to hold public office and political positions much later than their male counterparts. This is due to the delay in defining women as subjects with rights and recognizing their capability for decision-making, holding professional and leadership positions.
- One of the most common recurrences in interviews or articles about women is how they balance their domestic tasks while holding public office. This is one of the ways in which journalists remind women that they have to fulfil society’s expectation of them as mothers, wives and caregivers of the family. The standards for men are markedly different: they are not asked about fatherhood or what they do to fulfil their family responsibilities.
- Journalists should be mindful of the ways in which they describe women and men so as not to make the mistake of using stereotypes that reinforce cultural inequalities between women and men. The paths to political posts or public office are diverse and the use of stereotypes can blur the real journeys individuals have made to power positions.
- To contend that only men should address “hard” issues such as politics and government contributes to an absence of female voices on these topics, leading to a lack of diversity in positions and proposals. Many women are active participants in academic research and in different “hard” issue areas. They are part of the pool of experts who could be interviewed or quoted.
- The masculinisation of certain character traits and continual references to masculinity in power narrows the possibilities for women’s action. This tends to imply that women have of necessity to exude behaviour associated with masculinity in order to become decision-makers, as if this were the only way to participate in or to exercise power.
- When a female leader’s role in the family or private life is mentioned, she is not only reminded of her absences or errors that are affecting “normal” family development and what is expected of her, she is also concomitantly being warned of the limits to progress that exist for her.
- Media reports on women in politics tend to focus on details such as their dress style, wardrobe, diet and physical appearance, an approach that trivializes them, devalues their work in public office and damages their credibility.



Guidelines: Reporting stories on politics and government

1. Avoid mention of female political figures in their private and family life. It is not necessary to talk about someone's role in the family or how she carries out domestic tasks in order to speak about a person whose capability and profession led her to public office.
2. Refrain from mentioning that politics is a field for men in order to justify the need to masculinise women in positions of power or to reproduce the stereotype that politics is only for men.
3. When references are made to people who hold public office and in general, the person's last name and position should be used for *both* women and men.
4. Seek out the opinions of both female and male leaders on topics that impact women more severely, particularly given that male leaders also hold the responsibility of deciding and legislating on these issues. These topics affect society as a whole and not just the female half of the population.
5. When writing about a political leader's life story, cast the net wider to look at her path through social movements, unions, community organizations and professional associations. Many female leaders have followed such a trajectory into public political life.
6. The images of women in public office should reflect their public activities and respect their role, steering clear of revealing unrelated matters such as their dress style, wardrobe, makeup and other details that have nothing to do with their responsibilities or professional performance.
7. Eliminate qualifying adjectives or words with stereotypical connotations such as bipolar, hysterical, crazy, witch, hag, iron lady, soft, strong, and butch, among others.
8. Report on politics based on a person's actual behaviour and actions related to the issue. It can be counterproductive to emphasize a woman's tone of voice or manner of expressing herself.
9. Become familiar with social and women's organizations that advocate for and study women's access to political rights and public representation in your locality.
10. Provide statistics about the number of women who hold important public offices and the initiatives they have proposed.
11. Show the topics on which women's political participation is more prevalent, as well as the topics or spaces that continue to be impervious for women, for instance, offices that have yet to be held by a woman.
12. Build your knowledge of legal and legislative frameworks on women's political participation and access to elected office.



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8. Violence against women: Reporting sexual violence

According to the Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma; “*Reporting on sexual violence demands special care and increased ethical sensitivity. It requires specialised interviewing skills, understanding of the law, and basic awareness about the psychological impact of trauma.*” On all levels and topics of reporting, a special awareness is required to offer ethical journalism that challenges stereotypes and begins to provide a more balanced and just worldview. However, in the case of reporting on violence against women, including sexual violence, it carries an extra responsibility; as anything short of breaking through the silence that often surrounds these criminal acts of rape, assault and murder supports a status quo that minimises and excuses the impact of violence, and endangers women everywhere.



Sample story analysis

Consider the following story.

Title:	“Lara Logan, CBS Reporter and Warzone ‘It Girl’, Raped Repeatedly Amid Egypt Celebration”
Reporter:	By Simone Wilson
Where published:	LA Weekly Blogs (journalist blogs) http://blogs.laweekly.com/informer/2011/02/lara_logan_raped_egypt_reporte.php
Date	16 February 2011.

[...]

Breaking news: South African TV journalist Lara Logan, known for her shocking good looks and ballsy knack for pushing her way to the heart of the action, was **brutally and repeatedly raped** while a crowd of 200 celebrated the February 11 resignation of 30-year Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Logan was in Tahrir Square with her “60 Minutes” news team when Mubarak’s announcement broke. Then, in a rush of frenzied excitement, some Egyptian protesters apparently consummated their newfound independence by sexually assaulting the blonde reporter:

CBS News reports that “she and her team and their security were surrounded by a dangerous element amidst the celebration.” Then, the horrific assault:

In the crush of the mob, she was separated from her crew. She was surrounded and suffered a brutal and sustained sexual assault and beating before being saved by a group of women and an estimated 20 Egyptian soldiers. She reconnected with the CBS team, returned to her hotel and returned to the United States on the first flight the next morning. She is currently in the hospital recovering.

Thirty-nine-year-old Logan has long attacked Hollywood-lite reporters for their dumbing down of overseas violence -- at the same time using her Hollywood good looks and spotlight to push a more hard-hitting agenda.

[...]

Analysis

Increasingly, journalists have turned to blogs as easily accessible platforms that allow them to integrate commentary into a story. The article above appearing on a journalist blog is selected for analysis as it brings into sharp focus the pitfalls in the orthodox approach to reporting on violence against women.

Sexism, objectification and blaming the survivor: From the title phrase, “...Warzone ‘It Girl’ ...” to the classic glamour picture accompanying the article, we already know what to expect. The entire article is peppered with objectification references to Logan’s appearance: “*shocking good looks*”, “*60 minutes firecracker*”, “*blonde reporter*”, “*Hollywood good looks*”, “*gutsy stunner*”, and “*girls who happen to fall on the gorgeous side*”, further implying that as a “*stunner*” she was somehow responsible for a repeated, public, brutal beating and rape. Yet, while the article purports to be aware; “*we know our human rights*”, and that “*Logan’s rape was not her fault*”, the author repeats biased and salacious material quoted from another newspaper alleging prior affairs.

Sexual violence, taboo and misinformation: Logan, as a public figure, is open to further abuse as she has publically been seen as having a “*sex life*”. This brings up many levels of societal taboos (hate mail and hate speech), where there is often a backlash. The readers’ feedback available on online platforms is illustrative of how the orthodox reporting approach can trigger further violence, feeding a worldview that perceives gender violence as “normal”. In the case of the article above, reader commentary suggests sexual violence is acceptable (“...*I would totally rape her*”). The tone of the article is a subtle blend of salacious titillation and misinformation stemming from the choice of language. The mixed message imparted from using “*consummated*” in reference to the sexualised violence that Logan survived, raising images of honeymoons and virginal brides, is at absolute odds with the reality of the attack and puts it in a category of an expected and “normal” sexual expression.

Sanctioning survivors in particular, and women more broadly: The article contains another of the classic pitfalls of reporting on violence against women when it refers to another publication branding Logan as “*insane*” for returning to the Middle East, that of suggesting that women’s activities be curtailed. It is far too easy to uphold current cultural and inherently sexist views by suggesting that had a woman not been engaged in activities that would be unremarkable for men (in this case: working), or dressed or behaved in a certain manner, she would not have been attacked. In order not to uphold unfair constraints on women, there needs to be a better reason to include details of dress, mannerism or behaviour, than simply pandering to cultural conformity. It is an inherent responsibility of ethical journalism to challenge these hidden and pervasive myths.

Finally, the article raises the issues of the ethical treatment and safety of female journalists. As women, they run the same risks as any other woman, in addition to

the not inconsiderable added risks of the profession. Ironically, while press coverage of the attack on Logan presented her with more abuse through commentary and the press, it also opened the door on the issue of sexual violence used against journalists. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, few of these cases have ever been documented, but now the silence is being broken. “*Many of the assaults fall into three general types: targeted sexual violation of specific journalists, often in reprisal for their work; mob-related sexual violence against journalists covering public events; and sexual abuse of journalists in detention or captivity. Although women constitute the large majority of victims overall, male journalists have also been victimized, most often while in captivity or detention.*” (See the “bibliography and further reference resources” section for organisations that publish safety guidelines for female journalists).



Special focus: Challenges to reporting on violence against women

Language: The inherent dangers in reporting on violence against women are many, and to follow any ethical guidelines requires an awareness of the impact of language, its underlying messages and a willingness to avoid journalistic shorthand in the ever-quickening turn-around speed of modern media. This is not an easy task, many of the stock words and phrases used support an imbalanced status quo and endanger change in societal thinking and treatment of survivors. These can be expressions that mislead (sexual violence should never be related to sex – it is a violent act and an abuse of power), that blame the survivor (“she got herself raped”), that avoid placing the responsibility for the attack on the attacker, or that suggest that attackers do not look like “normal” men. In the worst cases, in terms of sexual violence, the survivor is often judged through use of dramatic language (i.e. “*cowering in fear*”), which suggests that for women to be proper “victims”, they must express the trauma in a certain way. This goes against most beliefs on the impact of trauma, which acknowledge that each person reacts in their own, individual way. Therefore, it is essential not only to get the facts correct, but to be precise, to offer alternatives to popular myths, and not use euphemism or shorthand. Language use is discussed in the “guidelines” section below.

Context: The issue is not one of using religion, culture or geographic location as an excuse for any form of violence: all violence is inexcusable. Rather, the issue is to recognize the consequences of reporting in a particular way, and the inherent possible dangers posed to interviewees, to others providing support, as well as to the journalist herself. Survivors or witnesses have the right to respect and privacy, but foremost to that of safety. It is essential for a journalist to educate herself in order to safeguard the life and wellbeing of those she interviews and works with. Often violence against women is dismissed or the impact minimised, yet research reveals the severe lifelong effects on the physical and mental health of survivors. An awareness and sensitivity of the risks posed to the survivor by going public and others providing support should form the contextual framework for everything a journalist does. Local and international women’s organisations, non-governmental organisations and, journalist unions and organisations are all good places to obtain information on potential risks, hazards, and threats to survivors, as well as the cultural context.



Guidelines: Reporting on (sexual) violence against women¹

1. Accurate language: Frame violence and sexual violence using accurate language. Rape is never sex nor is it a volatile ‘relationship’; it is a violent crime with judicial consequences. Sexual violence and violence against women has been defined not only as a human rights abuse but also as a crime against humanity, whether during war or peace.² Be aware of the legal framework of the crime and use the terminology to challenge myths that minimise violence.
2. “Survivor” or “victim”? Use of the word “victim” presumes knowledge of the impact of the survived trauma, and presupposes that the woman is, and was, powerless. The word itself removes the possibilities that a woman can resist, not accept that violence is normal and expected, seek help and survive. Use of the word “survivor” supports life after the attack, does not define her by that one event in her life, and helps to highlight the woman’s agency to take control, and make choices about her future.
3. Privacy and respect issues: Many survivors may feel shame, or guilt, or be distressed by the retelling of events. Identify yourself clearly as a journalist and explain the content of the story, it is important to build trust. It is also important to inform interviewees that they have the right to refuse to answer a question and that they may bring someone to support them. If possible, the interviewer should be female, with some understanding of the impacts of trauma. For example, some survivors of sexual violence remember things in a disjointed way, or may not remember certain events if too severe for them to cope. If you have offered anonymity, respect it, and think about obscuring identifiable elements, such as job or location (see guideline 9 below).
4. Safety concerns: In some cases, speaking to a journalist can further endanger a woman (see guideline 9). Recognize that you may be putting someone in further danger by approaching them. In some cases, to admit rape can lead to exile from the community, retaliation, or even death. Be aware and thoughtful about these risks when choosing the time and location of interviews. Local women’s organisations, non-governmental organisations working in the area, and local press organisations can provide information on the context and dangers posed by “going public”. Further, be aware that sexual violence can have wider impacts on family members, communities and witnesses.
5. Do your research: Misinformation is perpetuated through poor research. For example, Western media often focuses on “stranger danger”, when in fact most sexual violence (outside of war) is often perpetrated by persons known to the survivor, or treating domestic violence as an isolated event. Challenge these myths by doing research to give the story the proper, factual base and context necessary in order to educate the audience about the reality.

1. It is always worth consulting local organisations, as they would have put the information into a more culturally specific context than is possible here. The short guidelines here were compiled from a variety of sources, but primarily from the IFJ and Dart Centre Tip sheets (see bibliography).

2. The International Criminal Court (ICC) considers any form of widespread serious sexual violence as a crime against humanity.

6. Do not contribute to sexist views: Do not suggest, in any way, that the survivor was to blame, or give advice that curtails a woman's activities, dress or behaviour. Avoid the use of dramatic language, such as "defenceless", "lured" and "subjected to a fate worse than death", as these pander to stereotypes about women as, for instance, gullible. Do not make judgements based on the woman's response or level of recovery. It is important to show that women can recover and there is no such thing as a "normal" reaction to an abnormal situation. Respect the diversity of women.
7. Tell the whole story, but do not be gratuitous: Do not glorify the gory details. It is important to place the event in context, both in terms of the community or location, and for the woman. Present women as whole human beings, who had a life before, and are having a life after the event.
8. Make the perpetrator visible: Too often the perpetrator is absent or relatively invisible. Women do not get themselves raped. Also, mainstream media refer to rapists or attackers as "monsters" or "maniacs", which suggests that they are visibly different from other men, when this is patently untrue. Another area where the perpetrator is often excused, or the attack minimised, is in cases of domestic abuse.
9. Rape in War: This is one of the most difficult areas to cover as a journalist. It often goes unreported due to fear of further attacks, it is almost always difficult to verify, and the sheer brutality of this particular "weapon of war" has been reported to cause traumatic reactions in journalists covering it. Be sensitive to language, allowing interviewees to lead your choice of terminology. Be wary if armed officials or others want to sit in on the interview, they may be possible collaborators or know the attackers, but do not be confrontational as this can impact the safety of the people you are interviewing.
10. Whenever possible, provide information on the organisations sexual violence survivors can turn to for help and support.



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✓ *Editor's checklist**

Does your story:

1. Illuminate some aspect of gender relations?
2. Have fresh data to back it up?
3. Quote a diversity of voices?
4. Try hard to talk to women who are invisible in the media?
5. Challenge gender stereotypes?
6. Recognize race, ethnicity, class and age differences?
7. Use inclusive, non-sexist language?
8. Use terms and concepts understandable to a lay audience?
9. Have context, analysis and an attractive lead?
10. Use interviews with people as sources rather than relying purely on publications or other written materials?
11. Use a gender lens throughout?
12. Ask why?

Bonus question:

Ask why not?

* Adapted from the IPS Editor's checklist for stories on the Millennium Development Goal "promote gender equality and women's empowerment" (MDG3)

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