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IFJ Guidelines for reporting on violence against women

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Violence against women and human rights violations can be difficult to report on sensitively, especially when deadlines are urgent and you are in a rush to deliver. These guidelines give useful information on how to do so.

The original text from the Ethical Journalism Initiative can be found [here](#).

IFJ Guidelines for Reporting on Violence Against Women

1. Identify violence against women accurately through the internationally accepted definition in the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.
2. Use accurate, non-judgmental language. For instance, rape or sexual assault is not in any way to be associated with normal sexual activity; and trafficking in women is not to be confused with prostitution. Good journalists will strike a balance when deciding how much graphic detail to include. Too much may be sensationalist and can be gratuitous; too little can weaken the victim's case. At all times, the language of reporting should avoid suggestions that the survivors may be to blame, or were otherwise responsible for the attack or acts of violence against them.
3. People who suffer in such an ordeal will not wish to be described as a 'victim' unless they use the word themselves. The use of labels can be harmful. A term that more accurately describes the reality of a person who has suffered in this way is 'survivor.'
4. Sensitive reporting means ensuring that contact for media interview meets the needs of the survivor. A female interviewer should be on hand and the setting must always be secure and private, recognising that there may be a social stigma attached. Media must do everything they can to avoid exposing the interviewee to further abuse. This includes avoiding actions that may undermine their quality of life or their standing in the community.
5. Treat the survivor with respect. For journalists this means respecting privacy, providing detailed and complete information about the topics to be covered in any interview, as well as how it will be reported. Survivors have the right to refuse to answer any questions or not to divulge more than they are comfortable with. Journalists should make themselves available for later contact; providing contact details to interviewee will ensure they are able to keep in contact if they wish or need to do so.
6. Use statistics and social background information to place the incident within the context of violence in the community, or conflict. Readers and the media audience need to be informed of the bigger picture. The opinion of experts on violence against women such as the DART centre will always increase the depth of understanding by providing relevant and useful information. This will also ensure that media never give the impression that violence against women has an inexplicable tragedy that cannot be solved.
7. Tell the whole story: sometimes media identify specific incidents and focus on the tragic aspects of it, but reporters do well to understand that abuse might be part of a long-standing social problem, armed conflict, or part of a community history.
8. Maintain confidentiality: as part of their duty of care media and journalists have an ethical responsibility not to publish or broadcast names or identify places that in any way might further compromise the safety and security of survivors or witnesses. This is particularly important when those responsible for violence are the police, or troops in a conflict, or agents of the state or government, or people connected with other large and powerful organisations.
9. Use local resources: Media who take contact with experts, women groups and organisations on the ground about proper interviewing techniques, questions and places will always do good work and avoid situations - such as where it is unacceptable for male camera workers or reporters to enter a secluded place - which can cause embarrassment or hostility. There is always virtue in reporters educating themselves on the specific cultural contexts and respect them.
10. Provide Useful Information: reports that include details of sources and the contact details of local support organizations and services will provide vital and helpful information for survivors/witnesses and their families and others who may be affected.