



Gender, Conflict & Journalism



A Handbook for South Asia

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About this handbook

This handbook was conceived during the planning for the UNESCO-Nepal Press Institute first Roundtable on The Gender Perspective in Conflict Reporting, conducted April 7-9, 2004 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Roundtable drew together journalists and analysts from South Asia to specifically examine the influence of gender and conflict on professional journalism, and vice versa. The Roundtable discussions served as the central resource and inspiration for a wider-ranging exploration by the Roundtable facilitators of how reliable journalism is coping with the enormous challenges of gender inequity and violent conflict which exist, inter-related, in South Asia and elsewhere. The outcome is this handbook, a compilation of emerging ideas, strategies and professional skills that journalists can wield against the entrenched traditions and new threats which constrain free expression and the achievement of gender equality and conflict resolution.

Part 1 explores the 21st Century media environment and key issues; Part Two presents strategies and skills for working journalists; Part Three provides selected Resources.

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Introductions

Authors' introduction



"As journalists, words are our most powerful tools, and we should use these tools to build understanding rather than create fears and myths."¹

This is a handbook by journalists, for journalists - especially those who recently entered the profession, and those who have experienced it enough to seek change.

The book is a market-place of diverse views and experiences. It includes the voices of participants who attended the 2004 UNESCO-NPI Roundtable in Kathmandu, as well as ideas from other leading South Asian reporters, editors and analysts. We, the authors, also draw on our own experiences as journalists and trainers in gender sensitivity and conflict-sensitive reporting on four continents. In addition, the handbook includes as many sources of wisdom as could be quickly tapped from women-in-journalism organisations, other journalism associations and civil society. While South Asia is the focus, the handbook provides an international context for the issues that are explored.

The premise of this book is simple. Namely, that gender-awareness and conflict-sensitivity are the building blocks of reliable, professional journalism - not optional extras. Equally, reliable journalism is integral to a healthy democracy. Without clear, balanced information women and men are ill-equipped to make decisions about their lives, or to realise their full potential as human beings.

1. Rashdi, Maheen.
Triavails of the Press. 29
April 2004. Dawn
Internet Edition.
Available at
[www.dawn.com/weekly/
review/review4.htm](http://www.dawn.com/weekly/review/review4.htm).

We recognise that many journalists work almost bare-handed to challenge the newsroom barriers and social-cultural obstacles that hinder gender and conflict sensitivity. We therefore hope to provide material that journalists-on-the-run have time to use: clear ideas and practical strategies for making journalism better, and resources for accelerating the pace of change

The book recognises that the relationship between journalism, gender and conflict is a complex interplay of professional standards and moral issues. We therefore present strategies for achieving balance. We focus on the choices journalists make when framing a conflict story; and on the journalistic process of finding words and images that challenge gender stereotypes and myths about conflict. We acknowledge that newsroom and media industry cultures can make the process difficult, and we offer practical responses to those challenges. We also realise that conflict reporting can be stressful and dangerous, so we share tips for safe reporting.

As authors, we have been greatly inspired by the commitment of South Asian journalists and media practitioners, and the level of debate about media issues in the region. In spite of many frustrations and threats, professional journalism is better and braver than ever in this part of the world. Journalists are exposing injustice and gender imbalance; they are challenging the stereotypes that can incite violence. And they are doing so with courage and creativity.

This is reason enough to celebrate.

Fiona Lloyd, Johannesburg, 2004
Ross Howard, Vancouver, 2004

Nepal Press Institute introduction

In many newsrooms there is an enormous contradiction at work. Traditionalists regard gender issues and perspectives as "soft" or less significant. They assign such issues to women reporters. They create a separate section or plan separate treatment for displaying such news. The inconsistency is that women are the most vulnerable and abused victims of conflict. They make up the majority of victims. The violence ranges from assault to rape to homelessness and family disruption. There is absolutely nothing soft about these realities and issues, except traditional views. A handbook for journalists to address these realities and make them hard news is extremely timely.

The simultaneous treatment of gender sensitivity and conflict sensitivity in journalism is still very new and NPI is proud to have contributed to this ground-breaking initiative as a co-sponsor with UNESCO of the Roundtable on The Gender Perspective in Conflict Reporting, which took place in Kathmandu in April 2004.

The handbook is intended for journalism practitioners aspiring to greater gender sensitivity and more sophisticated reporting on violent conflict everywhere in South Asia. It is particularly relevant to Nepal where the media flourished under democratization only a decade ago but has since then suffered abuse of its rights and freedoms through political strife and violent conflict. The media of Nepal has also fallen short in its responsibility for providing reliable news that are not politically biased and gender-blind. Participation by women in the media in Nepal ranks very low; mirrored by insensitive reporting on women and gender issues and the projection of the role of women in Nepal's emergence into the liberal democratic era.

NPI is confident that the handbook will be of great value to journalists in Nepal and elsewhere, particularly junior and mid-career journalists who are still carving out their own careers and seeking standards and practices that reflect gender equality and conflict resolution.

The Nepal Press Institute has been the leading non-governmental and non-profit Nepali institution dedicated to advancing the quality and importance of professional journalism for over 20 years.

It specializes in media training, capacity building of indigenous media, organizing advanced level training for mainstream journalists and development communicators at grass-root level. NPI's programs and activities have nation-wide reach. It maintains three media resource centers located in Eastern, Western and Far-Western Nepal.

NPI is confident that this handbook will help develop professional skills among journalists covering conflict with gender perspective.

Nepal Press Institute

UNESCO

Introduction



Armed conflict tends to exacerbate gender inequality and encourages gender-specific disadvantages, particularly for women, that are not always recognized and adequately addressed by mainstream media. The impact of armed conflict on gender relations is significant. It varies from forced displacement to all forms of gender-based violence, impoverishment and acceptance of gender stereotypes.

Women are among the first to bear the brunt of armed conflicts but they also have a vital role to play in reconstruction processes. By ignoring or marginalizing issues of gender in conflict reporting, the media insensitivity can reinforce stereotypes of women and men. Whilst women's contribution to conflict transformation and reconciliation on the ground is slowly beginning to be recognized, women still remain largely excluded from high level negotiations and the decision making processes leading to peace. The media can contribute to building bridges of understanding and provide for a more informed and critical audience that will not so easily fall prey to prejudice.

Despite the fact that Women and Media and Women and Armed Conflict were identified as critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, and the adoption of the first resolution ever passed by the Security Council that specifically addresses the impact of war on women and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace (Resolution 1325), there has been little change in mainstream

media reporting: the perspectives on women are rarely nuanced, especially in conflict situations. When women appear, they are portrayed as passive victims and their stories frequently sensationalized.

To increase understanding of newsroom challenges which still prevent journalists from conducting a gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive reporting when covering armed conflict, UNESCO has sponsored a round table on gender-sensitive conflict reporting, organized jointly with the Nepal Press Institute in Katmandu, Nepal in April 2004. The event was organized on the assumption that the media, in the South Asian context, has an important role to play in raising awareness of the role of women and the integration of a gender perspective into all aspects of conflict prevention, conflict management and peace-building activities, without which it is impossible to achieve meaningful and durable peace.

The current publication seeks to encourage further awareness, action and gender sensitivity by media organizations and journalists to accelerate the implementation of Resolution 1325 and Beijing Platform's strategic objectives in this area. Among the agreed conclusions and shared experiences of the round table discussions, highlighted in this handbook, are practical strategies on how to reveal and analyze some social and political constraints in covering conflict in the light of gender relations and how to put women into the picture, both as producers of media information and as subjects of it in order to emphasize the fact that women are equally concerned and engaged in political issues as important peace-building actors at local, regional and global levels.

Abdul Waheed Khan
*Assistant Director-General
for Communication and Information*

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India

*Rita Manchanda, Urvashi Butalia, Ammu Joseph, Angana Parekh, *Sevanti Ninan, *Sakuntala Narasimhan, *Karan Sawhny, *Seema Mustafa

Pakistan

Tasneem Ahmar, *Maheen Rashdi, *Shaheen Salahuddin, *Beena Sarwar

Bangladesh

*Mehurun Runi, *Farida Yasmin

Nepal

*Anna Adhikari, *Dhruba Adhikarai, *Manisha Aryal, *Radha Budhathoki, *Sobha Gautam, *Bishnu Sharma, Manju Thapa

Sri Lanka

Sasanka Perera

Observers

*Vicky Asmussen, *Faruq Feisal, *Gabriela Mayorquin, *Sohae Lee, *Kate Logan

Part 1





The 21st century media environment

Conflict-sensitive reporting: a gender perspective

■ Making the link

*"The perspectives on women are rarely nuanced, especially in conflict situations. When women appear, they are portrayed as passive victims and their stories frequently sensationalised. Yet, these incessant media images of desperation and victimisation tell only part of the story. The other part, the strength, courage and resilience of many women, is rarely captured. The different experiences of women, the ways in which they live through conflict - as fighters, community leaders, social organisers, workers, farmers, traders and welfare workers - and their role once the violence has ended in peacekeeping and conflict resolution processes are not considered newsworthy."*²

Women and media was identified as one of the 12 critical concerns for advancing gender equality in the much-heralded Beijing Platform for Action at the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women (1995). But initially, transformation was slow. As commentator Anna Turley observes, reporting on women continued to be simplistic, especially in conflict situations. It was obvious that much of the mainstream media was incapable of adjusting its gender-blind focus in this regard.

2. Turley, Anna.
Communicating Peace.
Feb. 2001. World
Association of Christian
Communicators .
www.wacc.org.uk

However, pressure intensified for more realistic perspectives on women and conflict, and in October 2000 the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

For many, the Resolution was a reason to celebrate. Carol Cohn, writing in *The Women's Review of Books*³, says:

"Resolution 1325 breaks new ground because it not only recognises that women have been active in peace-building and conflict prevention; it also recognises women's right to participate - as decision makers at all levels - in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peace-building processes. . . . The resolution recognises that women are disproportionately victimised in wars and calls upon all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to respect women's rights."

The resolution emphasised the need to protect women from all forms of gender-based violence, particularly rape, and to prosecute perpetrators.⁴ And it called for the involvement of women at all levels of conflict transformation,⁵ highlighting:

- ✦ Participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution;
- ✦ Integration of gender perspectives in peacekeeping missions;
- ✦ Protection of women and girls in conflict zones;
- ✦ Mainstreaming of gender sensitisation in UN reporting and implementation systems.

Resolution 1235 was an important step forward. But it omitted one essential demand: full participation of women in the process that so significantly influences all of the others - the news media.

Fortunately, although the connection between gender, conflict and media has not yet been universally recognised, change is coming. Today, thanks to an explosion of technology and news outlets, almost everyone on earth has access to media. This development is not always positive, as we have seen in places like Rwanda and Serbia. But there are many instances when conflict has been reduced through reliable reporting, and the balanced reflection of diverse views and voices.

Similarly, the media's vital role in promoting gender issues has long been acknowledged (certainly before Beijing), and gender mainstreaming in media continues to be championed by many journalists, organisations and civil society groups. UNESCO has been an important player in this process.

Making the link between gender, conflict and media is the logical way to build on Resolution 1325 and the Beijing Platform of Action.

*"Sustainable peace cannot be imposed by the political or military hierarchy alone. The very people who are most affected by war must own the solution. . . . Yet they remain excluded."*⁶

Mainstreaming gender in media: avoiding the "add women and stir" formula

It is worth restating the obvious, but often forgotten fact that gender is not just another word for "women". Instead it is the "socially constructed differences between men and women which ...determine how we are perceived and how we are expected to behave as men and women".⁷

For conflict reporters, it is not simply a matter of bringing a woman's voice into the

3. January 2004

4. See also *A Summary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security*. Women Waging Peace website; and "Be it resolved: women have a role to play in peace and security" (Elayne Clift)

5. Woodrow Wilson Center. *More Than Victims. The Role of Women in Conflict Prevention*. Special Report. 2002. Available at www.wilsoncentre.org.

6. Wilson Center op cit.

7. Morna, Colleen Lowe, editor. *Gender and Media Training: a southern African toolkit* p 201. www.genderlinks.org.za

story or finding a "woman's angle". Nor is it sufficient simply to assign "gender stories" to a woman journalist. Indeed, we have to be careful to avoid the quick-fix approach that Indian media specialist Ammu Joseph calls the "add-women-and-stir formula".⁸

Angana Perekh, Director of the Delhi-based Women's Feature Service, takes it further:

"Women journalists cannot automatically be expected to be sensitive to, nor interested in, gender issues. In view of cultural socialisation and the competitiveness of the profession, there are many who prefer to see themselves as journalists first and women next. Male and female journalists both need to be sensitised and made aware of the importance of gender sensitivity in their work. This would have a positive impact on not just how an article is written but also on what is written about: the focus, the language, the perspective and the analytical content."

So, the process of integrating a gender perspective into conflict reporting is complex. It starts with respecting the essential standards of journalistic professionalism which impartially present verified information in a fair and balanced context. That kind of context also values and gives voice to marginalised interests.

But we have to be careful not to resort to reverse stereotyping. Do the media traditionally portray women as passive victims? It is tempting to respond by only reporting stories that reflect women's courage and resilience; stories that celebrate women as peace-builders.

For the sake of credibility, we need to resist such temptation, as UNIFEM's Felicity Hill reminds us:

*"...The quest to tell the good news about women's peace-building activity should not sway us from the fact that women really are victims of all kinds of violence and discrimination that inhibits them from taking control of their own lives, let alone taking decisions about war and peace... There's a real tension here in getting this balance between victim and agent right..."*⁹

Redefining conflict from a gender perspective

*"Conflicts are a natural part of any society. They are essential to useful and constructive change. Whether they become destructive depends on a society's capacity to handle them non-violently."*¹⁰

What do we mean by conflict and peace?

A woman from the troubled borders of Jammu and Kashmir explains it simply and eloquently:

*"My peace is when my children and my body are secure."*¹¹

UNIFEM's report "Women, War and Peace" (October 2002) calls for such voices to be taken seriously and urges that global security should be radically redefined to embrace "the human dimension...one that includes lives free of violence - including violence against women - and HIV/AIDS," because, as the UN special adviser on AIDS in Africa points out, "HIV/AIDS feasts on gender inequality and war".¹²

Such a holistic approach also acknowledges that, "for many women the frontline is the home"¹³ because the ripple effects of conflict include social problems like domestic

8. Joseph, Ammu. *Working, Watching And Waiting: Women and issues of access, employment and decision-making in the media in India*. 2002. United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) Expert Group Meeting on "Participation and access of women to the media, and the impact of media on, and its use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women." Beirut, November 2002
9. *More than Victims* op cit.
10. Galtung, John. *Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means: The Transcend Method*. Versions available at www.transcend.org.
11. Bhatia, Ashima Kaul. *New Beginnings*. Womens Feature Service.
12. *More than Victims* op cit. (pp 11- 12)
13. Beena Sarwar, speaking at NPI/UNESCO Roundtable

violence, human trafficking, health issues, infant mortality and enforced prostitution.

Felicity Hill further reminds us that a gender perspective on conflict must not polarise men and women:

"The argument is not that women's innocence is universal or that women are inherently more peaceful or men inherently more warlike. Conflict often causes fluidity in gender roles with women obtaining mobility, time and access to resources that they do not ordinarily have.

*However, that space is generally not used to secure permanent and lasting gender transformation. The women that do utilise the window of opportunity need tremendous support to advance the skills they have developed during conflict. Unfortunately, illiteracy and poverty make it virtually impossible for the experiences of women to be heard by the international community. Other obstacles to women's organisation and visibility include resistance from husbands, fathers and communities."*¹⁴

Ammu Joseph further suggests that a gender perspective:

"... needs to also take into account women's heightened experience of violence and trauma during periods of conflict, both physical and psychological, both within the home and outside it. It needs to spotlight the ways in which culture and tradition are often used in times of political tension and strife to curtail women's rights. It needs to take note of the additional social and economic burdens placed on women's shoulders at such times when they find themselves solely responsible for families (including the very old, the very young and

*the sick) under circumstances where even food and shelter are not always available."*¹⁵

What is conflict-sensitive reporting?

In recent years, journalists have been exploring new ways of reporting conflict¹⁶. These approaches have different labels (conflict-sensitive journalism, conflict de-escalating reporting or peace journalism¹⁷) but each approach acknowledges that, when it comes to covering conflict, journalists have special responsibilities and significant choices.

In today's complex and confusing world, it is impossible to be wholly immune to the influences of upbringing and culture. As journalists we have to strive for reporting which is fair, balanced, truthful and responsible. This is especially crucial in conflict situations where one careless word can incite violence.

Reporters in Indonesia devised this simple checklist to help deal with such challenging situations:¹⁸

Before you report:

- ✦ Listen and observe;
- ✦ Be aware of hidden agenda and prejudices;

When you report:

- ✦ First, do no harm!
- ✦ Paint the bigger picture without blame;
- ✦ Watch out for loaded language;
- ✦ Focus on common ground & challenge stereotypes;
- ✦ Open up creative possibilities, which may lead to healthy solutions.

If we follow such principles, we will produce reliable journalism, which informs by:

- ✦ Correcting misperceptions and dispelling myths,

14. *More than Victims* op cit (p 11)

15. Joseph, Ammu. *Women, War and the Media*. 2001. IWMF Wire. Available at www.imwf.org/ewire/7731/7732/ch-7737.

16. See: Howard, Ross. *Media and Peacebuilding: mapping the possibilities* Nov. 2001. Available at <http://www.impacs.org/pdfs/mapping..>

17. The term 'peace journalism' was coined by Professor Johan Galtung in the 1970s. The concept was subsequently developed by Jake Lynch & Annabel McGoldrick of Conflict and Peace Forums (UK) through ongoing dialogue with journalists from many countries: see www.reportingtheworld.org and www.transcend.org/pjmanual.htm

18. Devised during Internews "Reporting for Peace" training in Makassar, 2003. See also Resource Section for references to conflict-sensitive training material by Annabel McGoldrick & Jake Lynch; Ross Howard; Fiona Lloyd and Conflict Resolution Network.

- ◆ Identifying underlying interests and sources of conflict,
- ◆ Introducing alternatives and solutions

This is where the role of the journalist and the role of the mediator begin to converge. Conflict experts say "journalists mediate conflict whether they intend to or not,"¹⁹ and, at best, conflict-sensitive reporting enables citizens to better understand the complex world in which they live, so as to make informed decisions in their safer best interest.

Of course, there are also significant differences between the two professions²⁰. For example, there is the media's penchant for exposing anything behind closed doors, and the vulnerability to commercial pressures, which may encourage sensationalism.

But conflict-sensitive reporting recognises that:

- ◆ In conflict situations media can play a vital role in terms of "lowering the temperature". By giving the "bigger picture", media can stimulate solutions-oriented dialogue among citizens.
- ◆ Media can intervene positively in pre-conflict and post-conflict situations: in terms of reflecting and challenging the hardening of attitudes or stereotyping; and in helping to promote understanding, reconciliation and healing.

For journalists this means, in practical terms:

- ◆ Broadening mainstream definitions of who and what is newsworthy so that we do not marginalise any sector of the community;
- ◆ Recognising that news is part of a process and is not just a series of unrelated events;
- ◆ Becoming more aware of options for how to frame or define a story, and acknowledging that in the reporting of

any story we will inevitably exclude more than we can ever include;

- ◆ Making a conscious effort to show that within every grouping there is a complex, and possibly shifting, range of opinions and experiences.

We will explore these and other aspects of conflict-sensitive reporting later on.

■ Putting it all together

"Are we talking about 'conflict-sensitive gender reporting'? Or 'gender-sensitive conflict reporting?'"²¹

The answer, in one word, is: both. When it comes to professional, responsible journalism, conflict-sensitivity and gender-sensitivity are building-blocks, not optional extras.

This leads us to an important ethical question: if we consciously try to write about conflict from a gender perspective, and consciously try to be conflict-sensitive, are we in danger of losing our neutrality as journalists? In other words, is responsible, accurate journalism compatible with "intended outcomes"? More about this later. For now let us acknowledge that the kind of journalism we are discussing in this handbook does have an agenda - the 21st Century agenda described in Resolution 1325 and at Beijing in 1995.

This agenda is not incompatible with professional journalism. If anything, it provides a sharper lens, which in turn, reveals the skewed reality of gender inequity and the myths and interests underlying conflict. This agenda should not prevent us from being fair, accurate and balanced. Instead it should help us to become *more* fair, accurate and balanced. That is the best journalism for the 21st Century.

19. Melissa Baumann and Hannes Siebert (South Africa)

20. see *Peace Journalism: How to Do it* by Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch www.transcend.org/pjmanual.htm

21. Question posed by Beena Sarwar at the NPI/UNESCO Kathmandu Roundtable.



Untold Stories

"The guns have fallen silent on the borders. But inside Jammu and Kashmir women continue to face the aftermath of the long years of violence: they suffer abject poverty, desolation and insecurity...."

"When the women say they want 'aman' or peace, they don't imply just the absence of physical violence, but a system based on social security, equal opportunities, access to resources, distribution, economic rights and accountability."

*("New Beginnings",
Ashima Kaul Bhatia, WFS)*

We have already suggested that journalists need to **expand the frame** when reporting on conflict from a gender perspective. In other words, to see conflict in terms of a process rather than a series of unrelated events, and to acknowledge that the effects of conflict cannot be fully understood unless the definitions of conflict are broadened:

"Conflict does not only mean wars between or within countries, but also ethnic/caste/communal strife, gender violence and poverty".²²

But stories that attempt to focus on conflict in this way seldom make the front page. Sometimes they are even silenced, because they are regarded as "anti patriotic". Urvashi Butalia explains:

"Conflict reporting often has to fit into the givens of what is national, patriotic; and what is anti national. Many taboos come in here. For example, is it possible to report sensitively on women who are

suffering even if they may be anti nationals? The media never consider things like this."²³

Here lies the challenge for gender-aware journalists: to make visible the invisible; to make audible the unheard.

"One of the most critical questions here is: what happens to the women in an environment constantly charged with violence or the threat of it? Of course women are the worst losers - their space disappears, their voices are silenced. The men and the boys, meanwhile, brandish their 'courage' and 'prowess' with weapons to live up to the traditional image of a warrior engaged in guarding the people and the land."²⁴

But how do we write about such issues when mainstream media is apparently so gender-blind? It is not easy, but it has to be possible.

Reporting gender violence

"Violence becomes gender-based whenever particular acts are directed predominantly at either women or men. The fact that women are much more likely than men to experience particular crimes is no accident, indicating that beliefs about maleness or femaleness, or the circumstances of being male or female, play a significant part in violence against women."

*"Violence against women in South Africa: a resource for journalists"
(Soul City, 1999)*

22. Angana Parekh: response to participants' questionnaire (UNESCO/NPI Roundtable, Kathmandu, 2004)

23. Response to UNESCO/NPI questionnaire

24. *Women in Ethnic Minefields*, Linda Chhachhuak, WFS

South Asian media analysts agree that there is an abundance of news reports about rape, "honour killings", "dowry deaths" and "stove burnings".

The problem lies in the *quality* of reporting.

For example, Pakistani journalist Maheen Rashdi feels that the media are often guilty of victimising those who are themselves victims:

"Judgements are often passed on the victims before the truth comes to light. And in our society once a woman's name is sullied, her reputation cannot be redeemed. This is why crimes against women are not even registered at the police station by the victim or her family. The main reason for keeping the crime a secret - even by the well wishers of the victims - is that the media will take up the story and sensationalise the episode and do more harm than good."

WFS Director, Angana Parekh adds that:

"While such negative instances of sexual abuse, rape and objectification are reported with bold headlines, women activists' voices raised against atrocity, poor legislation and executive action against defaulters are projected as inconspicuous news items tucked away in between huge advertisement and news columns."

In conflict situations, gender violence - especially rape - tends to be either "naturalised" by official authorities (in

other words, portrayed as something regrettable but inevitable) or ignored altogether. The situation of women in refugee camps is a tragic example of this.

Domestic violence, too, is an issue that is rarely seen as newsworthy - especially in the context of conflict reporting. This, despite appeals by organisations like UNIFEM:

"Domestic violence (should) be recognised as systematic and widespread in conflict and post conflict situations and addressed in humanitarian, legal and security responses and training in emergencies and post-conflict reconstruction." ²⁵

Why are people so uncomfortable about engaging with the problem of gender violence? Perhaps because it not only devastates the life of the victim, it also tears apart the community - especially when used as a weapon in times of conflict.

As Pakistani journalist Maheen Rashdi asked, "With violence and discrimination against women forming the social fabric of our society reporting on issues becomes a double-edged sword. Will the revelations of the facts help the victim or make her more vulnerable to abuse from her society?"

When reporting on rape and gender violence, it is the responsibility of the media to avoid revictimising the victim. In other words we need to move from a **gender-blind** approach to one that is more **gender-aware**:

25. UNIFEM Report recommendations, p136

Gender-blind approach	Gender-aware approach
Sensationalises the crime, sometimes to the point of voyeurism.	Reports the facts of the crime in a balanced, responsible way. Gives the bigger picture, for example, legal context; includes voices of civil society groups like gender activists and human rights organisations.
"Victimises the victim" - by implying that she "asked for it"; by callously objectifying her suffering; by focusing on the "dishonour" caused to her family.	Is survivor-focused: respects the survivor without minimising her suffering; includes her perspective and voice. Also shows how other people are affected by the crime.
Reports on the crime as an isolated event, not part of a process: no attempt to follow-up.	Follows up on the event by tracking the police investigation, legal process, court case etc.

"Kusuma's story has one notable difference when compared to other female victims of sexual violence in Sri Lanka. She has the love and support of her family; most of her villagers and the active backing of a local non-governmental organisation (NGO). 'Each time I have to attend court, women members of the NGO come with me. Seeing them there, I get strength. I know


that I am not alone, that I am not despised,' she says. "

Aurora Vincent, "Victimising the Victims" (WFS) See "Best Practice" section for more examples of professional reporting

To conclude this section, here is a summary of some of the "untold stories" that relate to gender and period. - particularly in South Asia.

Untold Stories	Reporting Tips
<p>Rape & gender violence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ By military and rebel groups ◆ In refugee camps ◆ As a so-called "tool of justice" eg "honour" rapes ◆ By husbands or partners ◆ Rape of men and boys (sexual humiliation as a weapon) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Be careful about terminology and tone: do you choose to refer to "victims" or "survivors"? ◆ Take special care when conducting interviews with rape survivors²⁶ ◆ Don't sensationalise, help your reader to understand the context, in terms of human rights and the law - both national and international, for example, International Humanitarian Law and other international conventions. ◆ Challenge attempts to naturalise or condone the crime: eg "she asked for it" or "it was regrettable but understandable"

26. See: Interviewing

Untold Stories	Reporting Tips
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Follow up: find out what happened afterwards. Investigate the legal process; identify the human angle: eg how do rape survivors handle post-traumatic stress?
<p>Domestic violence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Beatings ◆ "Stove burning" ◆ Acid attacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Investigate the correlation between increased levels of domestic violence and the rise of violent period in the community. ◆ Show how domestic violence relates to forms of cultural/social violence. Give the bigger picture. ◆ Highlight initiatives which challenge the notion that domestic violence is a "women's issue"; initiatives that show men and women coming together to solve the problem ◆ Investigate if survivors of domestic violence are able to claim their legal rights.
<p>Health issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ HIV/AIDS + other STDs ◆ Rise in maternal & infant mortality rates ◆ Cholera, malaria, dysentery and other diseases that are exacerbated by conflict ◆ Health needs of refugees ◆ Landmine injuries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Investigate how and why HIV/AIDS (as well as other diseases) "feast on gender inequality and war"²⁷ ◆ What are the "forgotten" health needs of refugees? (eg sanitary towels, contraception) ◆ Show how women are particularly vulnerable to landmines because they work in the fields, collect water and gather firewood
<p>Trafficking and prostitution:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Investigate how this is exacerbated by the breakdown in social structures caused by period ◆ Ask who controls the sex trade. Who benefits from it? Who suffers? ◆ What are the rights of sex-workers?
<p>Women combatants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Rebel groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ask: why did they join? Were their hopes realised? If not, why? ◆ Were they forced to join? By whom and why? Are women more at risk than men in this regard?

27. More than Victims op cit. p 12

Untold Stories	Reporting Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Army, police etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Are there differences in the way men and women combatants are treated?
<p>War widows:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Investigate what societal pressures such women face (eg in Sri Lanka widows are considered "unlucky" and are often forbidden to attend weddings or other community events. What psychological impact does this have? ◆ How do war widows cope financially? What are their legal rights? Are they able to claim these rights? Why not? ◆ Has widowhood empowered them? How?
<p>DDR: <i>(Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Women combatants ◆ Women sex slaves ◆ Women porters, cooks etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ When reporting on DDR schemes question gender-blind definitions of 'combatants': "No matter what role women played in armed groups, they, too, need to have programs and opportunities to be retrained and replaced in the community just as combatants do under DDR programs."²⁸
<p>Peace processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Peace negotiations ◆ Formal peace agreements ◆ Informal peace deals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Who are the negotiators? Are they truly representative? ◆ Are peace agreements gender-aware or gender-blind? ◆ In informal peace deals, are women commodified? (for example, in Pakistan women are sometimes "given" to seal a treaty between different tribal groups)

"Most Sri Lankan women have little freedom to develop independent incomes or social networks. Once they become widows, their social status lowers. Considered unlucky, they are not invited to weddings or festivals, and face opposition if they try to remarry.

Today, given widows' new and unique circumstances, they respond in different ways: by going into debt, becoming dependent on other family members or trying to find work to support themselves and their children."

Melissa Butcher: "War widows learn survival" (WFS)

28. Felicity Hill quoted in More than Victims

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Fact sheet on "Women and war: Sexual violence."

"Sexual violence is a particularly brutal crime to which women are all too frequently subjected in wartime. It is a means of warfare when used to torture, injure, extract information, degrade, intimidate and punish for actual or alleged deeds attributed to women or members of their family.

Sexual violence, particularly rape, has been used to bring about 'ethnic cleansing' of an area, by spreading fear and compelling people to leave.

Rape and other forms of sexual violence committed in wartime are prohibited under international humanitarian law, which is principally enshrined in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional

Protocols of 1977, and are war crimes under the Statute of the International Criminal Court. Sexual violence in times of armed conflict is not inevitable and must be prevented.

Parties to an armed conflict must ensure that rape and other forms of sexual violence are not committed at any time. Arms bearers must receive clear instructions and training with specific references to the prohibition of sexual violence against women and men, adults and children.

Those who have survived sexual violence need to be protected from further attacks and receive appropriate treatment for the physical and psychological consequences. The treatment must be given confidentially and in a manner that is sensitive to the local culture.

Respect for and protection of women in wartime can and must become a reality."



Journalism and "intended outcomes"

"Exploring these issues is never easy. It means going beyond the obvious, it means understanding complexity... it means most of all understanding your responsibility as someone reporting on violence and conflict, a responsibility that is not merely professional but also moral, also human. It's the age-old dilemma that war photographers talked about: when you see someone being killed, is it more important to photograph them or to try and stop the killing? What do you do?"

Indian journalist Urvashi Butalia cuts to the heart of the issue with this remark in her presentation paper for the UNESCO/NPI Roundtable. How do we balance professional journalistic neutrality with a commitment to human rights? And is it possible to challenge the stereotypes of gender and conflict in our newsrooms and our societies, and still be "objective" in our reporting?

Guardian journalist Maggie O'Kane, says it is not impossible - as long as "objectivity" is redefined:

*"We are the personal and we are the professional... I think that we can still feel and still be truthful. And I think the word 'objectivity' is highly over-rated in our profession. I think what we should be aspiring to is truth, and the truth isn't always very objective."*²⁹

O'Kane is one of a growing number of journalists and media analysts worldwide who have debunked the "objectivity myth". They observe that all journalists, as human beings, bring culturally implanted attitudes and values to their work, which inevitably have some effect on what they choose to report. True objectivity

is impossible. Professional journalists rely on established standards and practices to guide themselves away from attitudes and assumptions, and towards accuracy, fair balance and a sense of social responsibility.

Many journalists argue that their role is merely to observe and to report what they see. But, it is not that simple³⁰. While few media practitioners would go as far as the Turkish journalism student who declared, "I cannot be objective because I am on the side of peace!"³¹, others would agree that their role is to be agents of positive change - by writing balanced, accurate stories that expose injustice, and pointing the way towards a range of possible solutions.

In other words:

- ✦ Journalists cannot personally stop the killing, but their reporting can create a well-informed public that addresses violence responsibly.
- ✦ Journalists cannot ignore conflict and violence as news. But they can be aware that raw conflict is not the whole story.
- ✦ Journalists should therefore include in their reporting a search for solutions and a search for the common ground. By so doing they will give the bigger picture.

As Butalia says, exploring these issues is a complex process. It means intentionally going beyond the traditional exclusion of women in stories about conflict. It means not simply reporting the myths and impressions of conflict which have been served up previously by leaders and repeated by other journalists.

But is it possible, or even desirable for journalists to go further? Recently, media trainers like Jake

29. Meridian Ideas, BBC World Service, 8 January 2001. Producer: Louise Swan. See also 'Beyond Objectivity' by Jay Rosen (Nieman Reports/Winter 1993).

30. See Framing Conflict

31. Comment made at European Centre for Common Ground's "Reporting for Peace" workshop (Thessaloniki, 2003).

Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick have put forward arguments for a journalism that is more deliberately engaged in seeking peace. In essays entitled *Peace Journalism*, and in a book called *Reporting the World*, Lynch argues that journalists should accept responsibility for the influence their work has on what happens next. He says journalists should make new choices in their news judgment. And ultimately the choices of influential news that "engaged journalists" make will be based on what they want to happen, which is peace.³²

Individually, many modern journalists acknowledge a moral willingness to pursue gender equality, or to prevent violent conflict. But the idea of formalising that impulse in journalistic codes of conduct troubles many professionals and wins little endorsement from media corporations.

South Asian media practitioners attending the 2004 UNESCO/NPI Roundtable in Kathmandu were asked to share their views about journalism and activism:

Indian journalist **Sakuntala Narasimhan** has written over 2000 articles in the last 30 years. She sees no contradiction between being a journalist and an activist - especially where human rights are concerned. She became convinced about this when she interviewed a young woman whose husband had tried to burn her alive:

"When I interviewed her it was so traumatic that I wondered whether this was a kind of voyeurism. Here I am making money from writing about the distress of a woman who has gone through such a horrific experience. This is the kind of experience that pushed me into activism. I decided that I can't just collect my cheque and my awards and be done with it. I said:

I need to do something beyond. That's when I decided that my book royalties should go towards helping women like these. And I have gone on protest marches. I have stood outside the High Court holding placards. I have gone to the police commissioner's office with the dowry victims to insist on some action. People come to me with all kinds of problems. I write about them as a journalist and then I follow them up as an activist."

Pakistani journalist, **Beena Sarwar** is a gender rights activist and a member of the Pakistan-India People to People Dialogue. She says that, although there have been times when she has felt "conflicted" about juggling the twin realities of journalist and activist, there is no inherent ethical dilemma:

"I don't think there's any such thing as objectivity. I think anyone who pretends that they're objective is pulling the wool over their own eyes, as well as the eyes of their readers, or viewers. If I'm reporting on a discriminatory law in Pakistan I'm not objective about it. I have very strong feelings. But I will also make sure I give the other side of the argument. The best thing you can do is to try to be fair - and to cover all points of view, particularly the marginalised, the dispossessed and those who are not normally given a voice."

The first time I was asked to describe my experiences as a woman journalist I was very offended. I said: what do you mean, woman journalist? I'm a journalist! And then the woman who was asking this question said: where you are, who you are, is obviously shaped by your experiences. This got me thinking that, yes, my involvement in the women's movement in Pakistan, which started off my involvement in the human rights

32. McGoldrick, Annabel & Lynch, Jake. *Reporting the World*. 2003. Online version at www.reportingtheworld.org.uk.

movement and the Pakistan-India People to People dialogue obviously has a lot to do with my own feminist perspective, so that bears on everything I do, whether I choose to say I'm a woman journalist or just a journalist."

As Sarwar says, the journalist's first priority is to achieve balance and fair representation in a story. In gender and conflict-sensitive reporting this means reflecting the experiences and voices of all those who are affected.

Sakuntala Narasimhan further points out that gender perspectives must be inclusive. For example, if a law designed to safeguard the rights of women has also threatened the rights of men it is important to write about it - even if only a few men have been negatively affected:

"Although I specialise in writing about gender, I'm not anti-men. I'm anti-oppression. The law can be very dehumanising. When I wrote about this I got a couple of nasty letters from women saying: you can't blame the law. They thought I was not being true to the feminist cause. But I get letters like that all the time. It's part of the satisfaction of writing to get feedback from my readers."

Such examples remind us that newspaper, radio and TV reports do not only reflect events in the outside world - they also shape public opinion. In an article titled, "Pakistan: Gang Rape for 'Honour'"³³, Massoud Ansari outlines the case of Mukhtiar Mai (a young village woman, whom a tribal court sentenced to a "punishment" of gang rape, because of

her brother's alleged "illicit liaison" with a woman of a higher caste). This case - unlike so many others - led to a public outcry, thanks largely to the role played by local media:

"The incident remained buried for over a week and the state machinery moved only when a local newspaper reported it. Countrywide protests by human rights activists followed, highlighting the unfairness of 'justice' meted out by the powerful tribesmen."

The Mukhtiar Mai case is a vivid reminder of the power of media: either to reinforce the status quo (with all its injustices and inequalities) or to ask the kind of questions that are catalysts for positive transformation.

There are also journalists and media practitioners who go even farther. Aware of the power of media, they seek to marshal the skills and resources of journalism as a tool for directly transforming attitudes, promoting reconciliation and reducing conflict. Their explicit intention is to produce behavioral change through their writing or broadcasting. Usually the most innovative programs are developed by NGOs and community-based organisations, often working in partnership with community media. **Intended outcome programming**, as it is called, can be effective. It is different from professional journalism, and it does raise questions about core values such as impartiality and fairness. But the media, ultimately, can be more than just news, and it can contribute to gender parity and peace-building in many ways.

33. Women's Feature Service op cit. See Best Practices

Media Culture

*"Many people - members of the media included - say we have entered an 'information era'. Whether this is true or not, there is no doubt that the information the media spreads around the world affects war and peace as never before. We need to put women into the picture - both as producers of media information and as subjects of it. Otherwise, women's role in peace-building will continue to be ignored, and the primary images we get from conflict zones will be ones of despair."*³⁴

In the new millennium there are many reasons to feel optimistic about the state of the media. Asia and Africa, in particular³⁵, have seen a dramatic transformation from "a largely government-owned, monopolistic and uncreative media environment into a more dynamic, popular, democratic, creative, commercial and complex one."³⁶ The word "democratic" is particularly important because the essential role of the media as the voice of free expression - which is a universal human right - only functions fully in a democracy. In that sense, then, the new millennium's proliferation of media should be a sign of greater free expression and debate. It should also signal greater tolerance and respect for media in individual countries' laws and practices. But, as Sri Lankan journalist Nakala Gunawardene reminds us:

*"That good news for some is also bad news for some. Media liberalisation has not been matched by a corresponding increase in the public sphere - the area that accommodates and nurtures wide-ranging discussion and debate on matters of public interest."*³⁷

What is emerging almost as fast as the diversity of media outlets is a quite contrary

stifling of diversity of voices, of diverse "news." This new phenomenon and its implicit threat to democracy is much powered by the private-sector nature of many of the new media outlets. As private commercial enterprises, these outlets put the prime imperative of gaining more customers (readers, listeners, viewers and advertisers) ahead of providing freely expressed and sometimes unpopular news and views. From a business perspective the news becomes a product or commodity like any other, to be as cheaply produced as possible. And from a big business or corporate perspective, reducing the diversity - buying up and shutting down competitors - increases the corporation's market share and profitability. But it does nothing good for democracy which depends upon diversity of free expression.

Commercial diversity can be a source of higher quality journalism when properly managed and regulated. But the threat to democracy of uncontrolled and profit-obsessed media is already severe in the US and Western Europe, and there are media mega-corporations emerging everywhere.

In Gunawardene's words:

"This now threatens to replace the earlier governmentally-controlled concentration of media with an increasingly narrow commercial and political one. This has serious implications for the diversity and accountability of the media."

We are now living in the era of the three Cs of modern media: commercialisation, commodification & concentration. What are the implications for journalists trying to cover conflict from a gender perspective?



34. "Women, War and Peace" P.109 www.womenwarpeace.org
35. Burma/Myanmar and Zimbabwe are obvious exceptions
36. 2002 Global Civil Society Yearbook, quoted in Gunawardene, Nakala. *Media: The stepchild of WSIS?* OneWorld, South Asia, November 2003. Available at www.digitallopportunity.org/article/view/72681/1
37. Gunawardene. Ibid

THE 3 Cs EFFECT

(Commercialisation, commodification & concentration)

Government monopolies loosened; media laws and controls liberalised to allow diversity of ownership.

Dramatic increase in number of media organisations and outlets.

Increased competition among outlets. A struggle for **commercial** survival. Smaller media organisations swallowed up by more powerful ones. They may become dependent upon secret financiers who pay for their survival but control the news choices in line with their own business or political interest.

Emergence of media moguls and monopolies. Media ownership **concentrated** into fewer hands. Media outlets become more market-oriented and city-based (where biggest markets are).

News becomes **commodified**, treated as a product to please more consumers and attract more advertisers. Advertisers become powerful, and may block "negative" news. Profit growth becomes a greater priority than public service.

News merges with entertainment for the sake of building audiences and ratings. News becomes more sensational in words, pictures and images.

Less budget is allocated to news-gathering.

Status of news is diminished.

Urban, middle-class values and voices predominate. Uncontroversial, status-reinforcing views are repeated. Gender issues which challenge traditional roles are ignored. Myths and misperceptions about "other" people or interests go unchallenged. Alternatives to violent conflict go unexplored. Patriotism prevails over professionalism in reporting. Rural people, poor people - especially women - are excluded from news coverage.

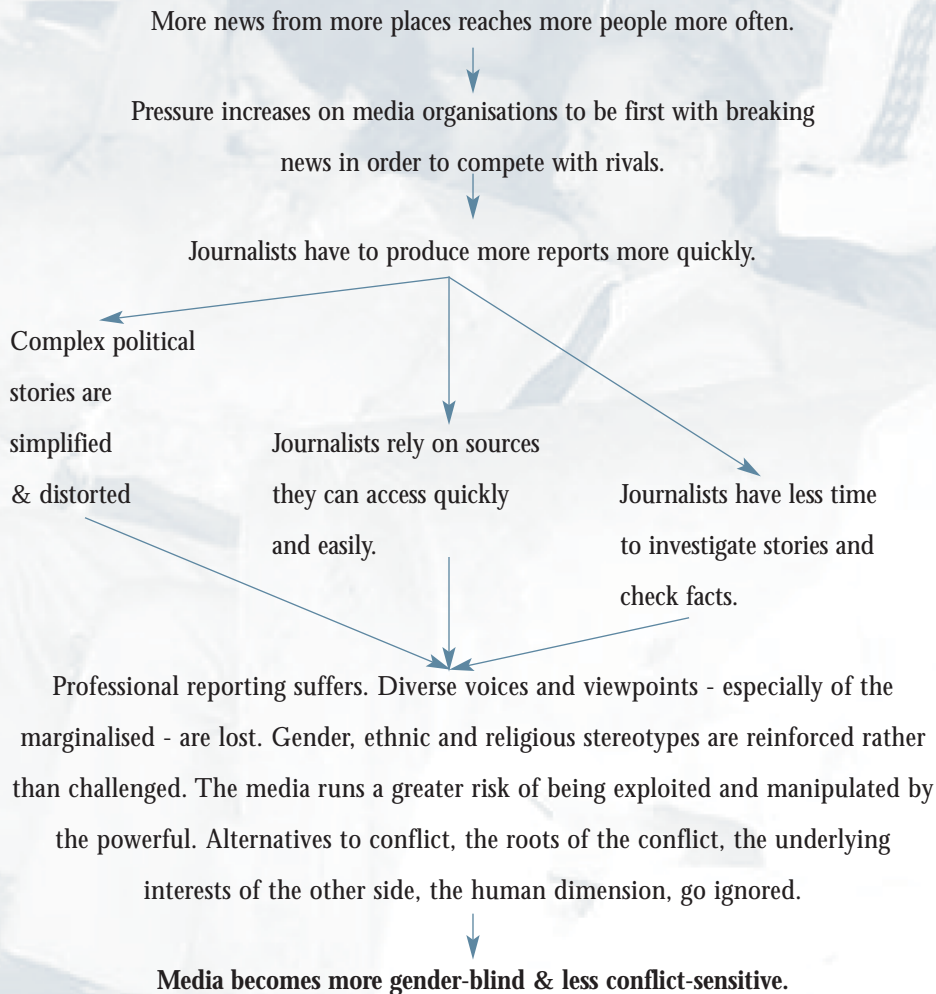
Media becomes more gender-blind & less conflict-sensitive.

NEW TECHNOLOGY AND THE 3 CS

Advancements in media technology have proved to be a mixed blessing, especially when that same technology becomes a servant of the 3 Cs.

True, new technology has generated many new media voices, but with increased market competition "it can mean they have to shout louder to be heard, and that can act to coarsen what can be said".³⁸

How does this affect the quality of journalism?



38. McGoldrick, Annabel and Lynch, Jake. *Peace Journalism: what is it? How to do it?* 2000. available at www.transcend.org. See also their analysis of the "Feedback Loop" and the "Media Savvy World"

*"Broadcasting has become a market-based activity where profits are being made mostly in cities, attracting advertisers and audiences with a mixture of music and light entertainment catering to the lifestyle needs of the middle class. Even in South Asian countries with widespread malnutrition, such channels would rather talk about how to lose weight."*³⁹

The importance of safeguarding community media

When profit and private interests over-ride public interest, the role of community media becomes increasingly important. Such non-profit, community-owned media outlets provide a space for diverse voices - something which is vital in times of violent conflict.

Mirna Cunningham, Director of Nicaragua's University of the Atlantic, notes that:

*"It is precisely when some media begins using language of intolerance that community media becomes even more crucial. It gives a voice to the marginalised people who are being targeted. It contributes to building bridges of understanding through the use of simple language where we all have a voice. It also provides for a more informed and critical audience that will not so easily fall prey to the hate messages."*⁴⁰

The work of organisations like the Antenna Foundation (Nepal) and Search for Common Ground is vivid testimony of the power of community media to cool the fever of conflict. There is, too, an

increasing demand for "community media to be considered as a vital part of post-conflict infrastructure alongside housing and water"⁴¹ And as the Kampala Declaration (2002) noted, such media can also play a vital role in setting up pre-conflict early warning systems, so that women (who are most at risk) can access support quickly.

The importance of radio

The resurgence of radio is another important development in the new environment. Radio, thanks to new transmission technologies and tiny, affordable receivers, enables news and views to reach almost everywhere. UNIFEM's "Women, War and Peace" report reminds us that the majority of the world's 960 million illiterate people are women. They rely on radio - not print - to receive and create information:

*"Radio is a perfect medium for reaching large numbers of people, especially during conflict when small transistors may be the only source of information for uprooted populations. According to FIRE, radio in Latin America is the most democratic medium and has a greater diversity of voices and ownership than other media. Since the cost of purchasing time on radio is relatively inexpensive, social groups can use even commercial radio to get their message out".*⁴²

In this high-tech era of globalisation and commodification, radio may prove to be more effective than print or TV in providing a space for diverse voices and views - especially those of women. Community radio in particular represents a promising opportunity.

39. Gunawardene, ibid

40. "Women, War and Peace" p 108

41. Ibid

42. Ibid

Reasons to be hopeful

"Women are increasingly learning to use the media to tell their own story, to document human rights violations and to report on peace-building. Everywhere we went we saw women using media in creative ways to build peace. Everything from comic books to call-in radio shows, from street theatre to videos to traditional story telling is being utilized. Barely one month after the fall of the Taliban, five women pooled their own money to create Seerat, Afghanistan's first independent weekly newspaper run by and for women. They printed 500 copies of their handwritten publication, which included articles that urged the government to provide day care for its female employees, encouraged women to refuse to sit at the back of buses and depicted the miserable conditions for returning refugee women. For an upcoming issue, Seerat's editor, Aeen, said she planned to 'expose the new government's refusal to play the music of female singers and musicians on state-run television and radio."⁴³

The challenge for journalists

There is no instant remedy for the worst excesses of the 3 Cs of modern media - commercialism, commodification and concentration. But every journalist has to confront the challenge. Without thoughtful response, journalism will increasingly fail its first imperative: to provide citizens with enough reliable information to make decisions in their own best interests.

One response within the grasp of journalists is to build trust with media consumers by telling important stories more accurately, engagingly and meaningfully. A well-informed citizenry will reject or prohibit media which is just a corporate version of a state-media lacking all diversity. When people trust media and recognise that its independence is essential to human liberty, they will also stand up and defend the media, when necessary.

And that means that journalists, as a profession, need to reclaim their pride. As Indian journalist Sidharth Bhatia⁴⁴ put it recently:

"Journalism is a profession like no other, and despite its debasement, journalists still see informing the reader with honesty and integrity as their main task. They chafe at these cynical and arbitrary whims of their owners who treat the dispensing of news as no different from running a fast food joint."

Because of the specific way in which women are targeted during conflict, and because Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security called for further study, UNIFEM appointed Elisabeth Rehn & Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to travel to conflict areas, interview women and bring their concerns to the attention of the United Nations and the world. Their findings were published in "Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building". Among their recommendations they included a special section on media.

43. Ibid p 107

44. Bhatia, Sidharth. *The times they are a-changing*. 18-2-2003. Thepioneer.com.

On Media and Communications the Experts call for:

- 1. Increased donor resources and access for women to media and communications technology, so that gender perspectives, women's expertise and women's media can influence public discourse and decision-making on peace and security.**
- 2. UN, government, private and independent media to provide public information and education on the gender dimensions of peace processes, security, reconciliation, disarmament and human rights.**
- 3. Hate media, under any circumstances and particularly when used for direct and public incitement to commit crimes against women, to be prosecuted by national and international courts.**
- 4. Donors and agencies to support the training of editors and journalists to eliminate gender bias in reporting and investigative journalism in conflict and post-conflict situations, and to promote gender equality and perspectives.**
- 5. A panel of experts to undertake an assessment of the relevance and adequacy of standards on the military use of 'psychological and information warfare' and its impact on women.**

- 6. The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression of the Commission on Human Rights to carry out a study on gender, media and conflict.**

The South Asia media scene

At the UNESCO-NPI Roundtable, participating journalists and analysts from Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India were invited to comment on their countries' respective media cultures, and to highlight trends they perceived across the entire region. The following reflections are drawn from their comments, plus observations submitted later from other recent country-specific analyses.

Women's participation in regional media

In South Asia, active participation by women in journalism is changing but it is still intolerably low, probably nowhere exceeding 15 to 20 per cent. It is barely one third of that percentage in Bangladesh and Nepal.

And even these figures can be deceptive. A 2002 survey of 14 media outlets in Nepal showed an impressive 20 per cent participation rate for women, but these outlets included new FM radio stations where most of the women produced music and entertainment and almost none gathered news.⁴⁵ Despite other figures, the reality is that less than 5 per cent of reporters in Nepal are women. (For comparison, a 2004 study in the United States shows women make up 37 per cent of newsroom personnel)⁴⁶.

In South Asia women journalists in the region remain too much relegated to the soft news ghetto. Women reporters remain largely excluded from covering conflict or political violence. And in terms of content, as one Nepali researcher put it, "the portrayal of women

45. Thapa, Manju. *Country report: Women and Media in Nepal. 2002.* www.isiswomen.org/pub/wia2002/countryrep.htm.

46. American Society of Newspaper Editors. *Annual Newsroom Survey*, April 8 2004.

...remains largely negative, unhealthy and biased." Nor is there sufficient social comment on this situation, "because conventional cultural frameworks do not critique such reporting," said a Sri Lankan analyst.

The biggest improvement in female participation in the news business has been in television, almost everywhere. The reasons are various, including the allure of this relatively better pay, visibility, and the presence of younger news managers more open to hiring women as capable professionals. Women television news managers are on the increase. They are also more frequently assigned to so-called serious subjects such as politics. In Bangladesh where television-watching nearly doubled to 61 per cent of the population from 1997 - 2002, the impact is powerful. "Women on air challenge stereotypes and change perceptions simply by being on air", noted one participant.

Print has been slower to change. In Bangladesh, as one participant commented, "participation of women remains minimal....And most (women journalists) remain traditionally ghettoised to soft stories relating to culture, entertainment, women's and children's issues."

It is also notable that Bangladesh is one of the most violent countries for journalists in Asia, according to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). The CPJ says that journalists are routinely harassed, threatened, and attacked by henchmen hired by political officials. The perpetrators, however, are rarely brought to justice.⁴⁷ Nepal's media has also experienced particularly repressive official censorship and insurgents' hostility to journalists.

There are positive exceptions almost everywhere, but generally in South Asia there are still few senior women newspaper editors. "In our country, almost all the news gate-keepers are male" is the common refrain. Female photojournalists are also extremely rare. "In Nepal," as one participant cited, "Women rarely survive long in this male-dominated profession."

The national press (especially English-language) in all five countries demonstrates some improvement in gender sensitivity and female participation in journalism. "But it simply hasn't spread at all to the (local) language press," observed one participant. Others agreed. In India, for example, there is a near-total absence of women journalists in the Hindi press in the six or seven states which constitute the Hindi heartland.

■ The portrayal of women

Throughout the region, gender stereotyping in media is compounded by commercial advertising and the entertainment industry. "Advertisements generally are a dynamic source of gender stereotyping," said a Sri Lankan. "The portrayal of women in Indian media continues to be deeply troubling. The portrayal of women in cinema (and soap operas) is itself a vast subject....And films have a definite bias towards the upper classes," according to one Indian participant. Nepal's most popular entertainment television program generally portrays women as "pushy, cunning, tricky, garrulous, insincere, silly and ignorant characters in domestic roles," notes a Nepal analysis.⁴⁸ The *Changing Images* study of women's portrayal in Pakistan found constant use of disparaging descriptions of women in news stories, almost no focus on women's issues in editorials, and exploitative portrayals of women in advertising.⁴⁹

47. Committee to Protect Journalists. *Culture of Violence*. 2004. http://www.cpj.org/Briefings/2004/DA_spring04/Bangla_DA.pdf
48. Thapa, op cit.
49. *Changing Images*. Uks Institute. 2002.

Conflict reporting

On the question of reporting violent conflict, it was noted that in India the media is formally free and in practice vibrantly competitive. But when addressing external conflict the media often functions with both voluntary and imposed constraints. Patriotism supersedes professionalism. Too often, "the media becomes the handmaiden of the state," as one Indian participant said. In Sri Lanka, however, what motivates and compels most coverage of the country's internal conflict is defined by "which side of the ethnic divide is one reporting from; which side of the political divide is one reporting from".

In India and Pakistan in particular, the media focus on external conflicts such as Kashmir has been at the expense of other long-festering internal insurgencies, and caste or communal conflicts. Massive internal displacement and refugee camps, in North-East India for example, are rarely covered in most Indian media. The tribal administration areas of northern Pakistan, where rates of gender violence are high, operate beyond the reach of national law, or inquiring journalists. In Nepal the violent conflict which envelopes 70 per cent of the countryside is not reflected in the amount of coverage it receives in the Kathmandu-centric media.

"A worrying development (in domestic conflict coverage) is also how many such conflicts...are papered over with a patina of culture and identity so that it seems as if they are about issues of identity while they may actually be about issues to do with access to water, or health or food," said one Indian analyst. Angana Parekh, director of the New Delhi-based Women's Feature Service, confirms this and also points to

widespread general abuse of ethnic labelling, as shown by a major 2004 study of gender insensitivity in Indian, Pakistani and Bangladesh English-language dailies.⁵⁰

In Nepal, "there is rarely any news published about the ongoing conflict from the perspective of women, except occasional event-based stories," said one Nepali journalist. Women in particular are trapped in the conflict between the army and the rebels.

In Sri Lanka, the implications of culture upon conflict are generally taboo topics. "Generally a critique of Buddhism and Sinhala society is not tolerated however much these things may be related to conflict...In Tamil society a critique of Tamil nationalist politics...is generally not tolerated," said one analyst.

In Pakistan, with a modern history of bloody internal conflicts, there has been little reporting on women and children affected by the violence, or reporting on initiatives responding to the victims.

In Bangladesh most of the forms of violence are internal to the country - political conflict, property ownership and corruption-related conflict. "A major challenge we face in Bangladesh is that women journalists are very rarely assigned to cover conflict of political violence, which is very common. Because the bosses think women are not capable of covering such things." Violent incidents against women also receive heavy, often sensational coverage in the newspapers. But follow-up is minimal. Reports of investigation, trial or punishment are rare.

In Pakistan, "with violence and discrimination against women forming

50. Angana Parekh. Reporting on Conflict. 2004. Women's Feature Service.

part of the social fabric of our society ...male journalists tend to sensationalise crimes against women, which in my opinion is a crime in itself," said one participant. There is always the risk of stigmatising women victims by reporting them. Nonetheless, Pakistan is enjoying unprecedented media freedom, especially with the electronic media where investigative journalism is on the rise.

Finally, there is the increasingly indiscriminate media linkage of religion and politics, militancy and nationalism. "The generous use of the term 'Islamic extremists' to describe all those involved or suspected of any terrorist activities contributes in a large way to keeping the biases and prejudices alive among media outlets and media consumers alike, noted Angana Parekh in her study. "Very rarely does one find editorials or news items challenging such biases."⁵¹

Fundamentalism also presents other challenges to journalists, notes Indian analyst Ammu Joseph. Religion is being used for political ends. The forces of fundamentalism can "endanger press freedom, not to mention society as a whole, because they're much more intolerant of dissent. They resent the media, especially the independent, liberal sections of the media, and accuse them of bias because they don't toe their line."⁵²

Conclusion

To be expected of professionals, the journalists at the UNESCO-NPI Roundtable were sharp critics of the greatest shortcomings of their own national-media, and especially gender blindness and insensitive conflict reporting. The description of imbalances, failures, and

obstacles was a powerful critique of cultures and of media. But nowhere was it suggested that change is stalemated, or that women are falling backward in refocusing the media's perspective on gender and conflict. As one participant summarised, what is needed is more of the basics: more education for everyone, more rule of law, and more professional training for journalists.

As mentioned earlier, at the UNESCO-NPI Roundtable, Angana Parekh (Women's Feature Service Director) summarised the results of a regional media survey conducted in 2003 on six newspapers in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. According to Parekh:

- ✦ "One gets a sense of women as a commodity, and an object to be commented upon, rather than a significant part of the world community."
- ✦ "As far as reporting on communalism and related issues is concerned, one finds a liberal dose of the assertion of identities - religious, linguistic, regional, etc. Alongside this assertion is the negation of the 'other'. The media thus plays a significant role in not only reinforcing or perpetuating existing prejudices and stereotypes, it also has the important social influence of constructing mindsets by legitimizing disparities, conflicts and differences amongst people through convincing newspaper reports and editorials. This is even more dangerous when the reporting is merely descriptive, communicating the 'feeling' of reporting 'facts' rather than being investigative with a critical voice. What gives hope in this scenario are the cases of positive reporting one occasionally comes across."

51. Parekh, *ibid.*

52. Joseph, Ammu. Ammu Joseph Q&A. IWMF.org/featu res/7598



Newsroom culture

Gender-sensitive journalism depends on gender-sensitive journalists. But we all know it doesn't begin or end there.

The reporting process starts with editors who make choices about what stories to cover and who should cover them. It continues with the copy-editors or line producers who handle the report, and the news editors or programme managers who make the final decisions. There are executive and external influences at work too, sending powerful signals back into the newsroom - signals that shape the perception of news.

Journalism schools produce more women graduates than men worldwide⁵³, but research shows that less than 10 per cent of political or government news coverage includes women's experiences⁵⁴. As Bangladeshi journalist, Farida Yasmin, explains: "The attitude at the top is at the heart of the problem".

Newsrooms are often microcosms of the gender-blind societies in which they operate; they embody the same imbalances of power and the same skewed values. South Asian journalists attending the UNESCO-NPI Roundtable agreed that transformation is long overdue. Here is a summary of their analysis:

Transforming the Gender-blind Newsroom

Problem	Effects of Problem	Ways to Transform the Problem
Gender issues ghettoised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Gender-related stories are seen as "women's issues" or "soft" news that only women journalists or "lady reporters" can cover; ◆ Women journalists are not allowed to cover "hard" news - especially conflict stories. So conflict reporting loses a gender perspective. ◆ Women journalists/editors are sent to gender training programmes but men are not. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Appoint more women managers, editors and mentors (but know that "a gender-aware male manager will be more effective than a female manager who is not.") ◆ Ensure that gender training is attended by both men and women.
Lack of recognition of social and family pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Inflexible routines and working hours ◆ Women journalists (and sometimes men who are single parents) have to juggle work commitments with family commitments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Introduce flexible working hours ◆ Think outside the newsroom space and find ways for journalists to work from home - at least some of the time

53. United Nations, *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*. New York, 2000.

54. *Women War and Peace*, op cit. Page 104.

Problem	Effects of Problem	Ways to Transform the Problem
	<p>Stress levels increase. Quality of reporting suffers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ If possible set up a crèche or other child-minding support system
<p>Unfair employment practices - especially relating to reproductive rights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Equal work does not receive equal pay. ◆ Maternity leave conditions are inadequate - and sometimes non-existent. ◆ Women "penalised" for child-bearing (not promoted, not given equal opportunities for skills training etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Educate all staff about national laws and international declarations relating to gender, the workplace, media and human rights. ◆ Ensure that all staff know what action to take if these rights are infringed. Ensure their actions are supported.
<p>Gender-blind news values prevail</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Unbalanced, sensational reporting that reinforces gender stereotypes. ◆ Discerning readers, listeners and viewers lose faith in the media as a credible source of information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Adoption of codes of ethics in the newsroom that stipulate gender-fair reporting. "There are almost no such codes today". ◆ Gender-sensitivity training for sub-editors and news editors. "As gate-keepers of the news flow and guarantors of style, they can do much to eliminate insensitive language and stereotyping". The quality of journalism improves. ◆ Organise regular focus groups from a cross section of media consumers: listen to what readers, viewers and listeners feel about the media and its coverage.
<p>Macho newsroom culture prevails</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sexual harassment (in various forms) increases because newsroom culture tacitly condones it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develop and enforce a newsroom code of ethics on workplace behaviour with serious penalties for sexual harassment.

Problem	Effects of Problem	Ways to Transform the Problem
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pressure on women to be "one of the guys" makes them reluctant to speak out about unsafe situations (eg working night shifts with no proper security) ◆ Culture of disrespect grows in the newsroom leading to divisions, stress and lack of productivity. ◆ A macho newsroom culture also affects attitudes to conflict reporting. Thus stories about peace-building are seen as "soft". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provision of late-night transport for women should be seen as "a company obligation, not pampering!" ◆ Provide a safe sleeping area within the office for people finishing a shift in the early hours.
Caste, religious and ethnic prejudices prevail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Such prejudices especially affect women from minority groupings. They are "doubly marginalised". ◆ Diverse voices within the newsroom are dumbed down. The newsroom becomes polarised and the quality of journalism reflects this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Conduct diversity training for everyone in the newsroom - and ensure that such training mainstreams a gender perspective. ◆ News editors and managers should affirm the variety of voices in the newsroom, and help staff to realise why such diversity is crucial to ensure quality reporting.

*"Women are as effective as men in reporting hard news and violent conflict. In conservative areas where female victims feel uncomfortable talking to a male reporter, a woman reporter may be able to uncover the truth."*⁵⁵

Affirmative action policies

Roundtable participants agreed that affirmative action policies are both a "corporate responsibility, and smart management". In the increasingly large and competitive media market, more women journalists in senior roles (combined with a genuinely gender-sensitive news perspective) can generate fresh ways of reporting which, in turn, can reach a huge, neglected

55. Comment made at UNESCO-NPI Roundtable

audience. This is also an essential part of democracy-building.

"Simply being female does not ensure a gender-sensitive perspective."

*Pakistani journalist
Beena Sarwar⁵⁶*

Taking responsibility

It is easy to look at a typically gender-blind newsroom and feel depressed. But Roundtable participants felt strongly that individual journalists can make a difference. Here are some suggestions:

- ✦ Be assertive: request so-called "male" beats like politics and conflict reporting.
- ✦ Create non-partisan professional regional associations of women journalists, and working groups within the profession. Find the time to support such groups in whatever way you can. Also, join a media union and fight to mainstream gender issues.
- ✦ Lobby for media award initiatives that celebrate the role and work of women journalists, and recognise quality, gender-sensitive reporting by women and men.
- ✦ Speak out against unfair newsroom practices - and support other women and men who do.

Lonesome at the top?

In April 2003, the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) celebrated the appointment of **Bachi Karkaria** as Delhi Times of India's resident editor. In these extracts from the IWMF's online discussion, she responds to e-mails from around the world.⁵⁷

Sangeeta: What is necessary for a woman journalist in India to become successful -

Having a godfather or being a part of cocktail circle? My experience tells me that there is no appreciation of hard work and efficiency. Why is a woman in the newsroom considered a fool who need not be appreciated and considered for more responsibilities?

Bachi Karkaria: No, Sangeeta, you can make it entirely on the strength of your merit and commitment. Godfathers or cocktail savvy aren't much use when you actually have to deliver, because there's a bunch of discerning readers out there who you can't fool. Why should a woman not be taken seriously in the newsroom if she is good at her work. Let's not make gender an issue at our end. All the best.

Carole Simpson: Hi my dear friend - I was so happy to hear about your new assignment. I always thought that if women achieved executive positions they would make an effort to improve the status of women in their companies. You are quoted as saying that you want to bring to your publication "quality and a robust energy." I wonder if that means hiring and promoting more women on the staff. My best wishes for your great accomplishment. Love, Carole

Bachi Karkaria: Great to hear from your Carole. Wish I could hear your booming laugh. I knew you'd throw me what in cricket is called a googly. But I'll try to answer. A secure woman will always try to improve the status of women. She can do this directly by being a mentor and a facilitator. She also does this indirectly: one individual being good at her job changes gender attitudes more significantly than we give it credit for. As for hiring women, there's no problem here. Women are so clearly ahead of the pack at interviews, that at times we wonder whether

56. Ibid
57. Reprinted with permission from the website of the International Women's Media Foundation <http://www.iwmf.org/chat/view/7449>

we should step back and hire the token man. We're currently engaged in identifying the next generation of leadership, and that's where I should start taking affirmative action. Lots of love.

Whitney Rutter: As an Indian woman, how does it feel to become a powerful editor? Do many men in India respond negatively to your newly assigned position? How have you overcome some of the challenges of socially determined gender roles?

Bachi Karkaria: Whitney, women have been asserting themselves in Indian media at different levels, so I guess the guys are conditioned, and prepared to accept a woman at the top. After all, it's likely that they had a woman Chief sub-editor or Chief Reporter at some stage. If an organisation and the individual is professional, and it is manifestly clear that she's the right person for the job when she's appointed, and she carries this through while conducting herself in this slot, opposition or resentment simply slinks away. A lot depends on the woman though. She shouldn't bend over backwards too much to be 'one of the guys', but she shouldn't strut too much either. Frankly, she should just be herself, because that's what's got her this far. I haven't felt any negative vibes in any of the leadership positions I have held, and some places have been very 'male club'. If you are referring to family, I guess the ground rules should be laid down from the start, again in a spirit of mutual respect. Then, the woman should show how

serious she is about this herself. As success begins to come, everyone realises that any adjustment is worth it. Men do have an ego about high-profile wives, and media, per se, is high profile. But again handling relationships sensitively makes all the difference.

Delia Lessing: Dear Bachi, Your career accomplishments are so impressive. I'd like to know - what quality do you have that you think has helped you most in your career?

Bachi Karkaria: Difficult question, Delia. I'll let my Dad answer this. He had two 'mantras' which he passed on. 1. Make your own sunshine, and 2. Be flexible. If you bend, you won't break.

Kalpna Chopra: What is the biggest challenge to women in the Indian media? ...Are you lonesome at the top, or do you see other women making their way to your position?

Bachi Karkaria: Biggest challenge: their own attitude. They should stop thinking gender and start thinking professional... Lonesome tonight? No, and let me give a puff to IWJMF here. It really helps to be part of such a network. The interactions I've had with fellow members are reassuring and supportive in the extreme. It's also humbling to see what real dangers some women journalists are up against. They have overcome not mere glass ceilings but ruthless despots.

Part 2





Skills and strategies for working journalists

Framing Conflict

"The power of the media in warfare is formidable. It can be a mediator or an interpreter or even a facilitator of conflict, if only by editing away facts that do not fit the demands of air time or print space."⁵⁸

As journalists, when we write a story, prepare a broadcast item or take a photograph, we always have to exclude more than we can include. Here lies the challenge: how to reveal the bigger picture with its complexities and contradictions, within a frame that is limited by time and space - especially when we are pressured by deadlines and the need to file the story before our competitors. How do we create compelling, immediate news that also includes the context and background essential to understanding the real story?

When telling every story we not only choose who and what to include inside the frame, but who and what to leave out. Our choices are shaped by personal values, professional standards and the news ethics of the organisation for which we work. Sometimes these may contradict one another. But whatever the dynamics, we should recognise that choices have consequences, particularly when reporting conflict.

58. Rehn, Elisabeth & Johnson Sirleaf, Ellen. *Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building*. 2002 UNIFEM



Imagine this: a small demonstration outside a foreign embassy. About 30 men and women are carrying flowers and singing songs urging peace and reconciliation. Police presence is minimal. Then a TV crew arrives and starts filming. As soon as they see the cameras, a few of the younger demonstrators rush forward, excitedly shouting slogans. The camera-person shoots a tight close-up so that the frame is filled with the shouting protestors. The picture excludes the rest of the crowd as well as the immediate surroundings where life is going on as usual. The reporter's opening words: "it started as a peaceful demonstration, but now tension is running high..."

Does this sensationalised approach to news sound familiar? What might have influenced the TV crew's decision to frame

the story in this way? What might be the effect on the viewer?

In today's commercialised media climate, many managers assume that only "bad news sells", and that consumers of media prefer violent images and spicy sensationalism (sometimes called "masala journalism" in South Asia) to balanced, factual, impartial reporting.

They are only partially right. According to psychologists, a diet of violent images can, indeed, become addictive. But, like any drug, it leaves the addict feeling increasingly unsatisfied, even while they crave a stronger dose.

So what do people really want from media? And what do they dislike? A cross-section of Indonesian media consumers was asked to share their views⁵⁹:

What we don't like about the Media	What we want from the Media
Media mostly just follow events. They don't explain what led to those events - and they seldom follow up on stories later.	More awareness of processes, trends, patterns and developments. Events don't just happen in a vacuum.
They concentrate on bad news! The more bodies, the bigger the story. They get stuck on problems and don't look towards solutions - or options for change.	More good news stories: reasons to celebrate, profiles of unknown people who have made a change for the better in the community.
They are often very sensational and emotional in tone.	They should try to be more calm and rational - especially when reporting on conflict.
They tend to focus on powerful people: political leaders, the rich and famous (film stars or musicians). Most newsmakers are men (women just seem to be valued for their bodies) - and most newsworthy people seem to live in towns or cities!	More focus on the powerless and the poor: people who are 'invisible and unheard'. We'd like to hear more about (and from) women. And how about more stories from rural areas? And children?
They often reinforce stereotypes.	We need them to challenge stereotypes - and find fresh, human angles.

59. Lloyd, Fiona. *Reporting from the Frontline*. Internews, 2000 (available in Indonesian only)

These comments reflect a desire for media to:

- ◆ Broaden the frame, so as to include people (especially women) who are all-too often ignored even though they make up the majority of the population;
- ◆ Be more explanatory and less sensational. With good journalism, the news can be informative and compelling without having to be exploitative.
- ◆ Provide information that allows people to decide how to respond, according to their own best interest, to what is happening.
- ◆ Be more proactive instead of following the agenda of the powerful.
- ◆ Reclaim core journalistic values like accuracy and balance so that the news can be credible.

Conflict reporting and gender stereotypes

Many conflict stories portray women and men in the most simplistic terms. Women tend to be seen as passive, gentle victims; men as brutal perpetrators of violence.

This, like all stereotyping, is built on the assumption that groups (whether they are defined by gender, race, ethnicity or religion) are homogenous entities whose members not only behave in the same way, but also share identical values. The reality, of course, is very different - and much more interesting.

During the *More than Victims Conference*⁶⁰ participants pointed out that:

- ◆ Women may be active combatants, war supporters, victims, or mobilisers for peace;
- ◆ In recent violent conflicts men have been subjected to brutality and human rights abuses, simply because they are men⁶¹ - in the same way that women

have been subjected to specific kinds of violence because they are women;

Part of our responsibility as journalists, therefore, is to **disaggregate**: to challenge stereotyping and polarisation by broadening our frame so that we truthfully reflect complexity and diverse views. At the same time, while representing complexity, we should also seek what disputing parties have in common, such as needs that transcend social divisions. This is particularly crucial in times of violent conflict, as Jake Lynch explains:

*"Portraying the nuance and complexity of lived experience, with an equal esteem for the needs and suffering of all parties, can transcend the tendency to lump all stakeholders together into two sides"*⁶²

One example of reframing conventional images to produce a far more revealing and thought-provoking view, is a story called **A Muslim woman stands up** written by Sharmila Joshi, for the Women's Feature Service.

The article profiles the life and work of gender activist Razia Patel. It challenges many prevailing media stereotypes of Muslim women.

"Patel's best known work is the study she did in 1993, traveling across India in search of the 'real' Muslim woman - a person she believed was vastly different from the image of her portrayed in the media and by politicians. 'The Muslim woman has her own thinking, perspective and answers,' Patel says, 'but nobody asks her.' The outlook of political leaders differs vastly from that of Muslim women, Patel realised, when she interviewed 300 women and several political leaders across seven Indian states.

60. *More than Victims* ibid.

61. Recent cases of sexual violence perpetrated against male prisoners in Iraq is one such example.



62. Lynch, Jake. *Using Conflict Analysis in Reporting - the Peace Journalism Option 3*. In *Peace Journalism*. 2000. www.transcend.org.


Fundamentalists highlight issues related to personal law but don't reflect Muslim women's other problems. The media, Patel says, pick up the same projection. 'They focus on what is in focus, on the law and on communalism. Perhaps they feel they can't enter the Muslim woman's domain to understand her.' "

The writer also mentions the support and inspiration Patel received from her father; a detail that challenges another set of stereotypes - this time about Muslim men.

There is nothing "soft" about a conflict-sensitive approach to reframing conventional ways of seeing. In fact, it demands the most rigorous journalistic standards and skills because the reporter has to investigate more deeply, question mainstream perceptions - and remain constantly on the alert to ensure that the story is not coloured by their own prejudices and assumptions.

Above all, this approach demands a solid understanding of the **core values of professional journalism**: accuracy, balance and responsibility:

<p>ACCURACY</p> 	<p>Relatively straight-forward but often abused. Accuracy means precision about everything: from spelling names and citing numbers to reporting what was said or witnessed in its real context and without exaggeration. Accuracy is betrayed by using unreliable sources or sources with hidden interests, and by failing to independently verify or double-source information essential to the story.</p> <p>The lack of double-sourcing turns journalism into rumour-mongering, disinformation and propaganda. Inaccuracy betrays the media's single greatest attribute, its credibility. Citizens will neither believe the media nor tell journalists the truth about events if they fear being misquoted, misinterpreted or maligned.</p>
<p>BALANCE</p> 	<p>Balance begins with the understanding that every story has at least two sides. But it goes beyond simply seeking reaction and giving equal time to both sides. Balance must be fair and impartial - and represent all sides without bias.</p>

	<p>This means examining who is affected and giving them a fair representation in the story especially if they are usually voiceless. It means going beyond the "easy" portrayal of women as subservient, dependent, nurturing, selfless mother and wife, or sex objects, or victims.⁶³ Balance means being disciplined about words and images used, to avoid suggesting that allegations are facts.</p> <p>Impartiality also requires that reporters avoid issues and activities in which they have a prominent or public role, such as political parties, which would influence their reporting or the public perception of their reporting. Bias ultimately destroys credibility.</p>
<p>RESPONSIBILITY</p>	<p>Journalists have obligations to the people they report about, and to those who receive their reports. The most basic responsibility is to protect sources when they should not be named. Responsible journalism also operates within the law. The old journalistic motto "to seek the truth and do no harm" is still a good one. In addition, professional journalism avoids defamation, plagiarism, and malice in reporting. And professional journalism rejects bribes and favours for special interests and pays its own way to get to the story, wherever possible.⁶⁴</p>

As Pakistani journalist, Beena Sarwar remarked at the UNESCO-NPI Roundtable:

"There should be no need for a special focus on gender sensitive reporting

because if reporters do their jobs properly - that is, they are fair and ensure the views of those affected are reflected properly - then the gender perspective would be automatically included."

63. See: Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, *How the media can be more gender sensitive*. Available at www.fjiwomen.com/media_info/speeches/gender_sensitive.htm.

64. See: International Federation of Journalists, *Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists*, at www.IFJ.org

65. Van Dijk, Bernadette, *Screening Gender: Gender Portrayal and Programme-making Routines* UN Division for Advancement of Women, Expert Group Meeting on Participation and Access to Women in the Media, Beirut, 2002. Also See: UNESCO, *Guidelines for Gender-Sensitive Media Reporting* at http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php?URL_ID=19220&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html. Also see: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, *Gender Guidelines*, published by Media Awareness Network, at www.media-awareness.ca/eng/gov/cbc/cbdgend/.

66. Howard, Ross. *Conflict Sensitive Journalism*. International Media Support-IMPACS, Copenhagen-Vancouver, 2002; Also see du Toit, Peter&Lloyd, Fiona. *Reporting for Peace vol 1 and 2*. A media training programme for Internews (Indonesia), 1999. Also see Lynch, Jake&McGoldrick, Annabel. *The Peace Journalism Option* and other documents at www.reportingtheworld.org.uk and also at www.transcend.org/pjmanual.htm.

67. Galtung, op cit..

This obviously also applies to conflict-sensitive reporting.

Much reporting that narrowly frames gender and conflict issues - and therefore reinforces stereotypes about them - is simply unprofessional. And it can initially be addressed on that basis. As Bernadette van Dijk, gender and media policy advisor to Netherlands Public Broadcasting, points out, efforts to change stereotyping in journalism should start with changing the routines of journalism. Every story is unique, so journalists should be encouraged to look upon guidelines and check-lists (about gender sensitivity, for example) as vital tools of their trade.⁶⁵

Similarly, an awareness of the dynamics of conflict should also be a part of overall professionalism. The irony is that although journalists deal with conflict very often in their work, surprisingly few have reported upon it in terms of a process, rather than a series of unrelated, arbitrary events.⁶⁶ Fortunately, in recent years many useful guidelines and training manuals have been developed to address this need.

Sources of conflict

All conflicts are complex and multi-layered, even if they are framed in such a way (by media, political leaders and other parties) that they appear simple.

But experts agree that the most common cause of violent conflict is inequitable access to scarce resources such as food, housing or jobs. Poverty fuels conflict. Other causes are poor communication between dissatisfied interests - which breeds myths and misperceptions;

unresolved grievances from the past; and unevenly distributed power. In one way or another, these causes can be seen in almost every conflict scenario, whether international, local, or within the tribe or family. When one party affected by these conditions seeks change or resists the imposition of change, and there is no peaceful management practice, violent conflict is likely.

Other sources of conflict may include:

- ◆ Institutionalised racism or laws that allow unequal treatment based on gender, race or caste
- ◆ Corruption and nepotism
- ◆ Religious intolerance
- ◆ Xenophobia

Journalists need to understand these social, historical and economic factors before they can frame conflict accurately and clearly.

Professor Johan Galtung points out, however, that conflict need not degenerate into violence - especially if a range of positive alternatives and options exists. The more players, stakeholders, and interests involved, the more likely it is that trade-offs, new perceptions, relationships and solutions will arise to transform the original conflict and open up possibilities for a just peace. This is the core concept of conflict reduction.⁶⁷

But the media often treats conflict as a contest waged only by elites - traditional leaders, politicians, generals. And it relies on elite versions of "facts": versions that are usually gender-blind. When the media take this kind of approach, they themselves become part of a status-quo which is not

interested in seeking peaceful alternatives. Such a focus is not only conflict-insensitive, it also leads to unbalanced reporting.

Conflict-sensitive journalism, on the other hand, goes into the field. It listens to the affected, and the ignored. It assesses their needs, hears their views and examines their ideas for alternative approaches.

See Resources for more readings and references on this issue.

Media and mediation

*"The media person, by their very inquiry, clarifies and influences. They become a player, a member of the cast, not just the audience."*⁶⁸

Although many journalists do not recognise it, they share significant similarities with conflict resolution specialists like mediators, negotiators and counselors.

For conflict specialists, the first essential is to establish communication: to get the parties to talk to each other. This is followed by moves to break down barriers and raise awareness of non-violent options. These moves are designed to educate, correct misperceptions, build confidence and open up alternative solutions.

As analysts like Robert Manoff, of the Centre for War, Peace and the News Media, have demonstrated,⁶⁹ the work of conflict resolution experts is also the work of good journalism.

But how might this work in practice?

The Conflict Resolution Network (based in Australia) offers this useful advice:

There are four key moves that media as mediators can make.⁷⁰

1. Clarify:

the facts...the players, the positions, the issues.

2. Explore Options:

developed by all the players and from the journalists themselves as they unfold the whole picture.

3. Move to the Positive:

Ask questions like:

"What would it take to solve this problem?"

What is it that you do want?"

"What would make it better?"

"What would make you willing?"

4. Go Back to Legitimate Needs and Concerns:

Ask "What do you need?", "Why is that important to you?" or "Tell me why that seems the best option to you?", "What would having it do for you?", "Are you meaning here that you need...?" (use this question to test your assumption)"Are there alternatives that would also satisfy you?"

For more ideas on this issue, see the CR Toolkit at www.crnhq.org

To conclude this discussion, let us remember that journalism is about communication. It educates by explaining, rather than simplifying conflict; it builds confidence by digging deep and identifying the key issues; it gives conflict a human face by reporting real life consequences; it provides an emotional outlet (it is better to wage

68. *Conflict Resolution Network Toolkit* available at www.crnhq.org

69. Manoff, Robert Karl, *Role Plays, Track Two*, Vol 7 No. 4, December 1998. Also see: Rubenstein et al, *Frameworks for Interpreting Conflict, a handbook for journalists*. Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, 1994.

70. © CRN

conflict in the media than in the streets); it constantly looks for new angles or frames through which to approach the issues and tell the story.

Which is not to say that journalists set out to play professional mediators. The roles are similar and parallel, but mediation is best left to the experts. Journalists, however, can make a positive difference simply by doing their job professionally and consciously.

*5Ws for Conflict Reporting*⁷¹

Rosemarie Schmidt, of the Conflict Resolution Network (Canada), devised this useful tool for journalists, using the traditional 5Ws +H reporting format. Schmidt says: "We recommend that stories identify and present the perspectives of all of the parties that have a stake in the outcome of the dispute, not just the primary or most powerful adversaries" Her comment - and the 5Ws tool itself - also relate powerfully to gender dynamics.

Who

Who is affected by this conflict; who has a distinct stake in its outcome? What is their relationship to one another, including relative power, influence, affluence?

What

What triggered the dispute; what drew it to your attention at this time?

What issues do the parties need to resolve?

When

When did this conflict begin; how long have the circumstances existed that gave rise to this dispute?

Where

What geographical or political jurisdictions are affected by this dispute?

How has this kind of thing been handled in other places?

Why

Why do the parties hold the positions they do; what needs, interests, fears and concerns are the positions intended to address?

How

How are they going to resolve this, e.g., negotiation, mediation, arbitration, administrative hearing, court, armed warfare; what are the costs/benefits of the chosen method?

Options

What options have the parties explored; how do the various options relate to the interests identified?

Common Ground

What common ground is there between the parties; what have they agreed to so far?

These are powerful questions for journalists to ask of disputants and of themselves when reporting on conflict. Reporting the answers will inevitably alter the frame of the story.

Choosing what to exclude from the frame

So far, we have discussed how to broaden our story frame to ensure a balanced, gender-aware approach to conflict reporting.

But journalists also have to make choices about what to exclude from the frame - not just because of time and space constraints, but also because we are sometimes faced with ethical dilemmas.

71. www.crnnetwork.ca

Two examples:

Question	Suggestion
<p>How much detail should we include when we report on rape or other gender-based violence?</p>	<p>It is often difficult to gauge at what point descriptions of such crimes become gratuitous or even voyeuristic.</p> <p>Facts are facts, and people have a right to hear them - but the victim/survivor has rights too. We have to make sure that we do not "revictimise" this person.</p> <p>Journalists are human beings. Sometimes when we are exposed to a particularly horrific crime our sense of outrage overrides our ethical responsibility to the victim. When in doubt: discuss the story with someone whose judgment you trust.</p>
<p>Should we ever withhold information "for the sake of peace"?</p>	<p><i>In Guidelines for Journalists Covering Ethnic Conflict</i>,⁷² the writers acknowledge that reporting the facts about a violent incident may, indeed, provoke more violence. But they maintain that censorship will have an even worse impact:</p> <p>'Journalists can only be forces for moderation if they have the trust of their audience, and therefore attempts by governments to censor accurate reports, or attempts by journalists themselves to suppress facts in order to reduce conflict are misplaced and counterproductive. We know that suppressing news about conflicts only creates a greater public appetite for information.'</p>

TV and photo-journalism checklist

Photographic images expose gender stereotyping at its worst. Too often, the camera objectifies women (as victims or as sex objects) and men (as macho "heroes"). In many cases the subject has

little or no control over how they are represented because the person who holds the camera holds the power.

The following checklist focuses on the ethical choices involved in TV and photo-journalism. Although the authors do

72. Conflict Management Group. *Guidelines for Journalists covering Ethnic Conflict*. 1994

*not specifically mention gender, each of their questions has interesting gender implications.*⁷³

Questions to ask before taking a photograph or recording on videotape

- ◆ Am I invading someone's privacy? If so, is it for an appropriate reason?
- ◆ Is this a private moment of pain and suffering that needs to be seen by our readers or viewers?
- ◆ Does this photo tell the story I want? Would another photograph be more appropriate?
- ◆ Am I shooting at a distance that is not intrusive or potentially revictimising individuals?
- ◆ Am I acting with compassion and sensitivity?

Questions to ask prior to publication or broadcast

- ◆ Do I need more information about facts or context?
- ◆ Is there information missing from the content of the photograph?
- ◆ What is the motivation for publishing the photograph or using the video image?
- ◆ What are the ethical and legal concerns?
- ◆ Who will be offended? Does such offence outweigh the value of presenting the image?
- ◆ What are the possible consequences of using the photo?
- ◆ How would I react if I was in the photo?
- ◆ Are there any alternative ways to present the information to minimise harm while still telling the story in a clear way?
- ◆ Will we be able to justify our concerns? Would disclosure of our reasoning process that preceded publication help to diffuse controversy and misunderstanding?

73. Black, Steele & Barney. *Doing Ethics in Journalism: a handbook with case studies*. Sigma Delta Chi Foundation & the Society of Professional Journalists. Boston, 1999

Language and labels

Language not only reflects the way we think. It also shapes our thinking. As the UNESCO Guidelines on Gender-Neutral Language⁷⁴ point out, the constant use of words and images that imply women are inferior to men will create a mindset that *believes* women are inferior to men. Language - the essential tool of journalism - is powerful.

It can also be deadly. In a tense situation one careless word or one inaccurate detail, can ignite violence. But, equally, one clear, balanced report can help to defuse tension and neutralise fear.

At the root of gender and conflict insensitivity lies an entire "lexicon of terms that are utilised regularly in society to give a prejudicial slant to any message being sent out," says Susanna George of ISIS International Manila⁷⁵, a women and media resource centre.

The use of 'terrorist', particularly in headlines, is one of the greatest sources of distortion. But "there are many other ways in which the news gets skewed," says George. "The way we are perhaps most aware of is the use of racial/ethnic/ references in connection with crimes, acts of violence and work, social or political stereotypes." And gender stereotypes.

Indian journalist and media analyst Rita Manchanda says such labels are all too often "shortcuts that confuse". Shortcuts because they are economical with words. Confusing because they over-simplify complex realities, and reinforce an "us and them" mentality which generates myths and misperceptions about "the other".

For Manchanda, labels also contribute to the ethnicisation of conflict. In other words, they create the impression that conflict is innate and inevitable - a never-ending struggle between two groups of people who are destined to remain enemies forever.

As anthropologists Tim Allen and Jean Seaton point out,⁷⁶ wars are not the product of natural or biological differences, but of social processes. The root causes are scarce resources, unevenly distributed power and stereotyping of "the other".

The media need to dig deeply if they want to explain why conflict happens or what can be done about it. Otherwise media consumers - and their governments - will be absolved from their responsibility to bring about change.

So here lies the challenge for journalists: to reflect "complex realities" in clear, balanced, non-judgmental language - without wasting words or time. The rush to deliver the news on deadline in the tightest, most easily understood form is no excuse for resorting to labels loaded with social political and gender stereotypes that reinforce narrow mindsets.

*Because you grasp labels and slogans,
You are hindered by
Those labels and slogans,
Both those used in
Ordinary life and those
Considered sacred.
Thus they obstruct your
Perception of objective truth,
And you cannot understand clearly.
Linji (Zen poet)*



74. UNESCO, Guidelines on Gender-Neutral Language, available from UNESCO Women and Equality, available at http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=19220&URL_DO=D O_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

75. George, Susanna, Strategies to Combat Identity-based Intolerance. ISIS International Manila, available at www.isiswomen.org/advocacy/media/2002/identity.html

76. Allen, Tim and Seaton, Jean (eds): *The Media of Conflict. War and representations of ethnic conflict.* Zed Books, London and New York, 1999

Language, labels and conflict

British conflict and media analysts Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch, who are members of TRANSCEND, offer a number of suggestions for avoiding labels and language which reinforce stereotypes and lead to conflict:⁷⁷

AVOID 'victimising' language like "destitute"; "devastated"; "defenceless"; "pathetic"; "tragedy" which only tells us what has been done to and could be done for a group of people. This disempowers them and limits the options for change.⁷⁸

INSTEAD report on what has been done and could be done by the people.

Don't just ask them how they feel, also ask them how they are coping and what do they think? Can they suggest any solutions?

AVOID imprecise use of emotive words to describe what has happened to people:

"Genocide" literally means the wiping-out of an entire people - in UN terminology today, the killing of more than half a million people.

"Tragedy" is a form of drama, originally Greek, in which someone's fault or weakness ultimately proves his or her undoing.

"Assassination" is the murder of a head of state.

"Massacre" - the deliberate killing of people known to be unarmed and defenceless. Are we sure? Or might these people have died in battle? "Systematic" eg raping, or forcing people from their homes. Has it really been organised in a deliberate pattern or have there been a number of unrelated, albeit extremely nasty incidents?

INSTEAD always be precise about what we know. Do not minimise suffering but reserve

the strongest language for the gravest situations or you will beggar the language and help to justify disproportionate responses which escalate the violence.

AVOID demonising adjectives like "vicious", "cruel", "brutal", "barbaric".

These always describe one party's view of what another party has done. To use them puts the journalist on that side and helps to justify an escalation of violence.

INSTEAD, report what you know about the wrongdoing and give as much information as you can about the reliability of other people's reports or descriptions of it.

AVOID demonising labels like "terrorist"; "extremist"; "fanatic" or "fundamentalist".

These are always given by "us" to "them". No-one ever uses them to describe himself or herself and so for a journalist to use them is always to take sides. They mean the person is unreasonable so it seems to make less sense to reason (negotiate) with them.

INSTEAD try calling people by the names they give themselves. Or be more precise in your descriptions.

AVOID making an opinion or claim seem like an established fact. (Eurico Guterres, said to be responsible for a massacre in East Timor....")

INSTEAD tell your readers or your audience who said what. ("Eurico Guterres, accused by a top UN official of ordering a massacre in East Timor....")

That way you avoid signing yourself and your news service up to the allegations made by one party in the conflict against another.

The Press Institute of India's guide to 'Reporting Communal and Ethnic Tensions and Violence'⁷⁹ is another useful tool, as these examples show:

77. Excerpted from Lynch, Jake & McGoldrick, Annabel. TRANSCEND member: In: Peace Journalism Training Manual, at 2003 Events, Peace Journalism Training, at www.reportingtheworld.org.uk

78. This also relates to the "survivor vs victim" debate - especially (but not exclusively) as it relates to stories about gender violence. Gender activists favour the use of "survivor", but stress that reporting should not minimise suffering, or the magnitude of the crime.

79. Excerpted from *Guidelines for Journalists covering Ethnic Conflict* (Conflict management Group, 1994)

Guideline	Example	Comment
<p>Factual accuracy in a single story is no substitute for the total truth. A single story which is factually accurate can nonetheless be misleading</p>	<p>During the Bhivandi riots a weekly newspaper reported that: 'two dozen innocent Hindus were murdered, more than five thousand Hindu houses and over a thousand shops destroyed, more than ten thousand Hindus turned refugees.'</p>	<p>These figures may be factually correct but they are misleading. The report gives the impression that the Hindus alone suffered losses, whereas in fact, an equal number of Muslims were killed and made homeless.</p>
<p>Avoid feeding, by selective reporting, common prejudicial stereotypes about groups. Generalisations based on the behaviour of an individual, or a small number of individuals, are inevitably unjust.</p>	<p>Before the Ahmedabad riots some Gujarati newspapers branded Muslims as 'communal', 'backward', and 'conservative'.</p>	<p>There should be a deliberate attempt to break false stereotypes by publication of stories that run counter to common prejudice. There should, in particular, be no irrelevant identification of communal groups, especially in court or crime stories. For example, avoid this wording: 'a Brahmin boy was knocked down by a truck driven by a Muslim.'</p>
<p>Statements and generalisations not supported by facts and figures can often mislead.</p>	<p>A Delhi Hindi newspaper talked about the 'glaring naked facts' of the unprecedented genocide of Hindus in Pakistan since independence. But it failed to present data to back up its 'facts'.</p>	<p>Evidence (in the form of facts and figures) should always be presented to support such assertions. Even when reporting speeches, newspapers should not hesitate in the form of footnotes, perhaps, to correct claims which are patently false.</p>

The last guideline makes a particularly important point. As journalists we have to take responsibility for the language and labels we use - and this must include the language and labels we quote. At the very least, we should be rigorous about attributing such labels. For example, "The Minister referred to the attackers as 'terrorists'." We should also make sure that when we conduct an interview we question any emotive terminology used by the source. (see *Interviews*).

Language, labels and gender

*"Blessed are the plural pronouns: for theirs is a kingdom beyond gender. The singular nouns, in the first and second persons, are also blessed: for they are free of the sexist and grammatical heresy 'the masculine includes the feminine'. But the singular pronouns in the third person, alas! have to dwell in the house of alternatives if they should escape the wrath of the feminists."*⁸⁰

Go through any newspaper or the scripts of any newscast and red-circle the gender-insensitive usages of language and images. It will likely surprise you.

The truth is that in spite of the lip-service that is paid to gender-sensitivity, there are few associations of journalists whose codes include more than a brief mention of the issue:

"Not only is there a dearth of Codes of Conduct/Ethics in the mainstream media that stipulate gender-fair reporting. But...the ones that exist depend upon the context of the country and further reinforce

the traditional roles of women and reflect conservative values on morality, family, good taste and decency," (Rajjeli Nicole, ISIS International-Manila).⁸¹"

The Associated Press Stylebook is one exception. It is quite clear about professional standards:

- ✦ Women should receive the same treatment as men in all areas of coverage. Physical descriptions, sexist references, demeaning stereotypes and condescending phrases should not be used.
- ✦ Copy should not assume maleness when both sexes are involved, as in "...the official told newsmen..." which can be phrased as "...the official told reporters...."
- ✦ Copy should not express surprise that an attractive woman can be professionally accomplished.
- ✦ Copy should not gratuitously mention family relationships when there is no relevance to the subject.
- ✦ Use the same standards for men and women in deciding to make specific mention of personal appearance or marital or family status.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation⁸² has a more detailed set of standards, requiring:

- ✦ The reflection of men and women's equality through the elimination of stereotypes
- ✦ The portrayal of women in a variety of roles
- ✦ The balancing of men and women's opinions in stories
- ✦ Avoiding gratuitous exploitation of individuals' bodies
- ✦ The use of appropriate gender-neutral or generic language such as "workforce"

80. Nimaladasan. Available on www.nwmi.org (article first appeared in the *Journalism Online newsletter*)

81. Cited in: Cabrera, Maria Balez, Maria Victoria, *Online Discussion Results, Participation and advancement of women to the media*. United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Expert Group Meeting. Beirut, 2002.

82. Available at www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/htmlen/policies/journalist/sexrole.htm.

instead of "manpower"; "houseworker" instead of "maid", "firefighter" instead of "fireman", and "business person" instead of "businessman".

Although there are relatively few gender-sensitive journalism codes like these, there is no shortage of other kinds of

But some gender-related language issues are clear-cut. Participants at the UNESCO-NPI Roundtable, for example, discussed the problem of gender-blind labels - in both South Asian and international media. Many of these labels relate to acts of gender violence:

Gender-Blind Labels <i>(Euphemistic: minimise the brutality of the act and render it more acceptable)</i>	Preferred Alternative <i>(Tells it like it is)</i>	Second Best Alternative <i>(At least questions the legitimacy of the label)</i>
Honour killing	Murder	So-called "honour killing"
Bride burning	Murder (or attempted murder)	So-called "bride burning"
Dowry death	Murder	So-called "dowry death"

resource material relating to gender and media. (Details can be found in the Resources Section) Increasingly, such guidelines are recognising that gender - and the language of gender - is dynamic and multifaceted, as this review of the updated IPS Gender and Development Glossary points out:

"The booklet stresses that gender concepts are neither linear nor static, and are instead shaped by diverse factors ranging from age to race, class, ethnicity, and sexual preference. The guide also recognises that terms describing gender and gender and development are often layered, hard to distinguish, and defined differently from one socio-cultural context to another."⁸³

Gender activists feel we must call a rape a rape. To call it something else is to minimise the crime.

UNESCO-NPI Roundtable participants expressed concern over the increasing trend towards anti-Islamic language in the media - in parts of South Asia and internationally. Examples include: "Islamic terrorist" and even "Islamic bomb". As Pakistani journalist, Maheen Rashdi, commented:

"a term like 'Islamic terrorist' is a judgment which is incorrect. I'm a practicing Moslem but I'm not a terrorist! It's exactly the same thing as stigmatising the Jews. Three people in a family are not the same. So how can you put a colour to a creed?"

83. Review of IPS updated Gender and Development Glossary www.journalism.co.za

Roundtable participants also noted that the world of economics is rife with misleading terminology. For example, "aid" or "funding" from international agencies like the IMF or World Bank might be more accurately described as "loans".

They agreed, too, that globalisation has affected language. Manjula Lal comments in The Hoot website:

"The public swallows Americanisms as easily as it does Big Macs and Coke, we forget that the US worldview is so much at odds with that of the rest of

the world that accepting their semantics means accepting an entire worldview,"⁸⁴

Labels and Conflict Reporting case study: "Us and Them"

During the first Gulf War, The Guardian (UK) analysed how the conflict was being covered by a cross-section of the British press.⁸⁵ The Guardian found that there was a dramatic - and worrying - contrast in the way in which the two sides were portrayed. Do you see any similarities with more recent war reporting?

"Our Side"	"Their Side"
We have: Army, navy & air force	They have: A war machine
We: Take out Suppress Eliminate Dig in	They: Destroy Destroy Kill Cower in their foxholes
We launch: First strikes Pre-emptively	They launch: Sneak missile attacks Without provocation
Our men are: Boys Lads Professional Lion-hearts Confident Heroes Dare-devils Young knights of the skies Loyal Brave	Their men are: Troops Hordes Brainwashed Paper-tigers Desperate Cornered Cannon-fodder Bastards of Baghdad Blindly obedient Fanatical
We are motivated by: An old-fashioned sense of duty	They are motivated by: Fear of Saddam

84. Lal, Manjula. *The semantics of expressions like 'communal riot' should be questioned.* In www.thehoot.org

85. Excerpted from *The Guardian*, 3 February 1991.

“Our Side”	“Their Side”
Israeli non-retaliation is: An act of great statesmanship	Iraqi non-retaliation is: Blundering & cowardly
Our missiles cause: Collateral damage	Their missiles cause: Civilian casualties
We: Precision bomb	They: Fire wildly at anything in the skies
Our prisoners of war are: Gallant boys	Their prisoners of war are: Overgrown schoolchildren
George Bush is: At peace with himself Resolute Statesmanlike Assured	Saddam Hussein is: Demented Defiant An evil tyrant A crackpot murderer
Our planes: Fail to return from missions	Their planes: Are zapped

As these examples show, when a country is engaged in a war there is intense temptation or pressure to use labels, stereotypes and imagery which deepen the divisions between "us and them." Challenging

these labels can be seen to be unpatriotic.

For journalists, however, professionalism should prevail over the language of blind patriotism, or gender-blindness.



Access to Information

Accessing women's voices

"To queries about general living conditions at the camp and their most pressing requirements, the women of Hisar Shahi silently point towards their men for permission to talk to the strangers. After some hesitation, one woman boldly gestures to a goat tied nearby. 'Why don't you talk to that goat? It does not need permission to speak,' she mutters laconically."⁸⁶

This Women's Feature Service story about post-conflict Afghanistan vividly encapsulates one of the biggest problems journalists face when they try to report from a gender perspective: the gagging of women's voices.

Women may be reluctant to speak out for a variety of reasons:

- ◆ They may not trust the journalist's ability (or willingness) to reflect their views faithfully;
- ◆ They may fear reprisals from their husbands, or other members of the community if they speak openly about issues that are considered "private";
- ◆ They may not feel that their views are "important enough" - particularly if nobody has ever shown much interest in their feelings or opinions before;
- ◆ They may prefer their suffering to remain private, especially if they have survived rape or other forms of gender violence.

Sometimes reluctance can be overcome if the journalist simply shows enough empathy and patience (*see Interview Skills*). But then comes the next challenge: to ensure the story is balanced and accurate by testing it against factual evidence, and

sourcing independent confirmation. In cases of gender violence this is often a particularly difficult process, not least because it is so time-consuming.

Participants at the UNESCO-NPI Roundtable suggested these strategies to help counter the gagging of women's voices:

- ◆ Agree not to name women who do speak out, if they request this for safety reasons.
- ◆ Ensure, however, that stories containing unnamed sources include the reporter's name. This, at least, tells readers and audiences that the story has some professional credibility.
- ◆ Where fear has prevented sources from speaking on record, report this. If nobody is willing to talk, it is a story in itself. Ask people why they cannot comment and report what they say. The responses can reveal much about a community.
- ◆ Find local gender groups in the community who can identify women willing to speak out - about the issue itself, or the climate of fear that surrounds it.
- ◆ Report the legal rights that are being abused: for example, international obligations, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the government has perhaps signed but ignored.

Ways to include more gender-balanced voices in news coverage:

- ◆ Develop a newsroom database of women spokespersons, especially on issues where men traditionally have claimed the right to speak (science, economics, politics, long-distance truck driving etc);

86. Bahuguna, Nitin Jugran. *The Silent Crisis*. Women's Feature Service, *ibid*.

- ✦ Challenge gender stereotyping by also asking men to comment on so-called "women's issues" like childcare, domestic abuse etc
- ✦ Broaden the definition of "experts": value non-formal experience and qualifications. For example, ask a market woman to comment on the impact of the falling foreign exchange rate; value traditional forms of peace-keeping in which women's roles may be highlighted.

■ Accessing official voices

Every journalist, at some time, has experienced the "no comment" brush-off from an official voice - often the one voice that is vital for the overall balance of the story.

As UNESCO-NPI participants pointed out, people may refuse to comment for a number of reasons:

- ✦ Simple "bloody-mindedness", for example, or a personal vendetta against the journalist or their organisation.
- ✦ A conscious attempt to suppress information, or at least to delay it until the journalist's deadline has expired in the hope that the issue will then be forgotten.
- ✦ Fear: for example if the official is anxious about their own position and the effect of "saying the wrong thing" to the media.
- ✦ Bureaucracy: cumbersome internal structures that prevent official spokespersons from responding quickly to the media - even if they would like to.

In response to any of these refusals, participants suggest:

- ✦ Know the law. Know your rights as a journalist and as a citizen to obtain

information of public interest. And know the penalties for sources withholding such information. Be able to cite the law.

- ✦ A brazen denial of apparent fact should never be accepted by a professional journalist. Be resourceful; be enterprising. Find another way to obtain the true information and report it. And report the original refusal.
- ✦ Place small denials within a larger context. If a source refuses to talk about a specific incident, report what is known about similar incidents on a larger scale, such as regionally or nationally.
- ✦ Go past the traditional information gate-keepers and elites to create balance in a story by seeking alternative sources in information, such as NGOs. Use their comment to create balance.
- ✦ Carefully assess the reliability of alternative sources. Declare their bias and quote them. They still have a right to be quoted.
- ✦ Be enterprising. Find knowledgeable experts who will talk about the intention and scope of laws, versus how they are practiced.
- ✦ Again, stories that use unnamed sources need a reporter's name attached to them, to establish authority for the information, and to achieve credibility through accountability.
- ✦ Where unnamed sources are used, always be prepared to reveal the names to a trusted senior editor.
- ✦ Reporters who are refused information and risk creating an unbalanced story should always seek balance in a follow-up story. Do the follow-up story as soon as the information is available. Once reported, a one-sided story is never finished. There must be a follow-up.

- ✦ Reporters should turn the denial or the withholding of information into a news story itself. The refusal to make public what the public has a right to know is news.
- ✦ Reveal that the media is muzzled. Make news out of Security Acts, Emergency legislation, or special measures to gag the press. The fact that the news is suppressed is a constant story, not a one-day event.
- ✦ Do not become a private source or activist for justice. When a journalist cannot get information into the public domain because a gate-keeper refuses to confirm it, they should not leak it to interest groups. Journalists do not do their work in private. Keep trying to make it a news story. Only relentless publicity about the withholding of information will eventually redress injustice.

See also Interview Skills for tips on how to be assertive without being aggressive.

Building networks with NGOs and civil society

Many NGOs and community-based organisations don't like the media. They accuse journalists of being "sensational" and "distorting the facts".

Journalists, on the other hand, sometimes feel manipulated by civil society groupings. They may say, for example, that such groups expect

"free publicity" for issues that are not always newsworthy. At the same time, they also feel that civil society groups blame media for having a negative attitude whenever journalists ask the kind of questions that readers, listeners or viewers need them to ask.

At times it's a no-win situation.

But, whatever the mutual frustrations, media is part of civil society, and a healthy civil society needs the media. The challenge is to find ways to work together more constructively, without threatening media integrity - and to build positive, professional relationships based on respect.

Journalists who are able to work with civil society in this way find that they are:

- ✦ Better informed about processes and contexts - especially if they regularly talk to civil society experts for informal briefings and updates;
- ✦ Better able to access a wide range of voices and views, particularly those of women and other marginalised people.

But a final word of caution: remember that nobody gives information without a reason. NGOs and civil society groups have an agenda. We may agree with their agenda (especially if it is based on gender rights) but we should subject all information we receive from such groups to the same rigorous tests that we use for information gleaned from other sources.

Interviewing: challenges and suggestions

"When somebody, voluntarily, comes forward and wants to be a subject because they have experienced the worst of humanity, far more often than not, your ability to help them put this into language, is redeeming, is re-humanising, is reconnecting them to community and to the human group. [This is] a very important task."⁸⁷

Interviewing survivors of trauma: the challenges

Conflict reporting frequently involves interviewing people who may be traumatised because they have "experienced the worst of humanity". As journalists we recognise how important it is for their stories to be told; as human beings we know how difficult it is to conduct such interviews.

This is what some South Asian journalists say⁸⁸:

- ◆ "I feel so guilty about intruding on someone's private grief, even though I know that it's my job to report the story."
- ◆ "It's hard to control my own emotions. Because of this I lose focus and maybe even my objectivity."
- ◆ "As a man it's not easy to talk to women who have been raped or abused. One cannot win trust."
- ◆ "You can't hurry an interview when someone is weeping. But, as journalists, we're always facing a tight deadline! It's hard to strike a balance between doing one's job and being compassionate."
- ◆ "It's difficult to know where my responsibility to the victim ends. Is it enough for me just to report their story? That seems callous. But what else can I

do without compromising my position as a journalist?"

■ The trauma of gender violence
"A bullet in the head is easier than being raped."⁸⁹

It is painful for any trauma survivor to relive their experiences; but for survivors of sexual violence it is doubly hard. As media analyst Gabrielle le Roux points out, "There is a stigma attached to women's suffering, that is often not attached to men's suffering. And this is particularly true of sexual crimes".⁹⁰

In South Africa, for example, thousands of women came forward to testify at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission - but initially they spoke only about the human rights abuses suffered by their husbands, fathers, brothers or sons. It was too painful for them to speak about issues like rape and sexual humiliation in a public forum. Only when the Commission convened special women's hearings could some of these stories be told.

As journalists we need to be extra sensitive when interviewing survivors of gender violence. And we should understand that a woman who has been raped might well feel uncomfortable about speaking to a male journalist - however sympathetic he may be. She may also need to "ask permission" of her husband, or other male relative, before she agrees to the interview.

How do we counter the social and cultural pressures that silence survivors of gender violence? One way is to build stronger working relationships with civil society



87. Dart Center trauma discussion. Available at www.dartcentre.org
88. Comments made during UNESCO/NPI Roundtable
89. Families of the missing, Bosnia-Herzegovina, People on War consultation, ICRC, 1998
90. From *Stones into Bread: South Africa after the TRC* (Institute for the Advancement of Journalism radio project)

groups like gender and human rights organisations. But this is not always straightforward: it may take time to win their trust - especially if they have had a bad experience with the media in the past.

Tips for interviewing trauma survivors

Here are some suggestions from social workers, psychotherapists and journalists:

- ✦ **Set up** the interview through **someone in the community** whom the interviewee **knows** and **trusts**.
- ✦ Let the interviewee suggest **where** and **when** they would like to be interviewed.
- ✦ Spend time explaining to the interviewee **why** you want to speak to them and - approximately - how **much time** you will need. Make sure that they understand, and **feel part** of, the whole process.
- ✦ If you are personally setting up the interview, **identify yourself** as a journalist as soon as possible. If the person refuses to speak to you, don't bully them. Respectfully explain why you feel their story needs to be told (for example, it may help other trauma survivors). If they still refuse, leave your contact details in case they change their mind later.
- ✦ Give yourself **plenty of time** to carry out the interview and be prepared, if necessary, to go back for a return visit.
- ✦ Most survivors of trauma **don't need your pity**. If they have decided to tell their story, it's because they need to **heal themselves** and feel strong again. So avoid making overly sympathetic remarks like "Oh shame! How terrible for you!" Even if you are sincere, you risk making your interviewee feel powerless all over again.

- ✦ Take extra care to **show that you are listening**. Make discreet eye contact, and nod your head. Don't concentrate only on your notes or tape recorder.
- ✦ If the interviewee breaks down and starts crying in the middle of the interview don't immediately assume that they want to stop. Rather: **give them a choice**. Offer a glass of water. Say something like this: "Shall I turn off the recorder for a minute? Or would you like to carry on?" Very often, simply by giving a choice, you can help them to feel in control again.
- ✦ In extreme cases a trauma survivor may experience **flashbacks** when they tell their story. This can happen if they feel they are being interrogated (especially if they have had a bad experience with the police), so make sure that you ask your questions in a humane, empathetic way.
- ✦ If the interviewee stops mid-sentence and seems unable to continue, **gently repeat** the last words they just told you. For example:
INTERVIEWEE: And then he came towards me with a gun....
LONG PAUSE
JOURNALIST: He came towards you with a gun?
INTERVIEWEE: Yes, and he told me to fetch my brother.
- ✦ Understand that **trauma affects memory**, so be prepared for contradictions or inconsistencies in the interviewee's story. Gently replay their words as much as possible. For example: "Let me see if I understand you. Did you say the military came to your place on Thursday night?"
- ✦ A trauma survivor may often take time to get to the point of their story. This is their right. They may also "derail" and

start giving details you feel are irrelevant. **Be patient.** Let them tell the story in their own way.

- ✦ Make sure the interviewee has given **informed consent** and understands the meaning of "on the record". Sometimes people do not understand the implications. You may need to check again during the interview - especially if they start giving details that could put them, or others, at risk.
- ✦ Make sure you can have **contact numbers** of support groups or local trauma counsellors. You may be the first person to whom the interviewee has spoken: they may well need subsequent professional help, but not know where to go.

Remember: your job is to help the interviewee to tell their story as clearly as possible. The best way you can do this is to create a safe, calm space in which the interviewee feels in control. Talk to social workers, religious leaders or psychotherapists in your community. What can they teach you about this kind of interviewing style?

You can say you're sorry for the person's loss, but never say 'I understand' or 'I know how you feel.' Don't be surprised, too, especially when covering acts of political violence, if a subject responds to your apology by saying, 'Sorry isn't good enough.' Remain respectful.

*(From: Tragedies and Journalists⁹¹
Joe Hight and Frank Smyth)*

■ Story from the field
Nepali radio journalist, Manisha Aryal, describes what happened when she met a

rape survivor at a peace consultation in West Nepal.

"I noticed that one woman was talking openly about being raped. Nobody in rural Nepalese society ever does that. People listened but they looked at each other, as if trying to signal that this woman was wacko: we shouldn't waste time on her. So she wasn't able to finish.

Afterwards she began to tell me her story... I kept thinking: when will it be the right moment to turn my recorder back on?

But somehow I switched gears. I decided that I didn't want to be a journalist. I thought: this woman wants to talk and I'm here to listen. So let me just do that. I won't get my story, but that's all right.

At one point I touched her very gently. I don't know if it was conscious, but that's what I did. And it was amazing. She just opened up. The interesting thing was that she seemed very confused. Some people later told me: "she's making it all up". But I think it was an effect of her trauma. I came away feeling that she had been raped twice and I thought it was OK that she couldn't remember the faces of the men who did it. Maybe if she had remembered she would have been more traumatised.

In the end I decided not to do the story, but the experience informed my perspective on how I view the conflict now. I also realised that rape stories are so difficult. The victim's perspective: how do we integrate that into our reporting process? Because these stories are very difficult to check. There are no

91. Available online at www.dartcenter.org

other witnesses. Do you believe the woman or not? Do we put these stories through the same rigorous journalistic machine that we put other stories through?

It was very confusing for me. I kept thinking: did I do the right thing? It was such a great opportunity. She'd already stood up and told her story. So why was I being cautious anyway? But I felt I did OK. I hope so.

By sitting with her and giving her my ears maybe I eased her pain a little bit."

Interviewing the powerful Handling sexual harassment

Many women journalists experience sexual harassment - particularly when interviewing powerful figures. This problem needs to be discussed openly in newsrooms. Coping strategies can then be brainstormed, and support systems put in place.

Sexual harassment, like any form of media intimidation, must be taken seriously. It is not just a "women's issue".

But what should you do if you encounter sexual harassment in the course of your work? Two suggestions:

- ◆ Trust your instinct. If you are uncomfortable about a suggested venue or time for the interview, make an alternative arrangement. If this is not possible, take a colleague. At the very least make sure your news editor knows where you are going and what time you expect to be back. Take your mobile phone. Remember: no interview is worth putting yourself at risk. If it doesn't feel right, don't go at all.

- ◆ If the interviewee starts to get too "friendly", make it clear that the organisation you represent takes sexual harassment of its employees very seriously. If the interviewee does not heed this warning, leave. Make a note of what happened and inform your boss immediately. Discuss what action to take.

Handling interviews: how to be assertive

When it comes to interviewing powerful people, journalists need to know how to ask tough questions. Without this skill they are little more than unofficial government spokespersons.

In a conflict situation, the journalist's responsibility is even greater. Just one inflammatory statement from a powerful person can ignite violence. It is the interviewer's job to challenge such statements, separate speculation from fact, and expose areas of uncertainty or confusion.

"Now, after the Gujarat violence, (and also Mumbai 1993) it's perhaps time to put expressions like 'communal riot' under the microscope. Both are words which have long carried a meaning peculiar only to the subcontinent. Why should the word 'community' be used to describe a religious group? A community, says the dictionary, consists of 'the people who reside in one locality and are subject to the same laws, have the same interests.' Such people may not love each other, but they just don't one fine day pick up hatchets and kill each other. Religious groups NOT staying together do, it seems."⁹²

92. Lal, Manjula.
Op cit.

Of course, it is not always easy to pin down powerful people, particularly when gender dynamics are involved. But you can ask really revealing or hard-hitting questions without sounding aggressive - as long as you use professional and personal skills. These include not raising the tone of your voice, or speaking louder than the interviewee. If you need to interrupt (and you sometimes do) wait until the interviewee is about to take a breath and slide in with your next question.

And of course you should rely on the basic questions of journalism:

Who? What? When? Where? Why? And How?

Of these questions, three produce fuller answers: **What? How? and Why?** These are the essential tools for hard-hitting (or delicate) inquiry. None of them can be answered by just "yes" or "no." They are called open-ended questions.⁹³

Finally, make sure you are 100% prepared. You cannot ask tough questions unless you have the facts.

■ Pinning down the powerful

Here are some ideas for ways to frame "pinning down" questions:

Challenge	Ways to Frame the Question
<i>Interviewee does not answer questions clearly.</i>	Let's be more specific. Are you saying that peace talks will start next week?
<i>Interviewee uses loaded, or generalised terminology.</i>	What do you mean by "outside forces"? Can you clarify?
<i>Interviewee makes accusations without backing them up.</i>	You mentioned that international organisations have "grossly exaggerated" the number of women who have been raped in the camps. According to your figures, how many women have been raped? (Further follow up: where do you get these figures?)
<i>Interviewee gives you a good answer - to a question you didn't ask! You want to come back to the original question.</i>	To come back to the earlier question: when are you going to withdraw the army?
<i>Interviewee refuses to comment</i>	You say that you cannot answer that question. Why? (Further follow up: when will you be able to answer it?)
<i>Interviewee gives a long-winded, confused answer. You suspect they are trying to cover up something.</i>	There seems to be some confusion about this issue. When did you first hear that your supporters were engaging in violence?

93. We use the same kind of questions when conducting sensitive interviews too - for example with trauma survivors. The difference lies in the tone of our voice, and the aim of the interview. Do we want to pin someone down? Or win their trust so they open up?

Challenge	Ways to Frame the Question
<p><i>Interviewee contradicts a statement they made previously.</i></p> 	<p>You say that you strongly condemn "honour killings". But last month in parliament you said that it is not government's role to condemn such practices. Why have you changed your mind?</p>

Personal Safety

*"When reporters go into situations where governments will not or cannot protect them, they face grave risks. Women correspondents face the same dangers as men - abduction, robbery, murder - but, in addition, they are in danger of gender-based violence. As Kathleen Currie, deputy director of the IWMF, has noted, 'the threat of rape and sexual assault is always looming in these dangerous locales.'"*⁹⁴

Reporting on conflict is not only difficult. It can be dangerous. In seeking stories that explore gender issues and violent conflict - often simultaneously - journalists run considerable personal risk. Risky journalism is most often associated with covering wars but civil strife can be just as dangerous. Demonstrations, street protests, public meetings and election campaigns can turn violent and leave reporters exposed or even targets of attack. There are risks in reporting cultural or structural violence too.

There is also the aftermath of covering violent conflict: stress. This can be invisible to a conflict-weary journalist - or even denied - until it emerges as harmfully as a sudden wound. (See *"Handling stress"*)

As the International Federation of Journalists' guidebook on safe conflict reporting says: there are no perfect precautions against snipers, stray bullets, car bombs, kidnapping, stampeding crowds, assault or intimidation. There will inevitably be accidents. But there are steps that every journalist and every media organisation can take as part of their professional responsibility, which minimise the risks:

"Safety is not just an issue when bullets start flying. It is also about creating a culture of risk awareness in all aspects of journalism - whether in war zones, investigative reporting or reporting events in the streets."⁹⁵

The IFJ is one of several organisations to focus on conflict safety for reporters. UNESCO, Reporters Sans Frontieres, the International News Safety Institute, and the Committee to Protect Journalists⁹⁶ have also produced valuable resource material on this issue. In addition there are a number of international organisations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Committee of the Red Cross which are working to promote the safety of journalists.

The IFJ's essential steps for safety begin in the newsroom:

- ◆ There must be adequate advance preparation, safety training and also social protection, which means health care and insurance.
- ◆ Media professionals must be informed and inform themselves about the political, physical and social terrain in which they operate. They must not contribute to insecurity through ignorance or reckless behaviour.
- ◆ Media organisations must guard against risk-taking for the sake of commercial advantage. More simply, no story is worth the death of a journalist. In dangerous environments, news organisations should cooperate, not compete, in order to protect journalists.
- ◆ Governments must remove obstacles to journalism. Withholding information, restricting free movement of journalists,



94. *Women, War and Peace*. op cit, p106

95. International Federation of Journalists, *Live News - A Survival Guide for Journalists*. IFJ, Brussels, 2003. Available at www.ifj.org. or contact safety@ifj.org.

96. See: Reporters Sans Frontieres, *Practical Guide for Journalists*. RSE, Paris, 2001 and International News Safety Institute at www.newssafety.com and Committee to Protect Journalists at www.cpj.org.

harassing journalists are unacceptable and illegal in international law. Authorities must inform their personnel of the rights of journalists.

- ✦ People must keep their hands off the media. Everyone should respect the physical integrity of the media at work. The media must reciprocate with accurate, fair, balanced and independent journalism.

Here are some more safety tips gleaned from journalists, and participants at the UNESCO-NPI Roundtable:

- ✦ Never go anywhere without informing someone about your destination and expected time of return.
- ✦ Inform yourself about the situation before you go. Consult local people.
- ✦ Seek out independent-minded individuals and organisations who can corroborate what you are told. Even in conflict zones, double-source crucial information.
- ✦ Be familiar with the local language. Do not assume people will speak your language.
- ✦ Do not travel in a marked vehicle belonging to either side in the conflict.
- ✦ Do not travel alone in danger zones.
- ✦ Do not give rides to police or military or rebel representatives. Evacuate wounded combatants in your vehicle only as a last resort.
- ✦ Be careful about whom you accept lifts from.
- ✦ In conflict zones and situations of civil unrest (especially involving crowds) plan possible escape routes. .
- ✦ Respect local cultural norms. Dress appropriately. Blend in. Don't attract attention.
- ✦ Do not wear combat fatigues or military-looking clothing.
- ✦ Especially in elections, partisan protests and guerilla conflicts, do not wear anything that identifies you with one of the parties or interests involved.
- ✦ If possible, do not accept security from the army.
- ✦ Carry adequate water and a small first aid kit, always. Know how to use it.
- ✦ Wear proper shoes. Anticipate that you might have to travel suddenly, on foot.
- ✦ Always carry proper identification and credentials as a journalist.
- ✦ Identify yourself prominently as a journalist.
- ✦ Do not carry a weapon. Carry a whistle. Some journalists, especially women, suggest carrying pepper spray. But a better defence is never to travel alone.
- ✦ If you are pregnant don't go into violent areas, or places where there is a danger of toxic or chemical contamination.
- ✦ Carry a mobile phone. Check in regularly. But conserve the batteries. Have adequate phone cards. If possible, carry a satellite phone.
- ✦ Do not flash your notebook, microphone or camera, and avoid taking notes, if the immediate situation is very tense. You could become a target of frightened people.
- ✦ If threatened with assault or kidnapping, attempt to buy your way out. Give the aggressors anything. Do not resist arrogantly.
- ✦ If you receive a threat from someone, go immediately to the leader of the group. Let the leader deal with it.
- ✦ Immediately report threats against journalists to your managers. Media intimidation is newsworthy.
- ✦ In conflict situations, don't take sides. Try to understand the perspective of all parties.

- ✦ Learn how to avoid land mines and improvised explosive devices.
- ✦ In reporting, disclose if you received assistance from either side.
- ✦ Do not trust strangers. To trust is good, not to trust is better.
- ✦ Know how to seek help from local and international organisations dedicated to journalism such as the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Sans Frontieres.
- ✦ Learn a reliable method of estimating crowd sizes, rough distances and the severity of injuries.
- ✦ Journalists should always have the right to refuse a dangerous assignment without penalty.

Grace Mutandwa is a Zimbabwean journalist with experience in many hotspots. She offers these words of advice:⁹⁷

"Good research is your starting point. If you're going to interview one side in a conflict, make sure you learn as much as possible about their feelings before you interview them... Be careful to frame your questions sensitively. Don't make judgmental statements: try to sound and look calm and neutral...."

"Most of all, learn how to blend in with the environment....It's also very important not to rush. Win people's trust before you get out your notebook or microphone...and let them see that you're serious and responsible....There's nothing wrong with saying 'sorry' especially if you have accidentally insulted someone. But apologise in a clear, assertive way so they don't treat you with contempt...."

97. From *Reporting from the Frontline* (Fiona Lloyd)



Handling our own stress

"It must be so difficult to stick your microphone into somebody's heart."⁹⁸

Journalism is stressful work, even in normal circumstances. But for journalists in conflict situations the stress is much more intense. Every day brings scenes of horror and stories of suffering. No matter how detached we try to be, the act of listening and reporting becomes an act of absorbing. No-one who reports extensively on violent conflict can remain entirely unaffected, and the pressure is even greater on those who are reporting on conflict within their own community. Consciously or otherwise, we carry within us the stories we are told, and the pain we witness.

Not surprisingly, many journalists find it difficult to recognise the effects of accumulated stress upon themselves and their work. Nearly a quarter of journalists who do conflict and war reporting suffer in this way.⁹⁹ They may endure such stress long after the causes are gone, a syndrome known as post-traumatic stress disorder. But sometimes they feel it is "unprofessional" or "weak" to discuss such issues. And, anyway, the macho culture of the average newsroom is hardly conducive to openness.

There is often a gender component, too. Indian journalist Karan Sawhny describes it as the "women are allowed to cry and men are allowed to drink" syndrome. While that may be true, it may not always be so simple: some women journalists feel that they "have to be one of the guys" - and that any sign of "weakness" will lower their already fragile status in the newsroom.

Whatever the dynamics, doctors and psychologists agree that to stay healthy we must find ways to manage stress. We cannot simply ignore it in the hope that it will go away. Stress can be revealed in a number of ways but symptoms include a deterioration of physical or cognitive health, and emotional and spiritual health. To neglect any of these for a prolonged period can lead to "burn-out."

Interested in finding out more about these issues? The Dart Center is a global network of journalists, journalism educators and health professionals dedicated to improving media coverage of trauma, conflict and tragedy. The Center also addresses the consequences of such coverage for those working in journalism. Visit their website www.dartcenter.org

Are you experiencing stress?

How many of these symptoms apply to you?

- ◆ I feel depressed and cry for no apparent reason
- ◆ I have mood swings and often lose my temper
- ◆ I have trouble sleeping
- ◆ Sometimes I have bad dreams
- ◆ My neck feels tight and sore
- ◆ I have headaches
- ◆ I suffer from hair loss
- ◆ I have problems with my memory
- ◆ I sometimes have no appetite
- ◆ I can't stop thinking about the violent stories I've covered
- ◆ Sometimes my pulse races for no reason and I start to feel anxious
- ◆ I worry about the people I love, and fear bad things happening to them
- ◆ I smoke too much

98. Comment by Cameroonian refugee to South African radio journalist, Shelley Knipe.

99. International Federation of Journalists. *Live News - A Survival Guide*. IFJ. Brussels, 2003. Available at www.ifj.org or contact safety@ifj.org.

These are all natural reactions to stress or trauma. The good news is that there are many techniques you can use to release the stress from your body and mind.

"Caring for yourself is not a sign of weakness: it's a sign of strength and self-respect."

Tips for handling stress

Here are some suggestions from journalists:

- ✦ Have a weekly massage
- ✦ Practice some form of meditation or yoga
- ✦ Take long walks - either by yourself or with a friend who knows and understands you
- ✦ Form a small support group of colleagues and make a regular date to meet and chat
- ✦ Learn a new skill or develop a new hobby
- ✦ Keep a private diary (for your eyes only)
- ✦ Don't be ashamed to cry

In their handbook "Tragedies and Journalists"¹⁰⁰ Joe Hight and Frank Smyth also suggest that journalists should:

- ✦ Find someone who is a sensitive listener. It can be an editor or a peer, but you must trust that the listener will not pass judgment on you. Perhaps it is someone who has faced a similar experience.
- ✦ Know your limits. If you've been given a troublesome assignment that you feel you cannot perform, politely express your concerns to your supervisor. Tell the supervisor that you may not be the best person for the assignment. Explain why.

Stress-releasing exercises

When stress is not released it expresses itself physically: in headaches, a stiff neck, sore back, stomach problems. One way to counter these problems is to make sure that you are breathing correctly. This cannot happen if the body is tense and "locked" - something that often happens when sitting for hours at a computer.

Here is a simple recipe for releasing stress¹⁰¹. Say these words, allow your body to respond, and notice what happens:

- ✦ My back is long & wide
- ✦ My neck is free
- ✦ My shoulders are free
- ✦ My head is lengthening out of my back
- ✦ I can feel the floor (or chair) supporting me

As soon as you get into the habit of repeating this easy exercise during the day you will notice the benefits: your breathing will deepen, your body will feel free, and your mind will become more centred.

Counselling for Reporters - a case study

Radio 702 is a popular news and talk station in South Africa. News editor, Katy Katopodis, decided to introduce counselling sessions when she became concerned about the impact of stress on her team of reporters. She takes up the story:

Why did the journalists need counselling?

Reporting in South Africa is often grueling. The reporters in the 702 Eyewitness newsroom are exposed to extreme incidents of violence and trauma as a result of the crime stories they cover. Having a very limited knowledge of psychology, I realised that they might be suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - a condition not unfamiliar in newsrooms

100. Available online at www.dartcenter.org

101. Adapted from Berry, Cicely. *Your Voice and How to Use It* (Virgin Books, 1994)

across the world. I also realised that if PTSD goes unattended for long periods of time it could have devastating consequences on their lives.

Some of the behaviour I noticed included bouts of anger or aggression and many off-days as they recovered from flu or other minor illnesses. I also noticed that several reporters relied heavily on alcohol (after hours) if they wanted to relax and I was concerned that all this was having a negative effect on their lives.

What results have you noted?

Now there isn't as much aggression in the newsroom and I feel that reporters know

that if they are faced with a particularly difficult story they do have an outlet in the form of counselling.

Do you think there is any difference in the way that men and women reporters are "allowed" to respond to stress?

I found that many of the men in the newsroom were more reluctant than women to take up the offer of counselling. It's seen as a very 'unmacho' thing to do. Unfortunately the perception still exists that men are a lot more hardened and tougher than women - and can cope a lot better. In my experience this is not so. Both male and female reporters are affected by violence.

Training approaches and challenges

"I believe that as trainers we need to convey the message that gender-sensitive reporting is more than a moral imperative. It is good reporting."

*Karen Williams*¹⁰²

In recent years there has been an emergence of conflict-sensitive journalism training initiatives¹⁰³. Separately, there has also been a strong focus on gender-awareness media training. But few attempts have been made to integrate the two, in terms of developing journalism skills and in-field reporting.

This is odd, because both kinds of training share the same goal: to build professionalism. They also frequently share similar methodology, using a holistic approach that helps participants to:

- ✦ Understand the nature of conflict and gender and their own responses to these issues;
- ✦ Explore their personal 'baggage', in terms of unconscious assumptions and stereotypes;
- ✦ Become more aware of the role of media in shaping public opinion and public behaviour - either positively or negatively.

As an Indonesian TV trainer comments:

"Training journalists is very different from training soldiers. A healthy democracy needs journalists who do not accept everything blindly, but who know how to question and investigate - especially when they're reporting violent situations."¹⁰⁴

To summarise, this type of training model is participatory and experiential. It recognises

that, in conflict-sensitivity and gender-awareness training, mere skills-development is not enough: we must start with the individual. The trainer's role, therefore, is to create a supportive learning environment in which participants are able to move from polarised positions, and to open their minds to new ways of seeing - as well as new ways of doing. Such a process is often painful, and frequently risky.

Opening up cans of worms - safely

Gender, like conflict, is a hot issue. If, as trainers, we invite participants to explore such issues we must be ready for all kinds of responses: anger, denial, blame. The challenge is to create space for different views and perspectives to be shared, without losing focus on professional journalistic skills.

For trainers, the best advice is: expect the unexpected. Karen Williams explains:

*"There is an assumption that women are more likely to raise, or make better reporters on, gender issues. On the contrary, I've often found that men bring up gender issues in my classes - but often because they felt it could be discussed from a safe, political distance. The atmosphere in the class changed when we touched on their assumptions of what is a man and what defines a woman."*¹⁰⁵

Such training situations demand excellent facilitation skills¹⁰⁶ with less emphasis on large group discussions (where the loudest voices tend to dominate) and greater focus on more creative methods that maximise participation.



102. In *Gender and Media Training: a southern African toolkit* p. 38 Available at www.genderlinks.org.za

103. See the Resources section for several recent handbooks, other publications and training programmes which explore conflict-sensitive journalism.

104. Comment made during Internews Training of Trainers workshop (Jakarta, 2002).

105. *Gender and Media Training* ibid, p 38

106. See SFCG's useful *Building blocks of common ground talk*. www.sfcg.org. This advice for talk show hosts is equally applicable to trainers.

Training materials

It is easy to find examples of gender-insensitive and conflict-insensitive reporting. The challenge is to build a resource library of stories (from both print and electronic media) that reflect 'best practice' journalism. Not only stories: visual images that challenge stereotypes about peace/conflict; masculinity/femininity can also lead to rich discussion. The Women's Feature Service website is a good starting point for such material; other useful resources are listed later in the book.

Practical field work

When planning gender and conflict training curricula, the challenge is to design field assignments that encourage participants to:

- ◆ Redefine news values from a conflict-sensitive, gender perspective;
- ◆ Explore the complexities of balance;
- ◆ Seek out alternative sources and voices;
- ◆ Debate language choices - especially relating to labelling and terminology.¹⁰⁷

Finally, when participants decide on roles and responsibilities for team assignments, trainers should be on the alert for gender stereotyping. Who handles editorial decisions? Who takes control of technical work? Who makes the coffee? Try not to replicate the injustices of a typical newsroom in the training environment.

Who do we target?

If gender and conflict training programmes are to have any lasting impact, we cannot ignore the gatekeepers: the editors and managers who determine media policy. Unless they become convinced that gender-sensitivity and conflict-sensitivity are integral to professional reporting, most training that focuses on these areas is ineffective. So how do bring them on board?

There is no quick solution for overcoming conservative attitudes in the newsroom and in news reporting. The long-term ideal, of course, is to develop a new generation of newsroom managers who are more gender-aware and conflict-sensitive. In the short-term, journalism trainers can at least keep emphasising the point that, when it comes to professional journalism, gender-sensitivity and conflict-sensitivity are not optional extras. They are building blocks.

"Women's rights are human rights. In the beginning you say, 'Oh these men! They oppress us! How dare they?' And then you say: we need to co-opt them. We need to sensitise them, especially the younger men. Otherwise we ghettoise ourselves, and men often have no idea what we are grumbling about."

(Sakuntala Narasimhan: Indian journalist and columnist)

107. See Labels and Language

Best practice

The following examples of gender and conflict-sensitive journalism are excerpted with permission from the Women's Feature Service archives. Many more examples of insightful reporting, innovative approaches and inspiring stories from South Asia are available at www.wfsnews.org.

No matter where we live, it is all too easy to find examples of gender-blind, conflict-insensitive reporting. It is not so easy to find stories that embody the core skills we have been discussing in this handbook. The examples included here have been chosen for this reason, as well as to generate discussion and new story ideas.



Bangladesh: Tough Laws But No Justice

By Farzan Hasan

Dhaka, (WFS)-- "My family has already suffered pain and insult because of me. I don't want them to suffer more," said the suicide note left by the teenage daughter of Anisar Rahman, a poor farmer from Akhrail village in the Bogra district of northern Bangladesh. She could no longer bear the harassment by four young men accused of raping her six months earlier. The four youth from neighbouring villages were on bail and were coercing her family to withdraw the case.

Unfortunately, this tragic tale is not a rare one. In another case, in nearby Gabtali village, the police were looking for an 18-year-old boy who allegedly raped a seven-year-old girl while she was alone at home. The boy fled after the girl cried for help. Neighbours found her bleeding on the mud floor of the hut and took her to a hospital. The boy's family, which is wealthy and politically influential, has been pressuring the girl's poor peasant family to withdraw the charges, and has threatened "dire consequences" if they do not do so.

"Even the police come and tell us to withdraw the case. We are too poor to continue a legal battle and will have to listen to them," says the girl's mother. The family is also considering leaving the village due to social ostracism. "Neighbours come and blame us for leaving the girl alone at home," says the hapless family.

Poverty, lack of support and daunting legal procedures discourage many rape victims from pursuing a legal battle for justice. Despite the highly publicised Yasmin rape and murder case in 1995, which brought much needed attention to the issue of sexual assault, families of rape victims are still reluctant to go to court.

Yasmin Akhtar, a 16-year-old housemaid, was raped and killed by a group of nine policemen patrolling a highway in northern Dinajpur district. Two years after the incident, a trial court found three of the nine accused policemen guilty of rape and murder and sentenced them to death.

The Yasmin case was one of the country's most-discussed cases of sexual violence

against women. It touched off street corner protests during which five people were killed. Although courts in Bangladesh usually take years or even decades to complete trials of domestic violence cases, the trial in Yasmin's rape and murder case was completed in two years because of the political pressure that was exerted.

But the delay in the execution of the convicted men has disappointed the country's women rights groups. Over four years have passed since the death sentence was handed to the three policemen, but they still await execution as their appeals are pending in the higher court.

"We always welcome tough laws that seek to stop violence against women. But the laws must be applied. Keeping the laws on paper does not help women at all," says Ayesha Khanam, a member of the Bangladesh Mohila Parishad, a leading women rights group.

Hit by a wave of growing violence against women, including rape of small children, the government enacted a special law in 2000 setting down a time limit of 180 days to ensure a speedy trial and providing for death sentence or life imprisonment for such crimes. The government has also added another provision: a child born out of rape will get inheritance rights from the convicted family until 21 years in the case of a boy and until marriage in the case of a girl.

Yet, women's and human rights groups are critical of this law. "Because the punishment is stringent, judges often become liberal. They don't like to hand down death sentences or life terms unless they are fully

convinced that the crime has really occurred," says K M Sobhan, a retired judge of the Bangladesh High Court.

Others criticise the way the law has defined rape. This special law has upheld the definition of rape that existed in the 1860 Penal Code made by the then British colonial rulers. "The definition of rape under this law is very limited. The offence is called rape only if a woman is tortured by the male sexual organ. But if a foreign object like a stick is used, it is not considered rape. This has weakened the law a lot," says Tania Amir, one of the country's best-known female lawyers.

While Bangladesh abounds in tough laws enacted to try to curb violence against women, the need to change society's attitude to women is not taken seriously enough, feel activists. "Men consider women weak, women consider themselves weak, and the rapists think their victims are too weak to resist," says Tasmina Hossain, editor of the women's weekly, 'Annanya' and a former Member of Parliament.

Hossain also maintains that the law has failed to curb the growing violence against women because of society's conservative attitude. "Women are considered second-grade citizens in this male-dominated society," she says.

According to official reports, more than 3,500 women were raped in the country between 1991 and 1996. And the number of rape victims has increased manifold over the last five years with women's rights groups saying that about 1,000 women are raped every year, many of them as young as six years.

Media reports on rape reveal a common pattern - the girl is young, belongs to a poor and helpless family and is left alone at home. The attacker is mostly from a wealthy family, often that of the village headman or his relatives.

Women in Bangladeshi society are also vulnerable to violence by relatives and neighbours. In most cases, the rapists are people the victims know. The involvement of close relatives often makes it difficult for the victims to take the cases to court. In some instances, local headmen force the rapists to marry the victims. But this does not help to punish the perpetrators.

Many rape victims do not complain to the police for fear of more shame or because they feel that no penalty will be handed to the offenders. "Our society has so many criminals who go unpunished. So those who resort to rape know very well that they will not be brought to book. If any case is filed, it will take years for the police to complete the investigation. If the investigation is done, it will take still longer to start and finish the trial," says Abdul Ahad, a law teacher.

Rape victims are also harassed during the trial, since the new law allows defence lawyers to question a woman about her private life and sexuality. Hence, they resort to a character assassination of the victim to prove that she had either consented to have sex or was telling lies to damage the defendant's reputation.

In such a scenario, a change of attitude is necessary among the police and other law enforcement agencies. In fact, the police are often among the perpetrators of the crime and more often than not policemen also get away with custodial rape.

"Violence against women will not end until the male-dominated society learns to respect women and provides them with the opportunities to become equal to men. This equality must not remain only on paper. It must be practised at family and state levels," says Sohana Sabnab, a Dhaka-based lawyer.

Wishful thinking? One hopes not.

WFS Ref: BANb425

COMMENT: Keeping the laws on paper does not help women at all. This article explores cultural-social sources of violence such as poverty and class, the rule of law, and women's second-class status. It includes background, context and expert sources.



India: New Beginnings

By Ashima Kaul Bhatia

Srinagar, (WFS) - The guns have fallen silent on the borders. But inside Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), women continue to face the aftermath of the long years of violence: they suffer abject poverty, desolation and insecurity.

In the absence of any concrete welfare programmes, some destitute women, like those from Dardpora, Kupwara district, have even resorted to begging.

Whether it is the women farmers who toil in the fields, or the craftswomen who embroider beautiful patterns on shawls and phirens (long woollen shirt worn by Kashmiris) - all are struggling to make a new beginning for themselves, their family and the community. They fervently hope that peace on the borders will extend within their villages, towns and homes.

"The qualitative difference of the impact of violence on women makes them the biggest stakeholders for peace in Kashmir. They are the ones who trudge to police stations and courts trying to trace their sons, husbands and brothers. They are the ones who continue to keep their families together in the wake of uncertainty, fear and despair," says Roma Wani, Additional Secretary, Planning and Administration in J&K.

Clearly, the last 13 years of violence have burdened them with new responsibilities. When the women say they want "aman" or peace, they don't imply just the absence of physical violence, but a system based on social security, equal opportunities, access to resources, distribution, economic rights and accountability.

According to a study entitled, 'Impact of Conflict Situation on Children and Women in Kashmir', conducted by Dr B A Dabla of the Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, 87 per cent of the widows in J&K were supporting their orphaned children. The research also indicated that very few widows in J&K remarried.

As Rashida Bi, a widow from Poonch, a hilly district in the Jammu division says, even if the state borders are guarded zealously by security persons, the fact that her children go to sleep hungry and that the army and the militants both harass her, implies that peace has still not arrived in her home. She lives in fear of hunger; of losing her son to the militants; or being picked up by the army for interrogation. "My peace is when my children and my body is secure."

Although some women have received institutional support in the form of compensation and bank loans - after wading through several administrative hurdles, and being vulnerable to abuse or exploitation - many in the villages continue to struggle with extreme poverty. "My mother had to go through traumatic times after my father was killed by militants in February 2003," says Irshada. The young school student narrated how at times it was difficult even to travel to town for any work from their remote village in Sogam as they did not have enough money to do so.

However, several women today are making efforts to build a better world for themselves and others. Shahzada, a health

worker in Badgam district, works for a programme of the NGO Voluntary Health Association of India. She tirelessly advocates health and economic parity for women in an extremely hostile, life-threatening environment. In remote villages, she introduces women to the benefits of a small family, nutritious food and safe deliveries.

Afroze visits villages in Kupwara, encouraging destitute and desolate Kashmiri women to rebuild their lives by forming self-help groups (SHGs). She helps them access loans, income-generation schemes and other government benefits. In their own way, both Shahzada and Afroze are creating spaces for women to empower themselves and ensure long lasting peace.

"The problem is that our voice is not being heard. Moreover, some of these so-called empowerment programmes have such stringent laws and guidelines that it is often impossible for women to access these schemes," says Shazda Bano, who has set up an SHG in Uri, northern Kashmir.

Even political parties have not taken up the concerns of women. Taja Parveen, vice-provincial president of the Women's Wing of the National Conference, points out that during the 2002 assembly elections none of the parties in the poll fray had any sort of package chalked out for women.

Still, some local women have taken the initiative to provide counselling and livelihood options to the most needy in villages. In the last two years, these women have encouraged village women to form SHGs in districts. Today, Baramullah itself has 700 SHGs!

Sabia Rasheed, State Co-ordinator of NGO Confederation of Voluntary Association, says, "Women are stepping out of their houses primarily to improve the economic condition of their family. It goes without saying that behind the economic development of Kashmir are the 'golden hands' of Kashmiri women struggling to bring a change." By change she implies a more just and equal society.

Take the 200 women from far-flung villages who recently attended a gender training workshop, organised by the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) in Rafiabad constituency, northern Kashmir. They gathered despite a bandh in the Valley, to discuss how they could access credit schemes, market their crafts, get agricultural and home loans.

Says Sazda, "More and more women should be economically empowered. Our economic azadi (independence) is the key to Kashmir's development."

WFS Ref: INDD225

COMMENT: This story pulls no punches about the terrible problems women face but it also shows their resilience and courage. It raises important questions: why is access to empowerment projects so difficult; why do political leaders not do more to respond?



Nepal: Sexual Abuse in UN Refugee Camps

By Tashi Dolma Thinley

Kathmandu, (WFS) - A survey of two of the seven camps run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in eastern Nepal, conducted by Oxfam in 2000, had revealed that refugee women in the camps are subjected to rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Now, after two years of inaction, UNHCR is taking steps to put a stop to violence against women in its refugee camps.

Women and girls, the Oxfam study said, were subjected to beating, psychological trauma, and physical, sexual and mental harassment by male members - both refugee males as well as the those from outside, including members of service-providing agencies and organisations. Shockingly, even after it received the Oxfam report, UNHCR did nothing; and violence and abuse in the camps kept on increasing.

UNHCR has now decided to help the victims by providing "psycho-socio help" and also by approaching the local authorities to arrest the perpetrators under Nepali laws. This was stated at a recent press briefing by Abraham Abraham, the newly arrived Officer-in-Charge of UNHCR's Nepal office. Abraham admitted UNHCR's "laxity" in taking prompt action.

Abraham is heading a seven-member UNHCR team that came to Nepal late November to develop strategies to put an end to cases of sexual abuse against refugee women and girls in the camps.

The admission of "laxity" follows the uncovering of 18 cases of sexual violence against Bhutanese refugee women and girls

in the camps, between June 2001 and October 2002. The probe was conducted by a three-member investigation team from the UNHCR Inspector General's Office that had come here on October 26 and left after 10 days. All these occurred after Oxfam GB Nepal submitted its report to the UNHCR in December 2000, which mentioned cases of rape and abuse in two camps - in Taimai and Shanishchare. But no action was taken.

Instead, UNHCR is alleged to have broken links with the agencies that drew attention to violence against women and girls in their reports. Organisations like Oxfam GB Nepal were not allowed to work in the refugee camps any more.

"It is reported that the cases of violence are increasing and this needs to be brought out in the open," said DNS Dhakal, General Secretary of Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP) in Jhapa district where six camps are located.

Meena Poudel, Programme officer of Oxfam GB Nepal, also said that the cases of abuses were increasing and proper measures had not been taken to address the issue. "During the study commissioned by us, we found that a driver of an ambulance of a service-providing agency had raped a woman who was taking her sick child to hospital," said Poudel. She suggested a more comprehensive study in all the camps was necessary to gauge the extent of the problem and its possible solutions.

The District Police Office, Jhapa, knows about the violence but cannot do much about it, "unless the crime is very serious,

like rape or murder". UNHCR has asked the police to inform them before it enters the camps. Said Kedar Prasad Saud, Superintendent of Police: "We hardly get any support from the camp officials in nabbing the culprits."

The police complained they were "handicapped" even though they knew about violence against women inside the refugee camps. "We cannot intervene in the camps like we can outside, so it hampers swift action against the culprits," Saud lamented.

Earlier, Michel Dupoizat, UNHCR Representative in Nepal, responded by saying: "The refugee camps are in Nepal, so Nepal is responsible for maintaining law and order in the camps."

Another reason for sexual and gender violence against refugee women and girls continuing in the UNHCR-run camps in eastern Nepal for so long is that victims and their families have been discouraged to approach the judiciary outside the camps.

According to Garima Adhikari, coordinator of Bhutanese Refugee Women Forum (RWF), "Those discouraging them are members of the refugee community, UNHCR officials, and the Nepalese government representative, Refugee Coordination Unit (RCU)". Adhikari's organisation aims to protect the social, economic and human rights of refugee women.

Turning to the courts for justice is too difficult. "The victims have to travel to and from the district court on their own so many times," Adhikari said. "Lack of money discourages many as no agency is willing to help the victims pursue the cases." The RWF had approached both UNHCR and RCU to help but both expressed their inability to provide funds for the cases to be pursued, Adhikari said.

The biggest obstacle, said Adhikari, was the refugee community itself. "The refugees, including family members of the victims, do not want such incidents to become public. While the victims and their families do not want any adverse publicity, others stress that a community matter should not go "outside". As a result, the situation has worsened.

She referred to a case in the Timai camp in Jhapa district in September this year. A 25-year old refugee youth had attempted to rape a six-year old girl. At a meeting held after the incident, the alleged culprit was asked to fork out Rs 500 which was accepted by the girl's mother who did not want to take the matter up outside.

It is to be hoped that the steps UNHCR takes will put an end to this victimisation of displaced women.

WFS Ref: NEPBC03

COMMENT: An indictment of apparent negligence towards gender violence, documenting the blame-passing and denial among authorities, and why women cannot report the abuses.



Pakistan: Gang Rape for 'Honour'

By Massoud Ansari

Islamabad, (WFS) -- When a group of tribal elders becomes the judge and jury and passes a sentence of gang rape against a young girl to shame her family, the outcome can only be inhuman.

In June this year, in remote Meerwala village, 610 kms from the capital Islamabad, young Mukhtiar Mai wept and pleaded for mercy when she heard the verdict. But the 18-year-old was dragged into a mud hut and gang raped, while a crowd of a few hundred stood outside.

The ordeal of the impoverished lower caste Gujjar family started when Mastoi tribesmen, of a higher social standing, accused 12-year-old Abdul Shakoor (Mukhtiar's brother) of an illicit liaison with a 22-year-old woman. The boy was beaten, locked up, and a meeting of the Panchayat (local council) called to avenge the family honour.

The hapless family argued that the boy was too young to indulge in an affair, but to no avail. Farid, the boy's father, was told to bring one of his five daughters - failing which all the women in his family would be raped. With no option left, Farid brought Mukhtiar, his eldest daughter, to bear the brunt of the verdict.

The incident remained buried for over a week and the state machinery moved only when a local newspaper reported it. Countrywide protests by human rights activists followed, highlighting the unfairness of 'justice' meted out by the powerful tribesmen.

The recent incident is not unusual in the tribal zones of Pakistan, where the 'edicts' of tribal heads are supreme, and violence against women, including killing them in the name of honour, is common. The majority of these cases remain unknown, and only a few like this one catch the attention of the outside world.

In an identical incident in 1984, in Nawabpur village in the same region, tribal heads of another tribe dragged about half a dozen women of a lower caste out of their homes, tore off their clothes, and paraded them naked. In order to avenge the family honour, they were also flogged in the local bazaar. The incident was sparked off when a boy from a low caste family was charged with falling in love with a woman from the upper caste.

Given the high prevalence of honour crimes, the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) conducted a study. The Commission found that between 2000 and 2001, a woman was raped every two hours and that nearly 1,000 innocent women are killed every year in the name of honour. The study found that excuses as flimsy as a woman sitting next to a man other than a relative could justify a killing.

The social sanction extended to honour crimes is equally shocking. "The real tragedy in this (Mukhtiar's) case is not only the fact that she was brutally assaulted, but that no one from the hundreds of onlookers objected or reported the incident to the police," says HRCP Chairman Afrasiyab Khattak.

Given the stigma attached to rape in Pakistani society, a woman needs a lot of courage to come out openly and fight her case. Says sociologist Iqbal Jatui, "Many rape victims try to hush up the incident because they feel if it becomes public, nobody would marry them."

Some like Mukhtiar, however, are determined to fight the injustice. "I relive my pain when I recall the ordeal," Mukhtiar says, but she adds that she is encouraged to go public in order to expose these men so that they dare not repeat this on any other woman. Mukhtiar says that she chose to fight back after she heard that another girl in a nearby village committed suicide after being raped by two tribesmen. "Although we continue to receive threats from the influential Mastoi tribesmen who scoff at the police, I am no longer scared."

Naeem Mirza, Court Director of the Legislative Watch Program of Aurat

Foundation, a women's rights organisation, says that this incident not only shows the failure of the State, but also indicates the disturbing pattern of violence against women.

Pakistan's current legal system is a combination of Islamic and British common law but, in addition to this, a parallel system of justice prevails in the conservative tribal belts across the country, where tribal heads decide cases ranging from murder to theft.

Although the government officially banned the tribal system in the early 1970s, it continues to exist, and State machinery is impotent against the might of tribal chieftains. "In these tribal zones, the law of 'an eye for an eye' is the order of the day and

even the general public does not trust the state legal system," says Ali Asghar, a senior advocate in Pakistan.

According to this parallel system of justice, whenever any crime takes place, the disputing parties call for a Panchayat and the tribal heads are asked to decide the case. The Panchayat determines the punishment to be inflicted on the basis of tribal rule. Anyone who does not abide by the decision of the Panchayat is subjected to punitive measures. And anyone who defies these decisions takes a grave risk, for the tribal jury can impose powerful sanctions to enforce its judgement.

The concept of honour forms the basis of the Panchayat decisions. "Honour makes men kill. Honour is a value in most tribal societies which is stronger even than religion," says Noor Naz, a human rights activist.

This is the first time the government has taken a Panchayat to task for its decision to inflict gang rape on a young girl. The countrywide protests by women's rights groups and human rights activists could possibly have pressurised the government to make Panchayats more accountable.

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Sheikh Riaz Ahmed, also took note of the incident: he asked police officials to appear before him and explain their inaction. "The attack against the innocent girl on the instructions of the tribal elders is the most blatant violation of human rights and human dignity in 21st century," Ahmed reportedly remarked.

The notice of the Pakistani apex court was followed by the military government's order

to take stern action against the police officials involved in the apparent cover-up and their failure to avert the crime. Mukhtiar was also given Rs 500,000 (1US\$=Rs60) by the government.

In the wake of the pressure built up against the local administration, three of the rapists and four of the men who ordered her rape and forced her to walk home naked were also arrested.

While action in this particular case has been positive, rights activists are demanding that the government put an immediate end to punishment by tribal councils. Says Saeed

Ahmed, a human rights campaigner in Karachi, "There have been a large number of human rights violations in the name of tribal law, but in the majority of these cases, the culprits are freed because they have money and political influence and can therefore buy justice. Public memory is too short and soon nobody will remember the case."

It is perhaps for this reason that courageous young women like Mukhtiar have chosen to speak out - in the hope that breaking the silence will ensure an end to honour crimes.

WFS Ref: PAKB910

COMMENT: A powerful but restrained account of an horrific 'honour rape.' The victim is also depicted as a courageous survivor. The story contains essential detail for credibility, empathy and explanation; it also demonstrates the positive role the media can play in seeking justice.

SRI LANKA: War Widows Learn Survival

By **Melissa Butcher**



Colombo, Feb.13 (WFS) -- War widows in Sri Lanka are facing a difficult future as the country comes to terms with the social and economic consequences of its ethnic and civil wars.

Since 1983, this small island has lost as many as 40,000 lives in the on-going north-east ethnic conflict; and between 40,000 to 60,000 during the civil strife and subsequent violent repression in the south in the late 1980s.

Statistics from 1994, show 21 percent of households are headed by women, making them responsible for maintenance, support and care of the household.

"These women have been brought up in such a dependant way, then suddenly they are on their own. Everything is on them," says Vino de Silva, coordinator of the Women's Education and Research Centre (WERC).

Most Sri Lankan women have little freedom to develop independent incomes or social networks. Once they become widows, their social status lowers. Considered unlucky, they are not invited to weddings or festivals, and face opposition if they try to remarry.

Today, given widows' new and unique circumstances, they respond in different ways: by going into debt, becoming dependent on other family members or trying to find work to support themselves and their children.

WERC in conjunction with Oxfam have begun an island-wide study of women

headed households, to get an accurate picture of their numbers and circumstances and help to improve their condition.

Sri Lankan non-government organisations have developed specific programmes to help widows deal with their trauma, says Dr. Kamini Alahakone, executive director of the Family Rehabilitation Centre (FRC).

The psychological stress in these women is manifesting itself in physical pain, fatigue and depression, she adds.

"They don't realise, they think it's something physical. We reassure them nothing is wrong, we talk and listen to their stories."

The stories of the widows are often retold through letters the NGOs receive. While their situations are different, they tell the same story -- death, isolation and survival.

"My three sons and two daughters were killed by women cadres of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the militant organisation fighting for a separate Tamil state within Sri Lanka). I survived by pretending to be dead," writes a 37-year-old widow and agricultural labourer.

Another 53-year-old woman who was badly injured in the war, writes, "I saw my husband, daughter and son killed. I survived by hiding under the bed."

Refugees living in camps, sometimes for a few months, sometimes for years, are also traumatised, Alahakone says, adding "once

they get used to this kind of life it's difficult to get them back to living on their own."

Many widows, used to dependency, continue to expect handouts.

"We always explain that we are not going to give them money but something more valuable, so that they don't have to keep asking all the time," says Alahakone.

What the NGOs give the women is knowledge of their basic legal rights, and nutrition and health information. There is also a more intensive training for some, including family planning and child nutrition which the widows take back to their villages.

"They can advise other people in their society, helping others, even those who are not widows," says Alahakone, adding that the interaction breaks down the social stigma attached to widowhood by giving them status within the village.

Sri Lanka's human loss has been compounded by the socio-economic impact of conflict.

"Poverty is a big problem. The widow is more concerned with looking for the next meal. Sometimes she doesn't have a place to stay, or money," says Alahakone.

Rising inflation and a falling rupee has meant an increase in prices for staple goods, says de Silva. "The problem will again be the woman's because she is the person who will have to find the food and educate the children. Prices of everything are going up."

As Sri Lanka begins another financial year, its economy is in trouble. A war budget has

seen defence spending rise to over US \$700 million, 8 percent of gross domestic product. The government has also imposed additional taxes for the national defence fund.

"The economy is second right now. Everything is for the soldiers. They really concentrate on that," says de Silva. "I can't say that development is not considered, but the main concern is the war."

It is the tragedy of war that transcends the ethnic divide.

"The Sinhala think only they are affected, the Tamil think only they are affected, Muslims think only they are affected. When they meet they realise that everybody is affected," says Alahakone.

The war has disrupted agriculture, education, and social life. Widows are being forced to take on very hard work, such as labouring, but even in this sector jobs are becoming scarce.

With falling investment there are no new employment opportunities, specially in the garment and tourist industries, both of which are predominantly female.

The war and the open economy, according to social workers, is eroding Sri Lanka's once exemplary welfare state. Indices for women, particularly malnutrition and the state of the girl-child, are declining.

Organisations like FRC work with around 2000 victims a year -- women, men and children. Yet in a country so physically and emotionally scarred, it hardly seems enough. Still, people have adapted.

"The widows are very resourceful. They somehow survive, maybe at a very basic level but still surviving," says Alahakone.

Survival however does not mean peace. During a visit to a refugee camp an NGO worker was approached by a woman holding

six photos in her hand. All her sons. All had disappeared.

"You are a mother," she said, "if you can find even one from this file I could live in peace." For these women, even a settlement to the conflict tomorrow is too late.

COMMENT: Details, numbers and well-informed expert analyses are combined with personal stories and vivid quotes to create a picture of the inter-connection of poverty, violence and gender disparity. The story depicts war widows as survivors, not victims. The writer reminds the reader that people from all sides of the conflict are affected.



India: Women in Ethnic Minefields

By Linda Chhakchhuak

Guwahati, (WFS) - "My son feared we would be attacked and told me to leave with the others as I would not be able to run when they came," says 70-year-old Huangneikim. Along with about 3,000 women, children and a few old men, Huangneikim was forced to leave her home last month because a bloody feud broke out between neighbouring tribes in the North Cachar Hills district of Assam. While the men stayed back to fight and/or die, the women and children were ordered to leave for 'safety'.

The recent orgy of violence in North Cachar Hills was for Dimasas Hallali or Dimasaland, the latest in the long list of homeland struggles and bloody pursuits, chillingly christened the "ethnic minefields". In the northeastern region of India, who hasn't heard of Nagalim, greater Nagaland, greater Mizoram, greater Garoland, Ri Hynniewtrep, Karbiland, Dimasaraji, Kangleipak, Swadin Asom, Bodoland, Rabhaland, Tiwaland, Twipra, Borokland?

With more than 300 different tribes and communities scattered across the 250,000 square kilometres of land, such claims for an exclusive, ethnic homeland - fuelled by the theory of self determination and a violent pursuance of this dream - are turning out to be disastrous. Disasters that spew nightmares for women like Huangneikim, who have to flee their homes.

The scale of the conflicts and the potential points of intersection between

the various tribal groups is mind-boggling, to say the least. More than 50 different organisations, armed to the hilt with sophisticated weaponry, are waging a battle for the ethnic homelands. Assam has 10 such groups while there are 37 in Manipur, 4 in Nagaland, 5 in Meghalaya, about 20 in Tripura, 4 or more in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. While many of these are active, others are waiting to join the ethnic (and violent) bandwagon.

One wrong move and these tussles for power - whether between the government of India and the armed groups, or between the warring tribal groups - can spill over the democratic boundary and into the field where violence seems to be the preferred and accepted method of settling a political question.

The 1990s saw some of the worst inter-tribal feuds, which were basically a result of the hegemonic intentions of the larger tribes. As a result of these, thousands of women, children and men became homeless, orphaned or were forced to live by petty crime.

One of the most critical questions here is: what happens to the women in an environment constantly charged with violence or the threat of it? Of course women are the worst losers - their space disappears, their voices are silenced. The men and the boys, meanwhile, brandish their 'courage' and 'prowess' with weapons to live up to the traditional image of a warrior engaged in guarding the people and the land.

"The different layers of patriarchal control, present in every society, get accentuated in a violent situation," says Roshmi Goswami, founding member of the Northeast Network (NEN), a women's rights group in the region. The all-pervasive culture of fear has spawned a feeling of helplessness and powerlessness in women.

NEN recently completed a study on women in conflict in the region. Part of a global effort under CEDAW (Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women), the study says it was women who lost their main support base, whether the conflict was with government agencies or with another tribe. The vulnerability of women as sexual prey became more pronounced in every way.

The NEN study also brings out the acute trauma of rape that was hitherto locked away in the hearts and minds of a number of Mizo and Naga women who had suffered during the height of the conflict in their respective states. Much like camouflaged terms such as 'collateral damage', women's sexual trauma does not figure anywhere when the conflict subsides, and the process of negotiation, rehabilitation, compensation or apology begins.

The aftermath of the clash is not much better for women. "In the relief camps, women's work patterns, fetching wood or water, makes them vulnerable and easy prey for men - from their own community, the shelter/relief providers, or others," says Goswami. Girls in relief camps are forced to stop going to school out of fear. "Girls deprived of even rudimentary education are doomed to perpetuate their downtrodden

situation," says Monisha Behal, co-founder and chairperson of NEN.

In other words, ethnic movements that emphasise ethnic identity make the control of men over women more pronounced - and more legitimate. Across the region, militant organisations feel free to issue diktats to women and girls - on what they should wear, whom they should socialise with and how they should limit their personal freedom of choice. And when masked, AK-47 wielding men back the diktats, it is more prudent to comply than risk one's life, says a college-going girl from Manipur.

According to Indrani Dutta of the Omeo Kumar Das Institute for Social Change and Development (OKD) in Guwahati, data shows that women-headed households have increased substantially. Contrary to popular and generalised perceptions, women in the northeast, like women elsewhere in the country, do not have control over property or inheritance rights. The report reveals a high incidence of mental disturbance and trauma among women, and the lack of food and security. OKD prepared the background report for the main study

And women have no visible presence in the post-conflict peace negotiations. It was only the concerted campaigning by the various women's groups that finally led to their being involved in some of the consultations between the government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (IM).

Valley Rose H Hungyo, a well-known editor and social activist of Manipur, says that the Naga Hoho - now looked upon as an apex

body to guide Naga Peace processes - "in actual fact does not have any women as part of it". Though groups like the Naga Mothers Association and the Manipur-based Naga Women Union were there, "something was lacking as they were not accepted as equal partners in the process," she said.

However, these groups are making a strong bid to promote inter-community/tribe

bonds through peace workshops and inter-community meetings. "This is the only sustainable political solution for our region," say NEN's Meghna Goswami and Grace Shatsang.

But will such a vision, which is certain to put an end to a thriving industry based on violence, ever be accepted?

WFS Ref: INDC508

COMMENT: This story manages to tell of a very complex conflict, involving ethnicity, in simple human terms through the eyes of one woman who represents many excluded from peace-building.

Part 3





Resources

Selected Resource List

■ Media and conflict websites

- ◆ **Article 19:** International NGO which champions media freedoms, monitors abuses, provides research, training and support. www.article19.org.
- ◆ **Committee to Protect Journalists:** A non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to the global defense of press freedom. www.cpj.org.
- ◆ **Conflict Resolution Network:** An Australian skills development network for conflict resolution professionals. The "conflict-resolving media" section has useful approaches for journalists. www.crnhq.org
- ◆ **Conflict Sensitive Journalism**, by journalist-trainer Ross Howard, 2003. A short handbook for journalists in conflict-stressed countries, emphasizing standards, conflict analysis and the media as mediator. www.impacs.org
- ◆ **The Communications Initiative:** a powerful, searchable source of information on media and development, media and conflict. www.comminit.com.

- ✦ **Committee to Protect Journalists:** See "On Assignment: a guide to reporting dangerous situations." www.cpj.org
- ✦ **Dart Center:** Research on trauma and the news media. www.dartcenter.org
- ✦ **Institute for Media Peace and Security:** UN-connected. www.mediapeace.org
- ✦ **IMPACS - Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society:** Exploring media's potential in conflict reduction/civil society enhancement. Training. Directory of interests focused on media as a peacebuilding instrument. www.impacs.org.
- ✦ **Institute for War and Peace Reporting:** International NGO providing professional journalism training in conflict-stressed regions, and a source of best-practices reporting. www.iwpr.net.
- ✦ **International Centre for Journalists:** Provides journalistic training, media management and technical expertise. www.icfj.org.
- ✦ **International Federation of Journalists:** Largest world-wide association of professional journalists. See: "Empowering Women for Change: resource pack for women in the media" (2002) www.ifj.org/pdfs/womenresourcepack/pdf and "The Story Behind the News: Journalists and Press Freedom in South Asia" at www.ifj-asia.org
- ✦ **Internews:** An international NGO providing basic journalism training, advocacy for a supportive media infrastructure, conflict-sensitised journalism, and intended outcome programming. www.internews.org.
- ✦ **International Journalists' Network:** See training materials. www.ijnnet.org
- ✦ **International Media Support:** Rapid intervention in support of free media. Research and training. www.i-m--s.dk
- ✦ **Media and Conflict. Special Edition.** 1998. An extensive dialogue among practitioners on the role of media in conflict zones, in Track Two, Vol 7, No. 4, publication of the Centre for Conflict Resolution.
- ✦ **Operational framework for media and peacebuilding:** 2002. An analysis of different roles of media and media for conflict resolution, by Ross Howard. Available at www.impacs.org.
- ✦ **One World:** Online network of people and groups working for human rights and sustainable development from across the globe. www.oneworld.net especially www.oneworld.net/southasia.

- ✦ **Panos Institute:** Journalism development and training. www.panos.org.uk
- ✦ **Peace Journalism:** How to do it, by Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch. Go to "Peace journalism" at: www.transcend.org
- ✦ **The Power of Media:** A handbook for peacebuilders. 2003. Reflections on media and peacebuilding, case studies and extensive resources. Published by the European Centre for Conflict Prevention, Common Ground Europe and IMPACS
- ✦ **Reporting for Peace:** (vols 1 and 2) Internews Indonesia training manuals by Fiona Lloyd and Peter du Toit. 2000 (currently available only in Indonesian)
- ✦ **Reporting the World:** Transcend members Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch and others' concepts of peace journalism from originator John Galtung (at www.transcend.org/pjmanual.htm), and roundtable report on "An Ethical Framework for Reporting of Conflicts." www.reportingtheworld.org.uk.
- ✦ **Reporters Without Borders:** Journalism freedoms and advocacy. www.rsf.fr
- ✦ **Search for Common Ground:** A leading practitioner of media and peacebuilding initiatives focused on intended outcome programming. www.sfcg.org.
- ✦ **World Association of Christian Communicators:** Communication for understanding and co-operation between peoples of different faiths and cultures. Sustains online journals on media and gender, conflict and development. www.wacc.org.uk

Gender and conflict

- ✦ **ICRC Red Cross website's Women and War** document at: http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/iwpList2/Focus:Women_and_war?OpenDocument#listanchor5
- ✦ **More than Victims. The role of women in conflict prevention.** 2002. A special report of the Woodrow Wilson Center. www.wilsoncenter.org. or www.womenwagingpeace.net/content/articles/MoreThanVictims.pdf
- ✦ **WISCOMP:** Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace is a South Asian initiative which facilitates the leadership of women in peace, security and international affairs. <http://www.furhhdl.org/wiscomp/html/about.htm>
- ✦ **Women, war and peace:** the independent experts assessment on the impact of armed conflict on women and women's role in peacebuilding, by Elizabeth Wren and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, for the United Nations Development

Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Particularly see Chapter 8: Media Power.
www.womenwarpeace.org

- ♦ **Women Waging Peace:** An international network of advocates for the full participation of women in formal and informal peace processes.
www.womenwagingpeace.net.

Gender and media

- ♦ **"Equality and Quality: a celebration of women in journalism"** June 2001 www.ifj.org
- ♦ **Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR):** New Delhi-based advocacy and research on the media to strengthen gender and development perspectives. Email: cfarasam@ndf.vsnl.net.in
- ♦ **Gender Links:** A South African-based NGO transforming gender relations in and through the media . Useful tools include "Whose News, Whose Views? A gender and media handbook" and "Gender in Media Training." www.genderlinks.org.za
- ♦ **Guidelines for Gender-sensitive reporting:** by UNESCO, in the Gender Mainstreaming resources section at http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.phpURL_ID=19220&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.
- ♦ **Guidelines on gender-neutral language:** available from UNESCO Women and Equality at www.unesco.org/women/index_en.htm
- ♦ **International Women's Media Foundation:** Strengthening the role of women in the news media worldwide, believing that no press is truly free unless women share an equal voice. The IWMF network is more than 1,500 women in the media in more than 130 countries worldwide. Its work includes Courage in Journalism awards to female journalists who have risked their lives to report on corruption, human rights violations and terrorism. The 2004 winners included Salima Tlemcani, a reporter for El Watan newspaper in Algiers, Algeria who has covered armed groups for more than 12 years and is battling several lawsuits and a prison sentence because of her fearless reporting; Gwen Lister, founder of The Namibian newspaper in Windhoek, Namibia, who began her career criticizing the apartheid government of South Africa and has often angering the current government of her country; and Mabel Rehnfeldt, investigations editor for ABC Color newspaper and host of a daily radio program on Radio Primero de Marzo in Asuncion, Paraguay. Her uncovering of government corruption has led to physical attacks on herself and attempted kidnapping of her daughter. www.iwmf.org.
- ♦ **ISIS:** A Manila-based feminist NGO dedicated to women's information and communication needs, collecting information and networking with special emphasis on Asia and the Pacific. www.isiswomen.org.

Key South Asian resources

- ♦ **Whose News. The Media and Women's Issues:** by Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma, analysis of media professionalism and gender sensitivity in South Asia and beyond. Sage Publications 1994.
- ♦ **Women in Journalism: Making News,** by Ammu Joseph, 2000. Konark Publishers
- ♦ **Changing Images:** edited by Tasneem Ahmar. Uks Institute, Islamabad 2003.
- ♦ **The HOOT:** The website of the independent Media Foundation in New Delhi and an excellent source of best-practices examples, commentary on South Asian journalism and gender and conflict, and resources. www.thehoot.org.
- ♦ **Institute for Human Rights Communications:** The Kathmandu-based organisation provides a human rights news service relating to women and children. www.ihricon.org.
- ♦ **Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies:** website, research and publishing centre focused on South Asia security policy. www.ipcs.org
- ♦ **International Centre for Peace Initiatives:** Founded in Mumbai in 1990 to explore innovative approaches to peace, with specific focus on India-Pakistan and West Asia. <http://strategicforesight.com/icpi.htm>.
- ♦ **The Centre for Policy Alternatives:** Sri Lanka's leading non-governmental analyst of media. Conflict and governance trends. www.cpalanka.org
- ♦ **Media and Conflict. Regional Dialogues.** South Asia Forum for Human Rights. Shared concerns and perspectives of South Asian practitioners. 2003. Also see other media-related publications by SAFHR.
- ♦ **Nepal Press Institute:** The major Nepali journalism training and research institute. npiktm.org
- ♦ **Pakistan Press Foundation:** Supports gender reporting and entry of women into media through Gender in Journalism training and feature service, and Gender In Journalism awards. www.pakistanpressfoundation.org
- ♦ **"Terror, Counter-Terror: Women Speak Out,"** edited by Kalpana Sharma and Ammu Joseph (Kali for Women, 2003)
- ♦ **"Working, Watching And Waiting. Women And Issues Of Access, Employment And Decision-Making In The Media In India":** Ammu Joseph paper delivered at United

Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) Expert Group Meeting on Participation and access of women to the media, and the impact of media on, and its use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women (Beirut, Lebanon 12 to 15 November 2002)

- ♦ **Network of Women in Media India:** a major forum for women media professionals to share information and resources, promote awareness and work for gender equality and justice within the media and society. www.nwmindia.org
- ♦ **South Asia Free Media Association:** provides South Asian Media Net, a round-up of South Asian media outlets. <http://www.southasianmedia.net/>
- ♦ **Women's Feature Service:** A New Delhi-based gender-sensitive news service and excellent source of best-practices examples from South Asia, plus a database of resources for news agencies, reporters and researchers. www.wfsnews.org
- ♦ **YATV:** Sharp, youth-oriented intended-outcome programming. www.yatv.vet

"Dear Journalist..."

Participants in the UNESCO-NPI Roundtable on gender and conflict-sensitive journalism were invited to draw upon their experience and write an imaginary letter of welcome to journalists entering the profession. We have briefly excerpted from those declarations of encouragement, wisdom warning and hope, throughout the handbook.

"The person you interviewed will remember for the rest of their life that a journalist picked their story to tell. So yes, you have told the world. But more importantly, you have told the person you interviewed that she or he mattered, if only for the short time it took to share their story. So keep at it. It is these stories that will change you, her, him, and the world." - **Manisha**

"Always remember your social responsibility. Journalists and media as a whole don't only reflect society. They shape it. This is often overlooked. Good luck. I am looking forward to reading you." - **Gabriela**

"Never lose your idealism, never become cynical in spite of the imperfections of the ground realities that you'll encounter...You can fight corruption, expose wrong-doing, help deserving causes and strengthen the forces that are working towards equity." - **Sakuntala**

"You can look for excitement or intellectual stimulation or you can look for opportunities to make a difference. You will begin by being attracted to the first, then you will come to a stage where you want the second. You could stop there and have a satisfying career. But if you try to move to the third you will get the greater satisfaction." - **Sevanti**

"You have to manage your energy very carefully not to burn down too fast. You must be ready for many disappointments. You must be prepared to deal with rude people...Do not be discouraged even when you see that your organization's policy is corrupt. ...Have always in mind that what does not kill you will make you stronger." - **Anna**

"Don't write the news by listening to other people's mouths. Go into the field and then you get the facts and the truth." - **Radha**

"If you can write your stories in a way that has authenticity, sensitivity and depth for yourself - regardless of how many stories will be changed by the gatekeeper, regardless of the pressure to report in a more traditional manner - you will have achieved a great deal. This will keep you sane." - **Kate**

"Keep your interest in listening and asking questions and don't ever assume anything because the reality is probably not as you assume it to be."
- **Vicky**

"But before that you need to have a clear vision about journalism. You have to have responsibility, accountability and accuracy so you can be balanced." - **Bishnu**

"You might have discovered by now that they call it a deadline. She or he who cannot meet the deadline should forget about being a journalist."
- **Da**

"If you want to be a good journalist try to be always impartial and hard-working. I wish you success. " - **Farida.**



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