REPORTING ON ISSUES AFFECTING YOUR COMMUNITY

A guide for citizen journalists
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Why the need for a guide for citizen journalists?

The media plays an important role in shining a spotlight on the challenges communities face and media practitioners often act as mediators between public officials and ordinary citizens. However, mainstream media’s reach has always left some communities on the periphery. One of the reasons for this is that most big media companies tend to operate from large cities. This means that in South Africa rural audiences, for example, have not always enjoyed consistent coverage because of the distance journalists who work in established media houses must travel to access them. In addition, some issues and community struggles are not seen as ‘newsworthy’ by mainstream media and get overlooked as a result.

Recently, as a result of the proliferation of new technologies and social media, ordinary citizens have begun to play a role in assisting both mainstream and community media in accessing stories from remote areas and from within communities that don’t often receive media attention. Citizens are now able to use technology to document and disseminate information at ease and with minimum restrictions. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as “citizen journalism”.

American researchers Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis, have described citizen journalism as “the act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires”.

By its nature, citizen journalism operates outside the boundaries and norms of the traditional media industry and, as a result, accepted best practices such as objectivity and accuracy are often not considered. Journalists have a responsibility to verify the information they are reporting on and maintain professional independence at all times. They also need to ensure that their stories do not cause harm or put other citizens at risk.
In her report for Health-e News, Barbara Klugman said, “Journalists have to tread a fine line between building relationships of trust with decision-makers and with advocacy groups, and scrupulously maintaining independence.” This means that journalists should guard against using their status to pursue their own interests.

This can create a tension for citizen journalists, many of whom are part of advocacy groups and are closely attached to the communities they report from. This means lines of independence and objectivity may become blurred when an individual has to report on an issue that is close to their, and their community’s, heart. It then becomes essential for the citizen journalist to be open about their associations or biases so that readers can decide for themselves how to treat the story.

The purpose of this manual is to guide citizens who wish to practise journalism to do so in a responsible manner and not to infringe on the democratic rights of others.

**Useful definitions:**

**Accuracy:**
reporting on facts and interpreting them without changing meaning.

**Bias:**
an inclination or prejudice for or against a person or group. It is the opposite of being objective

**Citizen journalism:**
when ordinary citizens engage in journalism practices of documenting, producing and reporting on information, mostly through the use of new technologies such as smartphones

**Citizen journalist:**
an ordinary community member who engages in journalism practices of writing and reporting the news

**Editor:**
a person who edits the stories written by journalists and citizen journalists before they are published. In most newsrooms an editor gives guidance to journalists on story ideas and angles, and sets deadlines for stories

**Informed consent:**
permission granted by a source of legal age of consent to journalists/citizen journalists, with the awareness of the possible consequences that may result from such permission being granted.

**Newsroom:**
place where journalists work

**Objectivity:**
reporting on an issue in a neutral and unbiased way, even if you hold different feelings

**Source:**
someone who feeds journalists information or tips for story ideas

**Story angle:**
the focus a journalist or citizen journalist decides to concentrate on for their story

### Abbreviations:

- **DV:** domestic violence
- **GBV:** gender-based violence
- **IPV:** intimate partner violence
- **LGBTQIA:** lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual
- **SAPS:** South African Police Service
- **VAW:** violence against women
BASIC INTRODUCTION TO JOURNALISM

1. Getting the news:

The elements of a good story

1. Is it interesting?
Your story should make the viewer, listener or reader stop in their tracks, look up from their breakfast and want to tell the story to someone else. If it’s not interesting, why tell it?

2. Is it new?
If you follow the news, you will know if your story is fresh and original.

3. Is it about people?
Most readers are more interested in stories about other people than about things.

4. Have you talked to enough people?
You need to talk to more than one person to make sure that your story is accurate. One person being badly treated at a clinic doesn’t mean the clinic is bad, but 20 people being badly treated probably does!

Getting quotes from people, along with their full names (first name and surname), makes a story come alive and shows that you are not just making something up.

5. Do you have the facts and not opinions?
A fact is a true statement that can be proven with evidence. An opinion is someone’s belief that might not be true. Eg. FACT: The hospital has two doctors and three nurses. OPINION: Dr Blue is a terrible man. News stories need facts, but the people you interview will often express opinions. Quote them: “Dr Blue is a terrible man,” said John Brown.
Sometimes you can’t answer all these questions but at least ask each question to see if you can. It will make your story more complete.

What makes a news story?

- Timeliness: It’s happening now or it has just happened
- Proximity: How close is this story to your readers either physically or in terms of experience?
- Significance/scope: How many people are affected? The more people affected, the bigger the story
- Prominence: If a high-profile person is involved
- Human interest: Particularly gripping, interesting, unique stories that evoke emotion

Sources

Journalists have a responsibility to report objectively and accurately. This means that journalists do not project their opinions or personal feelings in the stories they write. They should report on information in a straightforward way without feeding information to their audience the way they receive it. This is why having reliable sources is important for professional journalists and citizen journalists.

A source is anyone who feeds information to journalists in the hope that the journalists will turn that information into a story for publications. Sources include ordinary members of the community, government officials, politicians, traditional leaders, activists and corporate communicators.

Often sources have their own motivations when it comes to why they give certain information to journalists. Their reasons are not always clear or communicated to a journalist. It therefore, becomes important for citizen journalists to verify the information they receive from any source and also be open to hearing what different sources have to say about the same issue.

Why do we need three sources? Balance

In order to balance a story, journalists are required to speak to more than one source for the same story.
Health-e News has a three-source rule for its citizen journalists. This means you have to speak to three different people and hear what they have to say about the story you are working on.

In an instance where a source gives you information accusing an individual or organisation of wrongdoing or corruption, you need to find out if other people have had similar experiences and to hear those experiences. It is also important to hear from the individual or organisation’s side of the story. This is called balancing your story.

Sources might opt to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal should their names be published. As journalists we have to respect this and allow them their right to anonymity. However, you cannot have a story where everyone in that story wants their names to be hidden. It is fine to have a story with one unnamed source, but more than that raises questions about the authenticity of the information.

Types of sources

**On-the-record source** A source who doesn’t mind being identified and being fully quoted on what they said.

**Off-the-record source** This is a source that shares information with journalists in confidence. This means that as a journalist you are not supposed to refer to that information in your story. Instead you can use it as a basis to investigate further.

Useful sources for journalists

- Community members
- Government spokespersons
- NGOs
- Press releases/media statements
- Event calendars
- Media outlets

Conflict of interest

Journalists are expected to act impartially and to report on the news without fear or favour. When a journalist has a personal stake or involvement (e.g. emotional, financial) in a matter they are reporting on, it creates doubt about whether they will be able to report on a story ethically and objectively. For transparency purposes, journalists have to disclose their affiliation with an organisation or personal relationships with people they are writing about.

In cases where you have benefited from an institution you are writing a story about or received a gratuity, it is in the public’s interest that you disclose this in your article. This happens a lot with companies sponsoring journalists’ trips to attend functions. Usually this is done because the company expects favourable coverage.

2. Writing the news

Once you have gathered the news and interviewed people, you need to write your story in a way that is exciting and makes people want to read it.

**We use the Pyramid style of writing**

News stories put the most important thing first, with other information following in order of importance, finishing with the least important. This helps readers by giving them the main story very quickly.

**The introduction**

The introduction is the most important part of any news story. It should be direct, simple and attention-grabbing.

It should contain the most important elements of the story, but not the whole story. The details can be told later.

It should arouse the interest of the reader or listener, and be short. Normally it should be one sentence of not more than 20 words. However, two short sentences are better than one long, crowded and confusing sentence.

If the intro is dull the reader will not want to read on. If it is too complicated the reader will give up. Your time and effort in gathering information and writing the story will all be wasted unless you write a good intro.
A good intro should be:

- Based on the most newsworthy aspect of the story. Ask yourself what is new in the information you have and share that first.
- Kept it short and simple.
- Make the reader want to read the rest of the story.

Key points

After you have written your intro you have to decide what is the most newsworthy aspect of the story and start writing the rest of your story by starting with the important information first.

Any fact or opinion that meets some or all of these criteria is what we call a key point. All the key points belong in the news story, but only the most newsworthy belong in the intro. It is your job to decide which is which.

Go through your notes, go through the handouts and, on a piece of paper, list all the key points.

Now go through the list of key points, ranking them in order of newsworthiness, according to the criteria we have just mentioned. The key point that best meets the criteria will be number one on your list.

Writing your story step by step

As with writing the intro, if you follow a step-by-step approach to the rest of the story you will make your task simpler and easier.

1 Lead or first paragraph: What is the problem in one sentence? What is the main issue in your story?

This is your lead sentence. This is a short sentence (or two sentences) that makes your reader want to keep reading.

Bad lead:
Tumelo Letsitsa from Qwaqwa in the Free State only 10 years old living with her grandmother (Matshepiso Letsitsa).
- Your reader doesn't know Tumelo so you haven't given them a reason to care about him or his story.

Better lead:
Tumelo Letsitsa, 10, has spent his entire life unable to leave his home. Now, a stranger’s kindness may finally set Letsitsa free.
- You haven’t told all of Tumelo’s story but you told readers some of the most important information in a way that is quite striking and makes you want to know more.

2 Second paragraph: Unpack the five Ws and the H that would have guided you to get to the story. Tell your reader:
- What has happened?
- When did it start?
- Where is it happening?
- Who is it affecting and how? (How many people are affected by this and how do you know that number?)
- Why is it happening? Is this in response to something?

3 Third paragraph: Quote from a person who is being affected by what has happened, describing how it feels and maybe what they want to be done about it.

4 Fourth paragraph: Additional comment from someone who is also affected by what your story is about. Note: Their comment should not say the same thing as the comment before. If everyone you quote just says “it’s great” you need to continue to ask them questions until you get different quotes.

5 Fifth paragraph: In a story about a problem, this will be where you give the accused person or department the chance to respond to the problem. This will be where you will slot in, e.g. the response from the Department of Health about the problem you are highlighting.

In stories that are not about service delivery, this may be official comment so that you can complete the required three-source rule. The three-source rule means you always have to ask an opinion of three people about the same issue.

6 Sixth paragraph: Any additional information.
Remember, the most important information should be at the top of your story, so whatever is in the last paragraph that is not a response from someone should be something that is nice for readers to know but not crucial.
How do you avoid writing a story that will be rejected:

- Make sure your story is a recent or new story.

- Make sure you have pitched your story to your editor or manager to make sure that someone is not already working on the same thing and also allow them to plan when and how to use your story.

- Make sure you get a comment from whoever has been accused of anything. For instance, if you say the Department of Health did not do something, you must give them the chance to defend themselves.

- Are names and surnames spelt correctly? “Before I start an interview I always ask my sources to write their name and surname and their age on my notepad,” says award-winning journalist Pontsho Pilane. I even show them how I wrote their name so that I am absolutely sure it is correct. This also works as an ice-breaker and helps them relax. If the interview is over the phone I spell out their name using the phonetic alphabet. For example, P for Papa, O for Oscar, N for November, T for Tango, S for Sierra and H for Hotel and O for Oscar.”

- Have you checked and cross-referenced your facts among your various sources? This means speaking to as many people as you possibly can who might have information on the topic. This is also to avoid being used by people with a personal vendetta.

- Make sure you are not writing the same single person-based story again and again. For example, have you written about a dozen people’s experiences with the same condition or problem? Do they all sound the same? Then it’s time to give that story a rest for a while.

- Make sure your article is the required length.

- Use quotes in your article. Are the quotes from a reliable source and have you double-checked that quotes used are accurately recorded? Quotes give your story life.

- Read your story again. Do you have a good lead, middle and ending? Are you satisfied that someone else other than yourself would be interested in reading the story you wrote?

- Use a spell check to correct grammar mistakes. Most devices have autocorrect.

- Try to stick to the brief you were given and if the story’s direction changes, communicate it with the editor or the manager.

- Always stick to the deadline.

- Where possible, please provide photographs to go with your story. If the person doesn’t want to be identified, take a photograph that hides the person’s identity. The following example is the picture of a story Health-e News produced on Sexual Offences Courts. The prosecutor did not want to be identified, so we took a picture that represented the story.
3. Reporting on calendar or official events

As journalists we get invited to functions and events a lot in our profession. The invites usually come with the expectation for us to cover the event in our publication. Not all events we attend are newsworthy and in fact most media find event-related stories very boring. Sometimes you have to be fine with the fact that you are only attending the event for networking. Here are some of the things to keep in mind when attending an event in your capacity as a citizen journalist:

1. Ask for a programme to read more about the event and see who will be attending.

2. Read what the event is about so that you can discuss it with your editor/manager. Your editor/manager will advise if it is worth attending the event.

3. Just because you got invited doesn't mean you must feel obliged to attend. If you do attend you might not necessarily have a worthy story to write.

4. Speak to ordinary people attending the event. Often they can be your focus and you can find great stories from them, which you can then link to the event.

5. Make sure that the event is related to the focus of your organisation e.g. health or GBV.

6. Be prepared to submit your story on the day of the event and before 4pm. It is no use submitting the story late after others have published it, as it would have lost its news value by then.

7. If you are reporting on calendar event day, make sure your story is submitted two days before. This will allow sufficient time for the story to go through all the editorial checks and be ready for publication on the event date. If does not help to submit such stories at the end of the date.

4. Basic interviewing techniques

1. Have a focus.
2. Choose the right person to interview. Remember to ask for parental consent if interviewing minors.
3. Prepare yourself before you interview the person (do research if you are interviewing a well-known person).
4. Prepare the person you are interviewing by making them feel relaxed.
5. Put your questions clearly and concisely.
6. Listen to the interviewee.
7. Watch the facial expressions and body language of the person you are interviewing (you can include descriptions of these if they are relevant, for example “He sounded angry” etc).
8. You don’t always have to sit down. You can walk around with the person if they want to show you something. That often makes them more relaxed.

**Do’s**

1. Be friendly
2. Use simple language and explain complicated terms
3. Ask follow-up questions
4. Ask for permission to record the interview
5. Ask to take a picture of the person you are interviewing
6. Get the name and title of the people you are interviewing correctly

**Don’ts**

1. Never interrupt the interviewee
2. Do not speculate
3. Don’t ambush your interviewee
4. Don’t use jargon
5. Children in the press

A child is someone who cannot give consent and according to the South African Constitution the legal age of consent is 18 years.

Points to remember when doing stories on children:

1. Do not identify them if doing so might cause them harm.
2. Always ask for consent before interviewing and taking photographs of minors.
3. Unicef advises journalists not to exploit or manipulate children to get an interview.
4. Respect a child’s right to privacy and do not coerce them to give an interview against their wish.
5. Listen to children.

6. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is when you use someone else's work without crediting them, and therefore pass other people's work off as your own.

Here are the Five Types of Plagiarism compiled by the Wits Journalism Department:

1. “Copy & Paste Plagiarism”
   “Any time you lift a sentence or significant phrase intact from a source, you must use quotation marks and reference the source.”

2. “Word-switch Plagiarism”
   “If you take a sentence from a source and change around a few words, it is still plagiarism. If you want to quote a sentence, then you need to put it in quotation marks and cite the author and article. But quoting source articles should only be done if what the quote says is particularly useful in the point you are trying to make in what you are writing.” In many cases, paraphrasing and then citing the original sources is a better option.

3. “Style Plagiarism”
   “When you follow a source article sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph, it is plagiarism, even though none of your sentences are exactly like those in the source article or even in the same order. What you are copying, in this case, is the author’s reasoning style.”

4. “Metaphor Plagiarism”
   “Metaphors are used either to make an idea clearer or give the reader an analogy that touches the senses or emotions better than a plain description of the object or process. Metaphors, then, are an important part of an author’s creative style. If you cannot come up with your own metaphor to illustrate an important idea, then use the metaphor in the source article, but give the author credit for it.”

5. “Idea Plagiarism”
   “If the author of the source article expresses a creative idea or suggests a solution to a problem, the idea or solution must be clearly attributed to the author. Students seem to have a hard time distinguishing the author’s ideas and/or solutions from public-domain information. Public-domain information is any idea or solution that people in the field accept as general knowledge. For example, what a black hole is and how it is defined is general knowledge. You do not need to reference a general description of a black hole. The escape velocity of earth is also general knowledge and needs no reference. The distance to the centre of the Galaxy is also general knowledge. However, a new idea about how to look for black holes or a new solution to a physics problem needs to be attributed to the authors. If you don’t know what is accepted as public domain in a particular field, ASK.”

This information was compiled by the Wits Journalism Department
Five Types of Plagiarism Taken From:

How to avoid plagiarism

1. Use direct quotations if you see a story you would like to cover has already been covered by some and you want to use some of the information from their story in the one you are writing.
2. Make sure you attribute the original writer in your story and the publication where their story was published.
3. Paraphrase: Use your own words and interpretation more often. If you are using exact words, put them in quotation marks.
4. Have your own original information to add and give examples where possible.
1. Understanding gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence against another person because of their gender. It can be physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, psychological, economic or cultural. While GBV is largely experienced as violence against women, it can affect all people, including men, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) persons.

2. Types of gender-based violence

**SEXUAL ABUSE**
A broad category incorporating various forms of sexual violence, including, but not limited to, rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment.

**PHYSICAL ABUSE**
Any act or threatened act of physical violence towards another causing injury or trauma, including, but not limited to, hitting, slapping, kicking, punching and pushing.

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE**
A pattern of degrading or humiliating conduct towards another, including verbal abuse, threats to cause emotional pain, manipulation and intimidation, and repeated exhibition of obsessive possessiveness or jealousy.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE**
Subjecting another to emotional and verbal abuse, which may result in psychological trauma, including anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder.

**VERBAL ABUSE**
A form of emotional abuse, including constant criticism, repeated insults and name-calling.
3. Data on gender-based violence in South Africa

When writing an article about GBV, you are strongly encouraged to provide up-to-date statistics and qualify these by taking into account the unreliability of police statistics and the gross underreporting of GBV crimes. Overall, the lack of disaggregated data (as you will see below for each category) makes it difficult to identify trends and patterns accurately.

Moreover, the decline in reported sexual offences and rapes in recent years is not necessarily something to celebrate. This decline is indicative of fewer people reporting. It is important to be cautious of making blanket statements based on statistics without taking these factors into account.

Some of the most recent statistics and challenges related to these are as follows:

**Domestic Violence**

DV is not recorded by police as a specific crime category. When cases of DV are reported to police, they are recorded under a range of different categories such as assault, malicious damage to property, murder etc. Although the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 requires police stations to record incidents of DV in a register, the last compliance audit conducted by the Civilian Secretariat for Police (CSP) in 2014 found that only two out of 145 police stations under audit were fully compliant with the Act – a mere 1.4% of the sample size. Under-reporting of DV is also widespread.

**Intimate Partner Violence**

One in five partnered women has experienced physical violence at the hands of a partner in the last 12 months.

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**CULTURAL/RELIGIOUS ABUSE**

When a person is harmed as a result of practices that are part of their culture, religion or tradition.

**ECONOMIC ABUSE**

When one intimate partner has control over the other partner’s access to economic resources entitled under law or required out of necessity, resulting in them depending on the perpetrator financially.

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Many people think that GBV is the same as Violence Against Women (VAW), Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and use these terms interchangeably. The table below describes the differences between the four terms.

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### VARIOUS TERMS AND EXPLANATIONS USED FOR VIOLENCE

**Gender-based Violence (GBV):**

GBV is the most inclusive term used when describing violence against another person because of their gender.

**Violence Against Women (VAW):**

VAW is a type of GBV and narrowly focuses only on violence perpetrated against the homogeneous category of ‘women’. It therefore excludes men, boys, transgender men and other population groups that are not women.

**Domestic Violence (DV):**

DV is a pattern of behaviour that involves GBV by one person against another in a domestic setting. It includes spouses, persons cohabiting and family members.

**Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):**

IPV is a type of domestic violence against a spouse or intimate partner. It does not include other relationships in domestic settings, e.g. family members.
**Femicide**
A woman is killed by her intimate partner every eight hours in South Africa.

**Sexual Offences**
In the year 2015/16 there were 51 895 reported sexual offences. These include all 70 subcategories of sexual offences listed in the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007, ranging from rape through to sex work and bestiality.

**Rape**
Between April 2016 and December 2016, the police recorded a total of 30 069 rape cases. This amounts to an average of 109.3 rapes per day. Research has shown that due to widespread underreporting the actual figures could be up to nine times higher than those reported, with another study conducted in Gauteng specifically placing this at only 1 in 25.

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4. The importance of context

When reporting on GBV, it is important to provide the context within which the abuse occurred. This does not simply mean “where, what and how”, but rather the broader societal context that lends itself to a better understanding of the underlying drivers of GBV.

In South Africa, two key factors that influence levels of GBV are strong patriarchal gender norms and the intersection of race, gender, class and other identities that underlie oppression. It is important for informed conversations about GBV that these factors are unpacked when reporting on this topic:

**Patriarchy**
In South Africa, we need to be conscious of the patriarchy ingrained within our society. Through these norms, societal institutions privilege men and subjugate women, thereby reinforcing men’s superiority and dominance.

This plays out in many ways, including men’s feelings of entitlement to respect, sex and control, which often results in men exercising their power over women and children through violence. Patriarchy is also a contributing factor to the perpetuation of rape culture and rape myths.

**Intersectionality**
Some people are more vulnerable to abuse and have less access to services based on their race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, citizenship status (e.g. refugees), criminalisation of profession (i.e. sex workers), disability and religion.

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## 5. Myths and facts about gender-based violence

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>MYTH</th>
<th>FACT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“No” means “Yes” during sex.</td>
<td>“No” always means “No”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape only occurs outdoors at night and is perpetrated by a stranger.</td>
<td>In over 50% of rapes, the perpetrator is known to the survivor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman can’t be raped by her husband.</td>
<td>Forcing someone to have sex when they don’t want to is rape, even if they are married or have had sex many times before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only women can be raped.</td>
<td>Anyone can be raped, including men and gender nonconforming people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The survivor was raped because s/he was wearing a miniskirt (or other revealing clothing).</td>
<td>Appearance and clothing have nothing to do with who is raped. Women are raped no matter what they wear: babies in nappies, old women in tracksuits and nuns in habits have been raped. Rape is the rapist’s fault, not the survivor’s, no matter what the person who is raped is wearing.</td>
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The importance of language
The use of correct language is critical when reporting on GBV, otherwise it could lead to stigmatisation, secondary victimisation and re-traumatisation. Coverage of issues related to GBV can be improved through careful and nuanced use of language. Over time, this has the potential to influence social attitudes and to curb rape culture. The table below highlights some of the language do’s and don’ts when it comes to reporting GBV14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DO</th>
<th>DON’T</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DO use the descriptor that an interviewee prefers, e.g. “Survivor”. Many people prefer the term “survivor” because it conveys agency and resilience.</td>
<td>DON’T default to the descriptor “victim” unless this is the wording an interviewee prefers. Many people feel “victim” has negative connotations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO use neutral language when describing a survivor sharing their story, e.g. “shares”, “tells” or “reports”. This implies that the survivor is speaking the truth.</td>
<td>DON’T use phrases such as “the survivor admits/confesses” to describe a report of sexual abuse. This language implies responsibility or shame on the part of the survivor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO use language that places the accountability for sexual abuse with the perpetrator, e.g. “He raped her” (for legal purposes you may have to add the word “allegedly” when applicable).</td>
<td>DON’T use language describing the abuse as belonging to the survivor, e.g. “Her rape” – this removes the perpetrator’s accountability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO use language that accurately conveys the gravity of the sexual assault. e.g. “The survivor was unharmed.”</td>
<td>DON’T use language downplaying the violent nature of the sexual assault. e.g. “The survivor was unharmed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO use language that portrays the violence and nonconsensual nature of sexual assault. e.g. “Sexual assault”; “oral rape”.</td>
<td>DON’T use euphemistic language to describe sexual assault. This is vague and lessens the seriousness of the act. e.g. “forced sex”; “sex scandal”; “private parts”. Avoid needlessly including salacious details of the assault. Only include specifics if there is a valid need to do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO use language that makes the perpetrator the subject of the sentence and assign the verb to them. i.e. “The perpetrator forced the survivor to perform fellatio against her will.”</td>
<td>DON’T use language to make the survivor the subject of the sentence and assign the verb to them. i.e. “The victim performed fellatio against their will.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO use “sex work” and “sex worker”. This avoids moral judgment and treats the selling and buying of sexual services as a work matter with implications for labour law and occupational health and safety rights.</td>
<td>DON’T use “prostitution” or “prostitute”. This historically refers to shameful acts and carries negative connotations linked to inaccurate information about sex workers and the sex industry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check list when reporting on GBV

When reporting on GBV, there are certain pitfalls you must avoid. The check list below provides tips for reporting on GBV including, but not limited to, headlines, interviews, article content, imagery and social-media posts.

**DO**

**DO** take into account the “Importance of language” from the table on page 26.

**DO** ensure that survivors, especially those from marginalised communities, are included and given the space to speak on the issue.

**DO** speak to a diversity of sources, especially GBV experts. Don’t focus solely on police, legal or perpetrators’ voices.

**DO** include up-to-date, reliable statistics and interrogate the validity of these within your article. We may want to use popular statistics that add shock value, but these are often incorrect. Africa Check is a great resource and produces useful factsheets with accurate information. For some of these, see the footnotes below 15 16 17 18.

**DO** provide context! Position your article and interview within the context of patriarchal gender norms, intersectionality and the larger problem of GBV.

**DO** provide information on local support services in your article for the reader to access AND following your interview with a survivor.

**DO** take into account and reflect on your own position as interviewer and reporter relative to the identity of the people whose stories you are telling, e.g. a white cisgendered person writing about black LGBT-QIA persons.

**DO** use trigger warnings appropriately. Only use these if the content of your article is explicit in nature and may potentially trigger secondary traumatisation in another survivor.

**DO** cross-check your facts and information in research and other documents.

**DON’T**

**DON’T** report details that could put the survivor at further risk, e.g. names, photos, unless specific consent is given.

**DON’T** make public the names or any identifying features of child victims.

**DON’T** make public the names of reported perpetrators of sexual offences until they have pleaded in court. This is according to Section 154 of the Criminal Procedure Act.

**DON’T** use headlines and taglines that are sensationalist or false, such as “sex scandal” or “controversy”.

**DON’T** focus on the survivors’ clothing, addictions, sexuality, employment, past relationships or drinking behaviour.

**DON’T** focus on facts that make perpetrators appear to be “unlikely” rapists, e.g. “upstanding citizen”, “star athlete”, “volunteer in the community”. This suggests bias towards their innocence.

**DON’T** suggest that the difference in power between the survivor and perpetrator is an attempt to tarnish the image of a public figure or a revenge stunt by a “jilted ex-girlfriend”.

**DON’T** assume that all survivors are the same, be it in their experience or their reactions.

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15 Africa Check (2016). UN Stats don’t show a rape occurs every 26 seconds in SA, as Sky News reported. Available at: https://africacheck.org/reports/un-stats-dont-show-a-rape-occurs-every-26-seconds-in-sa-as-sky-news-reported/


INTERVIEWING A SURVIVOR OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Interviews must meet the needs of the survivor and provide a space for survivors to open up about their story and be heard. It is important to honour this and be respectful, mindful, safe and responsible. Below are essential tips to observe before, during and after an interview, and when conducting an interview that is broadcast on radio or television. This is followed by examples of types of questions to ask.

Before an interview

1. **RESEARCH.** Inform yourself about the impact GBV has on survivors and trauma they may be experiencing. This will aid in your compassion and sensitivity when interviewing them.

2. **BUILD TRUST.** Spend time with your interviewee before the interview. The more of a relationship you have with the interviewee, the more comfortable they will be, which will allow for a better interview.

3. **FORMAT.**
   a. Schedule the interview in a safe space that is preapproved by the survivor.
   b. Ensure that there is enough time and that the interview is not rushed.
   c. Take the time to review your process with the survivor.
   d. Allow the survivor to bring a support person to accompany them during the interview.
   e. Prepare a comfort kit for your interviewee, including tissues and water.

4. **CHECK YOUR ASSUMPTIONS.** Be aware of the assumptions you take into the interview. Do not approach the interview with negative assumptions, e.g. they are making it up, they could have prevented it, they should be over it by now. Recovering from trauma is a process and takes time. Be mindful of and compassionate about this.
5. **CRISIS NUMBERS.** Ensure that you have crisis numbers on hand for the interviewee. While they have agreed to be interviewed, they may be triggered by the memories. Some national numbers can be found in Appendix F of this Guide. However, do source additional numbers that are relevant and specific to the interviewee's potential needs and area or province.

6. **EXPECTATIONS.** Have an open conversation with the interviewee about your expectations and the information you need, and provide them with some sample questions of what you might ask. This will prepare the interviewee and allow them the space to inform you of their boundaries. You may need to then adjust your questions accordingly.

7. **INFORMED CONSENT.** It is vital that the interviewee is made fully aware of the consequences of being interviewed, including:
   a. The intended publication.
   b. That they will remain anonymous (unless they give express permission otherwise).
   c. That the interview will remain confidential (unless they give express permission otherwise).
   d. That they do not have to answer questions they don’t want to.
   e. Whether you intend to record the interview. They have the right to request that the interview not be recorded.

   If you use the survivor’s story in future, other than what they have agreed to, ask for their permission first. An example of an informed consent form can be found in Appendix A.

8. **INTERPRETER.** If you need an interpreter, ask an organisation that works with GBV if they can recommend someone who is an appropriate choice for this type of interview. Before the interview day, meet with the interpreter to go over interview questions and appropriate terminology and language. Keep in mind that the interviewee might be more comfortable with someone of their own sex or gender.

9. **GENDER.** Be cognisant of your own sex and gender in relation to the interviewee. For example, if the survivor is a woman, she might not want to be interviewed by a man. In that case, ask whether she would prefer a female colleague of yours to interview her instead.

**During an interview**

1. **SHOW COMPASSION.** Retelling a story of experiencing GBV can be difficult and traumatic. Be compassionate and understanding, and do not shame or blame the survivor for the violence perpetrated against him/her. Panic attacks are common symptoms of trauma and may arise during the interview.

2. **BODY LANGUAGE.** Be aware of your body language during the interview. Allow enough space between yourself and the interviewee to make them feel comfortable.

3. **TOUCH.** Don’t touch the interviewee, unless they have given you permission to do so to comfort them. If you touch them without permission, they might feel triggered or uncomfortable.

4. **ACKNOWLEDGE DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES.** No two survivors are the same. Experiences of GBV differ from person to person and are shaped by race, class, gender, sexuality, disability and other social locations. The interview provides a space in which to explore these intersectionalities, which are important to frame your article in. It is important to honour each person’s individual experiences and to be aware that there is no right or wrong way to act during the interview.

5. **RESPECT BOUNDARIES.** Survivors have the right to choose how and when they want to tell their story, as well as what they are willing to tell. If a survivor is uncomfortable answering a question, do not probe for more information.

6. **STAY ON TOPIC.** Do not add questions that veer from the initial pre-interview discussion on expectations and sample questions. If you are going to ask difficult questions, explain why you are asking them, e.g., “I am going to ask you about the incident. I am doing this because I want to ensure the accuracy of my article and do justice to your experience.”

7. **IDENTIFICATION.**
   a. Ask how the survivor would like to be identified, i.e. survivor, victim, person who experienced violence, etc.
   b. Ask whether they would like to remain anonymous, or be identified by pseudonym or their real name. This will have been established during the informed consent process.
c. Ask what words they use to describe the violence perpetrated against them, e.g. rape, sexual assault, etc.

Ensure that the editor is aware of these factors and why it is important not to change them.

8. USE OF PHOTOS. Do not take photos of the interviewee unless they have given their written and informed consent. The use of stock photography that portrays violence in an indelicate way, such as a photo of a woman with a black eye or bleeding, should generally also be avoided. This just adds shock value and is a reminder of what violence looks like, as many people have experienced this themselves and know what it looks like. Rather use photos showing the context in which the abuse occurred, or that illustrate a general situation, e.g. a photo of the crime scene.

9. END THE INTERVIEW WELL. Ask the interviewee whether they would like to add anything else and ensure that you bring the conversation back to the present and to things the interviewee finds safe.

After an interview
In addition to the “Check list when reporting on GBV” on page 26 and “The importance of language” on page 28, other useful tips when writing up an article following an interview with a survivor are as follows:

1. RESPECT PRIVACY. Principled, ethical journalism means respecting the privacy of the interviewee and their family. As such, you need to be careful of “jigsaw identification” when granting anonymity. This is when audiences are able to piece together details, such as the location, clothing or age of the survivor, even though you don’t name them specifically.

2. BE IMPARTIAL. It is your responsibility not to judge or discriminate. Stay away from implying that the survivor was to blame by mentioning clothes worn, the survivor’s appearance or their level of inebriation. While you may want to add ‘colour’ to your story, this can unintentionally lead to the onus of blame being taken away from the perpetrator and placed on the survivor.

3. FOLLOW UP
   a. Make yourself available for contact after the interview.
   b. Before sending the article to the editor, allow the survivor to review it to ensure that their story is accurately captured.
   c. If they feel uncomfortable with something and want it edited or removed, do so.
   d. Remind them of support crisis numbers that are available to them post-interview. Some national numbers can be found in Appendix D of this Guide. However, do source additional numbers that are relevant and specific to the interviewee’s potential needs and their area or province.

Interviewing child survivors of violence
There are additional difficulties when interviewing child survivors of violence.

The Bill of Rights (Section 28.2) in the South African Constitution states: “A child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.” As such the Press Council’s Code of Conduct (Appendix D) has also made provision for this when reporting about children:

“8.1.1. exercise exceptional care and consideration when reporting about children. If there is any chance that coverage might cause harm of any kind to a child, he or she shall not be interviewed, photographed or identified without the consent of a legal guardian or of a similarly responsible adult and the child (taking into consideration the evolving capacity of the child), and a public interest is evident;

8.1.3. not identify children who have been victims of abuse or exploitation, or who have been charged with or convicted of a crime, without the consent of their legal guardians (or a similarly responsible adult) and the child (taking into consideration the evolving capacity of the child), a public interest is evident and it is in the best interests of the child.”

1. BEST INTEREST. Determine whether it is really necessary to interview the child. Is it in the public’s interest or best interest of the child? If the possibility exists that it might harm the child and this outweighs the benefit, do not interview them.

2. PARENTAL / GUARDIAN CONSENT. Once you have determined that no harm will be caused and that it is in the best interest of the child, you must receive consent from the child’s parent or legal guardian.

3. CHILD’S CONSENT. Don’t forget to ask for the child’s consent too. Even if the parent/guardian has agreed, the child has the final say.

Types of questions to ask
Respecting the interviewee’s boundaries is crucial during an interview. Do not probe for more information if they do not feel comfortable answering a question. The best way to do this is to ask open-ended questions that are not too specific or targeted, thus allowing the interview to evolve naturally and the interviewee to share as much information as they feel comfortable with. To maintain the open-endedness of the interview, reflect on what the interviewee has said rather than asking pointed questions. Asking “Why?” can sound quite accusing. For example, instead of asking “Why didn’t you report sooner?”, rather say, “You said you found it difficult to report. Tell me more about that.”

SOME EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK A SURVIVOR IN AN INTERVIEW:

1. As much as you’re comfortable with, please share your experience.
2. What do you feel is important for people to know?
3. What barriers did you experience in coming forward?
4. What would have made it safer for you to come forward?
5. What services or people helped you?
6. Is there anything else you’d like to add?
In journalism, there's a phrase that says 'a picture is worth a thousand words'. Most of the time your pictures are going to attract people to your stories. Technology has made this so easy because most people can use their cellphone cameras to take pictures and record brief videos.

**Understand your camera:**

The smartphone comes with digital software where most camera functions adjust automatically depending on whether it is night or day, or dark or light. There is little that needs to be done manually.

**The rule of thirds** is where an object, place and thing are aligned on a camera screen. Imagine the camera screen divided into three equal parts horizontally and vertically, making up nine parts in total. These divisions are what you will use to guide the position of the object being filmed - see below:

The image being shot should ideally be in between the second and third frame. According to Hannah Chibayambuya, an editorial intern at Health-e News, an example of the rule of thirds is that if the main subject is a person, the shoulder of the individual should be closer to
the corner of the screen, while the other shoulder is in the middle of the second frame. The vertical line should be dividing the subject in half. The subject’s eyes should be approximately in line with the top horizontal line. The subject should always be in frame and should not be cut off by the edge of a camera.

**Composition** This is how you manually arrange or position subjects into a frame of your lens before taking pictures. You have to think about composition in order to take dynamic pictures that go well with your story. Think about the 5 Ws and the H of your story and visualise how it will look with a picture.

**Speed** The shutter speed of a camera allows you to freeze actions. The faster the speed, the more you are able to capture motion and moving objects, and the quality will depend on the speed of your camera.

**Lighting** Taking pictures when there are cloudy weather conditions is different from taking pictures when the sky is clear. Because most of the cameras we use adjust automatically to different temperatures, you need to take a picture from different angles without moving the subject. The camera allows you to preview to see if there is enough or too much lighting.

**Flash** Use your flash at all times, even outside during the day.

**Beyond the picture:**
- **Captioning and filing** Always provide captions with your pictures. Never send your pictures in Word or PDF documents. Send your pictures separately as an attachment. It is almost impossible to retrieve a picture sent through documents.
- **The 5 Ws – Who, What, Why, Where and When** Name everyone in the picture. Say what was happening when the picture was taken, where it was taken and when it was taken. If the picture was given to you by someone else, credit the person or organisation that gave it to you.
- **Average file size must be 1.5megs** Your images must not be too small or too large. They must preferably be in JPEG format. This is the standard for most newsrooms.

- **Give a selection of a few frames** Take more than one picture of the same subjects from different angles. Move around to have a few angles and have more options.

- **Imagine the feature on the page or online** Look at your pictures and check the quality.

**Outside the office:**
Practise – don’t be scared! Play with your camera to familiarise yourself with it and get the perfect settings. Take a few test shots. You can’t go back! Once you leave the scene there is no going back, so make sure you have saved your pictures.

**Beyond this lesson:**
Remember, you can Google to help you learn if you are unsure. Use free resources to learn online in your own time and space.

Karen Sandison
_African News Agency Photo Editor, Gauteng_

Online resources to help:
1. [https://www.tineye.com/](https://www.tineye.com/)
2. [https://photographycourse.net/](https://photographycourse.net/)
WRITING EXERCISES

1. Writing the intro
For each of the following stories, decide what is the most important key point or points and then write the intro for the news story.

Story 1
One mother in the Northern Cape does not know where to store her ARVs. She recently found out that her 18-year-old son was stealing them one by one. The mother is part of members of Seodin Village who are concerned that their children are stealing antiretroviral tablets to produce a highly addictive drug called nyaope or whoonga. Seodin Village is near Kuruman. She asked to remain anonymous.

Story 2
Portia Rasilavhi was brutally killed by her boyfriend. She had just celebrated her 35th birthday. Her body was discovered at her lover’s house. Both Portia and her boyfriend come from Nzhelele Village outside Louis Trichardt. Five months after her death police have not arrested the man who killed her. Portia had a daughter who is eight years old. The family feels as though the police are not looking hard enough for her boyfriend. Portia’s mother told journalists that she cannot sleep because the man who murdered her daughter is out there.

Story 3
Community healthcare workers are known to be an important link to improving access to healthcare services. However, this connection could be affected, as they claim they are overworked.

According to a community healthcare worker employed at Holy Cross Hospital in Taweni in the Eastern Cape, whose name is known by Health-e News, they are overworked and underpaid, and only two
community healthcare workers are allocated to cover each ward covering duties that should be conducted by at least six employees.

“We are pleading with the Department of Health to consider increasing the number of community healthcare workers, as it’s strenuous work and we are demotivated because we are only paid R3 000 after all the hard work of covering more than six locations,” says the community healthcare worker. “The shortage of community healthcare workers also jeopardises the quality of services we are offering to our communities,”

He added that the Eastern Cape province has been experiencing quite a high number of people who default treatment. The shortage of community healthcare workers could be the main contributing factor.

Story 4
Max Mpuzana, one of the men who will take part in the 100 Men March against abuse tomorrow morning in Tshwane, Pretoria, says he sees himself as the victim of children and women abuse. Acts of abuse and atrocities towards the most vulnerable members of the society project a very disturbing image in front of his eyes.

“I’m very scared. These things happen daily. They leave one emotionally drained and shattered. I’m looking at my daughter, my sister, my mother, thinking that one day they’ll be victims. I need to take a stand. Enough being a spectator,” he said. He recalled how one night in the complex where he stays a man chased a woman out wearing just underwear. “Although all the men came out to rescue her, it was terrible to see that. The woman was screaming profusely.”

He urged men to speak out against abuse and said while there have been high-profile incidents of abuse reported in the media, there is a lot happening behind the scenes.

The march comes ahead of former statesman Nelson Mandela’s centenary birthday on the 18th of July and was organised by Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), together with various stakeholders. Thousands of men from various organisations will march to denounce the spiralling abuse of women and children.

According to GCIS, there was no other way to celebrate Nelson Mandela without values that he stood for throughout his life. Mandela would have been 100 this year, hence the march is called 100 Men March.

2. Writing the story

Read the account of child abuse in Vhembe below. Choose the key points of the story and arrange them from most important to least important. Write a new intro with the most important points:

LIMPOPO – A day hardly goes by in the Vhembe district without a reported case of child abuse, whether it be sexual assault or domestic violence. Since the beginning of the year Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment (TVEP) has already recorded about 200 cases of sexual assault, 60% of those victims being young children. TVEP is an NGO that provides support and advocacy to women and children survivors of sexual abuse and domestic violence. In most of the cases victims are children under the age of 13 years.

“The statistic is increasing almost daily, which is something to worry about. It is worrisome when young children are becoming victims of sexual assault almost daily. Children need to be protected from all forms of abuse”, said TVEP spokesperson Tshilidzi Masikhwa. This year 380 cases of domestic violence that also involve children have been recorded by TVEP. Masikhwa, however, further encouraged children who are being abused at home or school to report to relevant people who will help them.

Victor Mavhidula of the South African Human Rights Commission said that people must not be afraid to report child abuse to relevant people when they see it happening. “Children’s rights come first and we must take any form of child abuse very seriously because times have changed; parents and teachers are no longer allowed to beat children as a form of punishment. For us to stop child abuse we have to work together as communities and report any form of child abuse we may have witnessed to relevant people,” said Mavhidula.

On Monday the MEC of Social Development, Mapula Mokaba-Phukwana, launched Child Protection Week in Tshifulanani outside Thohoyandou. She pleaded with the communities to play their part in fighting against child abuse. Most rural parents still believe in beating their children as a form of punishment, which by law is wrong. Chief Calvin Nelwamondo of
Lwamondo Village outside Thohoyandou said that parents must lead by example and stop abusing children.

“It is our responsibility as leaders and parents to make sure our children are protected from child abuse. It hurts us as parents when young children die because of neglect by their own parents,” he said. “Parents must find other ways to reprimand their children and refrain from beating them. Now there are laws that protect children and those laws must be respected by all of us.”

3. Focusing the story
Read the following story and identify the 5 Ws and the H

For KwaMhlanga villagers, seeking healthcare may actually kill them. Many residents of the Eastern Cape village have stopped accessing health services due to the alarming rate of rape and murders in a forest separating the village and the clinic in Flagstaff town.

Residents who cannot afford transport have to walk through the thick forest, where a large number of violent crimes occur. This, said resident Noluvo Mhlanga, is why most villagers, especially the elderly, have stopped accessing health services.

“The forest separating our village and the town has become a hub for criminals and we are scared to walk through it,” she said, adding that because of the dangerous journey her mother doesn’t take her medication.

“We have asked our community leadership to intervene and engage relevant departments to come to our rescue,” Mhlanga said.

The community’s pleas have been heard and during the Department of Health’s Check Impilo campaign KwaMhlanga was identified as a service point. Nonyameko Tibe, the community-based service manager at the Department of Health, said monthly health services will be provided at the service point.

“According to the information provided by the clinics, the area of KwaMhlanga has a high prevalence of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, HIV and Aids and tuberculosis. A church hall has been allocated to provide health services each month,” said Tibe.

“We will ensure that the people of KwaMhlanga and surrounding areas will have access to primary healthcare services,” she said. – Health-e News

APPENDIX A:
Sample Informed Consent Form (Before an Interview)

It is vital that your news organisation or outlet honours any undertaking you make to the interviewee. The unauthorised use or disclosure of confidential information may lead to the interviewee suffering substantial damage.

Interview Consent Form

I (interviewee) ..............................................................................................................,
acknowledge that this interview may be published/broadcast and that I fully understand the implications, and give permission to .................................
.............................................................................................................., (name of journalist/interviewer) of the .................................
............................................................................................................... (name of media company) to interview/record/film (circle applicable) me on .......................................................... (date).

The interviewer may (tick next to preferred term):
☐ Use my real name and surname
☐ NOT use my real name and surname or any identifying, private information
If ticked, please write preferred pseudonym here:
..............................................................................................................................................

The interviewer may (tick next to preferred term):
Use photographs of me or identifiable imagery
NOT use any photographs of me or any identifiable imagery
Other conditions
If ticked, please specify:
................................................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................................

Agreed on this date: .................................... in ........................................ (area/city)
Signed by interviewee:..............................    Signed by journalist: ......................
/ interviewer
APPENDIX B: Accuracy Check

Reporter:
Editor/Checker:
Date:
Short description of the story:

☐ Do you have the prime source’s name and telephone number?
☐ Are all the names of people and places correct and spelt correctly?
☐ Are all the titles correct?
☐ Is this story current? Has anything changed since you filed it?
☐ Are all the facts correct? What steps did you take to check the facts?
☐ Have you checked any medical allegations, for instance about possible causes of diseases or illnesses, with a medical practitioner, health worker or expert?
☐ Did you contact everyone involved in the story? If you could not, what steps did you take to contact them?
☐ What are the main, if any, allegations in the story?
☐ Who did you ask about these allegations?

APPENDIX C: Citizen Journalist Copy Check List

Before sending your story make sure you’ve done the following: When you have finished the story and before sending to your editor, have a final look through and pay special attention to the following:

☐ Make sure you have checked all the proper names for correct spelling, including the names of people, places, centres, hospitals and NGOs, as well as titles.
☐ Look out for proper names like those of hospitals or clinics. If the proper name of the hospital, e.g. Dr. George Mukhari Hospital, includes the word “hospital”, then make sure it is capitalised.

Note, for example that checking the proper noun “Thohoyandou Clinic” by typing it into Google, will reveal that Thohoyandou has no “Thohoyandou Clinic” but instead has a “Thohoyandou Community Health Centre”.

☐ For cities with name changes, please check the latest name spelling, e.g Messina is now Musina, Umtata versus Mthatha.
☐ Make sure you have included a short description of any NGOs that might not be broadly familiar to readers, e.g Alex Stuart from the South African Haemophilia Foundation (SAHF), an organisation that works to improve haemophilia diagnosis and standards of care in the country by reaching out to rural communities.

☐ Any hyperlinks/URLs you may have referenced should be at the END of the relevant sentence but NOT in the lead.
☐ Made sure that all acronyms are spelt out on the first reference with the abbreviated name in brackets. After the reference, you can start using the acronyms in the story. For example: Treatment Action Campaign (TAC).

☐ Reread the story thoroughly to make sure that there are no missing words or letters. Always use simple words.
☐ Have you selected your intended topic and carefully planned out your idea? What is your focus going to be and who will you interview?
☐ If you can’t verify something, ask your editor.
APPENDIX D:
Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media

(Effective from 1 January 2019)

The Press Council of South Africa and the Interactive Advertising Bureau South Africa adopt the following Code for print and online media (together referred to as “the media).

PREAMBLE

The media exist to serve society. Their freedom provides for independent scrutiny of the forces that shape society, and is essential to realising the promise of democracy. It enables citizens to make informed judgments on the issues of the day, a role whose centrality is recognised in the South African Constitution. Section 16 of the Bill of Rights sets out that:

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes:
   a) Freedom of the press and other media;
   b) Freedom to receive and impart information or ideas;
   c) Freedom of artistic creativity; and
   d) Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.

2. The right in subsection (1) does not extend to:
   a) Propaganda for war;
   b) Incitement of imminent violence; or
   c) Advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.

The media strive to hold these rights in trust for the country’s citizens; and they are subject to the same rights and duties as the individual. Everyone has the duty to defend and further these rights, in recognition of the struggles that created them: the media, the public and government, who all make up the democratic state.

The media’s work is guided at all times by the public interest, understood to describe information of legitimate interest or importance to citizens.

As journalists we commit ourselves to the highest standards, to maintain credibility and keep the trust of the public. This means always striving for truth, avoiding unnecessary harm, reflecting a multiplicity of voices in our coverage of events, showing a special concern for children and other vulnerable groups, and exhibiting sensitivity to the cultural customs of their readers and the subjects of their reportage, and acting independently.

Chapter 1: MEDIA-GENERATED CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES

1. Gathering and reporting of news
   The media shall:
   1.1 take care to report news truthfully, accurately and fairly;
   1.2 present news in context and in a balanced manner, without any intentional or negligent departure from the facts whether by distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation, material omissions, or summarization;
   1.3 present only what may reasonably be true as fact; opinions, allegations, rumours or suppositions shall be presented clearly as such;
   1.4 obtain news legally, honestly and fairly, unless public interest dictates otherwise;
   1.5 use personal information for journalistic purposes only;
   1.6 identify themselves as such, unless public interest or their safety dictates otherwise;
   1.7 verify the accuracy of doubtful information, if practicable; if not, this shall be stated;
   1.8 seek, if practicable, the views of the subject of critical reportage in advance of publication, except when they might be prevented from reporting, or evidence destroyed, or sources intimidated. Such a subject should be afforded reasonable time to respond; if unable to obtain comment, this shall be stated;
   1.9 state where a report is based on limited information, and supplement it once new information becomes available;
   1.10 make amends for presenting inaccurate information or comment by publishing promptly and with appropriate prominence a retraction, correction, explanation or an apology;
   1.11 prominently indicate when an online article has been amended or an apology or retraction published and link such to that text, while the original article may remain;
   1.12 not be obliged to remove any article which is not unlawfully defamatory; and
   1.13 not plagiarise.
2. Independence and Conflicts of Interest

The media shall:

2.1 not allow commercial, political, personal or other non-professional considerations to influence reporting, and avoid conflicts of interest as well as practices that could lead readers to doubt the media's independence and professionalism;
2.2 not accept any benefit which may influence coverage;
2.3 indicate clearly when an outside organization has contributed to the cost of newsgathering; and
2.4 keep editorial material clearly distinct from advertising and sponsored events.

3. Privacy, Dignity and Reputation

The media shall:

3.1 exercise care and consideration in matters involving the private lives of individuals. The right to privacy may be overridden by public interest;
3.2 afford special weight to South African cultural customs concerning the protection of privacy and dignity of people who are bereaved and their respect for those who have passed away, as well as concerning children, the aged and the physically and mentally disabled;
3.3 exercise care and consideration in matters involving dignity and reputation, which may be overridden only if it is in the public interest and if:
3.3.1. the facts reported are true or substantially true; or
3.3.2. the reportage amounts to protected comment based on facts that are adequately referred to and that are either true or reasonably true; or
3.3.3. the reportage amounts to a fair and accurate report of court proceedings, Parliamentary proceedings or the proceedings of any quasi-judicial tribunal or forum; or
3.3.4. it was reasonable for the information to be communicated because it was prepared in accordance with acceptable principles of journalistic conduct; or
3.3.5. the article was, or formed part of, an accurate and impartial account of a dispute to which the complainant was a party;
3.4 not identify rape survivors, survivors of sexual violence which includes sexual intimidation and harassment* or disclose the HIV/AIDS status of people without their consent and, in the case of children, from their legal guardian or a similarly responsible adult as well as from the child (taking into consideration the evolving capacity of the child), and a public interest is evident, and it is in the best interests of the child.

* The World Health Organisation inter alia defines sexual violence as follows: “Sexual violence encompasses acts that range from verbal harassment to forced penetration, and an array of types of coercion, from social pressure and intimidation to physical force...”

4. Protection of Personal Information*

The media shall:

4.1 take reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information under their control is protected from misuse, loss, and unauthorized access;
4.2 ensure that the personal information they gather is accurate, reasonably complete and up to date;
4.3 take steps to verify the accuracy of their information and, if necessary, amend it where a person requests a correction to be made to his or her personal information;
4.4 only disclose sufficient personal information to identify the person being reported on as some information, such as addresses, may enable others to intrude on their privacy and safety; and
4.5 inform the affected person(s) and take reasonable steps to mitigate any prejudicial effects where it is reasonably suspected that an unauthorized person may have obtained access to personal information held by the media.

* “Personal information” is defined as follows in Section 1 of the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013: “Personal information” means information relating to an identifiable, living, natural person, and where it is applicable, an identifiable, existing juristic person, including, but not limited to (a) information relating to the race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, national, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental health, well-being, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth of the person; (b)
information relating to the education or the medical, financial, criminal or employment history of the person; (c) any identifying number, symbol, email address, physical address, telephone number, location information, online identifier or other particular assignment to the person; (d) the biometric information of the person; (e) the personal opinions, views or preferences of the person; (f) correspondence sent by the person that is implicitly or explicitly of a private or confidential nature or further correspondence that would reveal the contents of the original correspondence; (g) the views or opinions of another individual about the person; and (h) the name of the person if it appears with other personal information relating to the person or if the disclosure of the name itself would reveal information about the person.

5. Discrimination and Hate Speech

The media shall:

5.1. avoid discriminatory or denigratory references to people’s race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth or other status, and not refer to such status in a prejudicial or pejorative context – and shall refer to the above only where it is strictly relevant to the matter reported, and if it is in the public interest; and

5.2 balance their right and duty to report and comment on all matters of legitimate public interest against the obligation not to publish material that amounts to propaganda for war, incitement of imminent violence or hate speech – that is, advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.

6. Advocacy

The media may strongly advocate their own views on controversial topics, provided that they clearly distinguish between fact and opinion, and not misrepresent or suppress or distort relevant facts.

7. Protected Comment

7.1 The media shall be entitled to comment upon or criticise any actions or events of public interest; and

7.2 Comment or criticism is protected even if it is extreme, unjust, unbalanced, exaggerated and prejudiced, as long as it is without malice, is on a matter of public interest, has taken fair account of all material facts that are either true or reasonably true, and is presented in a manner that it appears clearly to be comment.

8. Children

In the spirit of Section 28.2 of the Bill of Rights* the media shall:

8.1 exercise exceptional care and consideration when reporting about children*. If there is any chance that coverage might cause harm of any kind to a child, he or she shall not be interviewed, photographed or identified without the consent of a legal guardian or of a similarly responsible adult and the child (taking into consideration the evolving capacity of the child); and a public interest is evident;

8.2 not publish child pornography*; and

8.3 not identify children who have been victims of abuse or exploitation, or who have been charged with or convicted of a crime, without the consent of their legal guardians (or a similarly responsible adult) and the child (taking into consideration the evolving capacity of the child), a public interest is evident and it is in the best interests of the child.

* Section 28.2 of the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution says: “A child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.”

* A “child” is a person under the age of 18 years. 7

* Child Pornography is defined in the Film and Publications Act as: “Any visual image or any description of a person, real or simulated, however created, who is or who is depicted or described as being, under the age of 18 years, explicitly depicting such a person who is or who is being depicted as engaged or participating in sexual conduct; engaged in an explicit display of genitals; participating in or assisting another person to participate in sexual conduct which, judged within context, has as its predominant objective purpose, the stimulation of sexual arousal in its target audience or showing or describing the body or parts of the body of the person in a manner or circumstance which, in context, amounts to sexual exploitation.”
9. Violence, Graphic Content

The media shall:
9.1 exercise due care and responsibility when presenting brutality, violence and suffering;
9.2 not sanction, promote or glamorise violence or unlawful conduct; and
9.3 avoid content which depicts violent crime or other violence or explicit sex, unless the public interest dictates otherwise – in which case a prominently displayed warning must indicate that such content is graphic and inappropriate for certain audiences such as children.

10. Headlines, Captions, Posters, Pictures and Video / Audio Content

10.1 Headlines, captions to pictures and posters shall not mislead the public and shall give a reasonable reflection of the contents of the report or picture in question; and
10.2 Pictures and video / audio content shall not misrepresent or mislead nor be manipulated to do so.

11. Confidential and Anonymous Sources

The media shall:
11.1 protect confidential sources of information – the protection of sources is a basic principle in a democratic and free society;
11.2 avoid the use of anonymous sources unless there is no other way to deal with a story, and shall take care to corroborate such information; and
11.3 not publish information that constitutes a breach of confidence, unless the public interest dictates otherwise.

12. Payment for Information

The media shall avoid shady journalism in which informants are paid to induce them to give the information, particularly when they are criminals – except where the material concerned ought to be published in the public interest and the payment is necessary for this to be done.

APPENDIX E: Rights of a Survivor
APPENDIX F: Referrals

Below are national helpline numbers for you to have on hand when interviewing a survivor and to list at the end of your article or report.

Ensure that you also source reliable province-specific referrals when interviewing a survivor, so that they are able to reach out to organisations within their area should they need to.

**NATIONAL HELPLINE NUMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National GBV Helpline</td>
<td>0800 150 150</td>
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<tr>
<td>LifeLine South Africa</td>
<td>0861 322 322</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS Helpline</td>
<td>0800 012 322</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Counselling Line</td>
<td>0861 322 322</td>
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<tr>
<td>Childline South Africa</td>
<td>0800 055 555</td>
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<tr>
<td>South African Police Service</td>
<td>10111</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal Aid</td>
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**THUTHUZELA CARE CENTRES**

Thuthuzela Care Centres are one-stop facilities where a rape survivor receives medical, psychosocial and legal support. They have been introduced as a critical part of South Africa’s antirape strategy, aiming to reduce secondary victimisation, improve conviction rates and reduce the cycle time for finalisation of cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>THUTHUZELA CARE CENTRE</th>
<th>CONTACT NUMBER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GAUTENG</td>
<td>Kopanong TCC</td>
<td>016 428 5959</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kopanong Hospital,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Duncanville, Vereeniging</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Laudium TCC</td>
<td>012 374 3710</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>KWAZULU-NATAL</td>
<td>Edendale TCC</td>
<td>033 395 4325</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pietermaritzburg</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Madadeni TCC</td>
<td>034 328 8000</td>
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<td>ext 8514</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Empangeni TCC</td>
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Survivors' Support Service through Izwi Lami

Health-e News has developed a Survivors' Support Service: a USSD (Unstructured Supplementary Service Data) service and online map that provides a directory of all Thuthuzela Care Centres, hospitals, 24-hour clinics and shelters for survivors of sexual violence survivors across the country.

This is part of Health-e’s ‘Izwi Lami’ (‘My Voice’) campaign to ensure that rape survivors get the medical services and support that they need and are entitled to. The map can be found here: https://www.health-e.org.za/survivor-support/ and the free and anonymous USSD code to dial is *134*334# from any cellphone, or Whatsapp ‘Izwi Lami’ to 060 069 2788.

How to use it

For the map, users can search for locations either by typing in a city, town or address on the website, or selecting the checkbox of either ‘Shelters’, ‘TCC’ (Thuthuzela Care Centre) or ‘Hospitals/Clinics’. Once a facility is selected, the address and contact info of the facility is displayed.

Users are given a checklist of services that they might need if they have been raped, including emergency contraception, HIV test (and ARVs within 72 hours if they are HIV negative), vaccinations against tetanus and hepatitis B, antibiotics for sexually transmitted infections and counselling.

Users can click on the ‘Rate this facility’ link and give a rating out of five for the treatment they received at the facility, and are also invited to leave a comment.

Whistleblowers can also use this to report problems with facilities. This data will be collated and shared with partner organisations and the Department of Health.

As the map requires data or wifi, Health-e emphasizes the importance of the free and anonymous USSD which is available from any mobile phone, and is in five languages. Just dial *134*334# from any cellphone. The public is urged to save the code on their phones for cases of emergency.

The free and anonymous service is available from any mobile phone, in five different languages.

Just dial *134*334# from any cellphone. The public is urged to save the code on their phones for cases of emergency.
RAPE SURVIVORS' SUPPORT SERVICE

Get the support you need

Find rape support services like shelters, clinics, counselling, medical care and more.

DIAL *134*334#
FREE & ANONYMOUS from any mobile phone

IZWI LAMI [MY VOICE]

or Whatsapp 'Izwi Lami' to 060 069 2788

Rate your experience on our interactive map with services available across the country.

www.health-e.org.za/survivor-support/