

**Policemen V  
e Water Sa  
AS**

... lady said she was raped by policemen  
... could not pay the money they de-  
... in exchange for her release.

... The Social Development Secretariat and the  
... in the welfare of the victims of the  
... and Security Service, Public Relations Officer of the  
... to an enforcement agent to bring to those that  
... ready being investigated. Our team will instead  
... women, against their will. They are all women that  
... them ought to have allowed these persons, such a person  
... should be prosecuted.

**The Media News**

VOL. XCVC No. 234 ©Sahara Reporters 2022 WORLD, SEPTEMBER 2022

**Married babysitter  
who had baby with  
boy, 13, is jailed for  
30 months**

A married babysitter who had a baby with a 13-year-old school boy ahead a total lack of remorse, a judge said.

“My one snag I had on alternative but he meant that that one was doing herself a disservice in her interaction with prosecution counsel. Further if in any way allowed to remove her from the scene.”

“I could I based on indications from other victims of the crime that she would have any particular affection, the evidence from at least one witness was of physical closeness and self-endorsement as opposed to emotional attachment.”

As a written report statement, the boy said he had been diagnosed with separation anxiety by a psychiatrist, which was a result of him having his child taken away by social workers.

Majority of the arrests were made in the states of Lagos, Oyo, and Ogun by members of a joint task force.

However, speaking at a press conference in Lagos, the police commissioner said:

“It feels like I was punished. I had been taken to the station and I was not allowed to see my family.”



**As**

... They picked up the girls and  
... the police station with the  
... policemen inside, so they  
... there are pulled out, they  
... they used condoms, some of  
... use, a girl said, another asked  
... were all brought out of the van and  
... the policemen because we had to  
... give them. We were raped behind  
... Our College. The other girls were  
... by the other use of them used a  
... pure water sachet as a condom for  
... the other need of it.”

Some of the ladies contacted by a  
... in Abuja, the Nigerian Capital, for  
... situation, have spoken out about  
... raped by some of the policemen  
... them - some without condoms  
... wearing improvised ‘pure water  
... sachets’.

... “It feels like I was punished. I  
... had been taken to the station  
... and I was not allowed to see  
... my family.”

Your Daily News Report

**The Media News**

VOL. XCVC No. 234 ©Sahara Reporters 2022 WORLD, SEPTEMBER 2022

**Arrested Abuja ‘Prostitutes’  
Narrate How They Were  
Raped By Policemen Who  
Wore ‘Pure Water Sachets’  
Condoms**

... from Benue, when they  
... there, they took us to Uba  
... station was empty, there was  
... so they told us to pull off  
... all they started, some of us  
... some of us they didn't  
... together asked: “Three of us  
... we had no money to  
... the National  
... raped by  
... water  
... sachets.”



... she was raped by policemen  
... not pay the money they de-  
... for her release.

... by three policemen while one  
... all me. He didn't wear a condom,  
... one is all that were raped by the  
... policemen.

... as we were all brought out of the van  
... by the policemen because we had  
... give them. We were raped behind  
... Our College.

... and the ICTA is a responsible ad-  
... of the residents of the FCT,  
... of the SCS.

... the law does not give advantage  
... those from. This occasion is al-  
... as well treated and they have been  
... by all means that if any of them  
... the person, such a person will be di-  
... by the police.

... police spokesman, said the allegations had  
... of the Commissioner of Police, and they

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**Married babysitter  
had baby with  
13-year-old boy, is  
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... “It feels like I was punished. I  
... had been taken to the station  
... and I was not allowed to see  
... my family.”



**Combating Media Narratives that Fuel Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) and Impede Access to Justice**



## Stand To End Rape I N I T I A T I V E

[STER](#) is a youth-led and award-winning social enterprise, advancing gender equality by advocating an end to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); providing support to survivors of SGBV, and creating awareness and rights education on dominant, recurring and emerging issues on SGBV through sensitization programmes; pushing for policy reforms and working with communities to generate holistic and sustainable homegrown solutions to issues of SGBV in Nigeria.

**WITNESS**  
**SEE IT FILM IT**  
**CHANGE IT**

[WITNESS](#) is an international organization that helps people use video and technology to advance human rights. For the past 5 years, WITNESS has led a focused initiative on ways to better prepare for new forms of media manipulation and the broad context of mis/disinformation. Recently, this has also involved prioritizing the identification of threats and solutions in key Global South countries.

## Introduction:

In Nigeria, issues of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) are covered by the media daily, though vastly underreported. While this is a positive indicator that there is a recognition of the problem, it is equally important to analyse how the media portrays these issues, their role in fuelling violence against women – a social enigma – and their contribution to sustaining harmful gender stereotypes, disinformation, and promoting sexist and damaging narratives in general.

This document highlights the existing gaps in media reporting of SGBV such as; language/imagery that distorts the crime, intimidates and further violates the victim/survivor.



## Definition of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and Related Terms

Before we take a deep dive into the intersection between SGBV, misinformation, and disinformation, it is important to understand what Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) means and make a distinction between terms related to SGBV and mis/disinformation. These terms are often misused in reportage, and it undermines the gravity of the reported crimes and how they are viewed by readers, viewers, the legal system, and society.

## Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

“Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) refers to any act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. It includes physical, emotional or psychological violence, sexual violence, and denial of resources or access to services. The scope of violence includes threats of violence and coercion. SGBV inflicts harm on women, girls, men, and boys and is a severe violation of several human rights.”<sup>1</sup>

## Harassment

The [United Nations Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2008/5](#) defines harassment as; “any improper and unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person.”<sup>2</sup>

## Sexual Harassment

Specifically, “sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct, or gesture of a sexual nature or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another”

The updated United Nations Secretary-General’s bulletin ST/SGB/2019/8 goes further to also highlight that “Sexual harassment may involve any conduct of a verbal, non-verbal or physical nature, including written and electronic communications.”<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, unlike the widely accepted notion of sexual harassment being just physical, the above definition provides a wider scope.

It is important to note that harassment can be (and oftentimes is) a precursor of sexual assault.

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Emergency Handbook: Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and response: <https://bit.ly/38jpiPE>

<sup>2</sup> Secretary-General's bulletin: Prohibition of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority (2008): <https://undocs.org/en/ST/SGB/2008/5>

<sup>3</sup> Secretary-General's bulletin: Addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority (2019) : <https://bit.ly/3vaNQiP>

## Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

Sexual exploitation is an actual or attempted abuse of position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to; profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

(“Sexual exploitation” is a broad term, which includes a number of acts such as; “transactional sex”, “solicitation of transactional sex” and “exploitative relationship”)<sup>4</sup>

Sexual abuse is “the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.”<sup>5</sup>

Generally, sexual abuse and exploitation are collectively referred to as SEA.<sup>6</sup>

## Rape

According to the [Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act \(2015\)](#)<sup>7</sup> in Nigeria, “a person commits the offence of rape if;

- a. he/she intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus, or mouth of another person with any other part of his/her body part or anything else;
- b. the other person does not consent to the penetration; or
- c. the consent is obtained by force or by means of threat, or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by means false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or the use of any substance, or additive capable of taking away the will of such person, or in the case of a married person, impersonating his/her spouse.”

## Minor Child

The term minor refers to; “A person under the age of 18, regardless of the age of majority, or age of consent locally.” Similarly, the [Child Rights Act in Nigeria](#)<sup>8</sup> also classes any person under the age of 18 as a child. Sadly, not all states in Nigeria have domesticated the Child Rights Act even though Nigeria is a signatory to the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)<sup>9</sup> and the [African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child](#)<sup>10</sup>, which both underscore the rights of the child.

As such, the goal is that all states in Nigeria domesticate the Child Rights Act and adhere to international standards on the rights of the child.

## Child Sexual Abuse/ Child Molestation

“Child sexual abuse is the involvement of children in sexual activities for which they are developmentally unprepared, and thus cannot give consent.”<sup>11</sup>

In the UN Glossary on SEA, it is stated that; “All sexual activity with a child is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or consent locally and is considered as sexual abuse. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.”<sup>12</sup>

## Vulnerable Adult

“A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who requires or may require community care services due to mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of him/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or exploitation.”<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately, most countries do not have the term “vulnerable adult” codified in their legal instruments, and the rights of this demographic must be recognized legally to ensure that all persons in society are adequately protected.

4 UN Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: [bit.ly/3vdtqRh](https://bit.ly/3vdtqRh)

5 UN Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: [bit.ly/3vdtqRh](https://bit.ly/3vdtqRh)

6 Sexual Exploitation Abuse  
: <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment.html>

7 Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (2015): <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/104156/126946/F-1224509384/NGA104156.pdf>

8 Child Right's Act 2003: <https://bit.ly/38Wk6sv>

9 Convention on the Rights of the Child: <https://uni.cf/3EJAR5I>

10 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child:  
<https://bit.ly/3wYpNOw>

11 Child Sexual Abuse - an overview: <https://bit.ly/3K6CM5m>

12 UN Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse:  
<https://bit.ly/3vdtqRh>

13 Safeguarding Adults: <https://bit.ly/3z2fxYg>

## Victim

“The term victim, in this context, includes those who have been directly harmed by SGBV, their families, and their community members, including children born as a result of pregnancy from rape. Importantly, the term victim refers to people who have survived SGBV as well as those who may have died as a result of their injuries or been murdered after an SGBV attack.”<sup>14</sup>

## Survivor

Survivor, in this context, refers to “a person who has experienced sexual and/or gender-based violence. The terms ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ may be used interchangeably. ‘Victim’ is often used in the legal and medical sectors, whereas ‘survivor’ is generally preferred in the psychological and social support sectors because it implies resiliency”<sup>15</sup>

However, the use of the term “victim” instead of “survivor” is not intended to diminish the agency, autonomy or resilience of individual survivor.

In a guide for Canadian journalists titled [Use The Right Words](#), the authors explained: “Many people may prefer the term “survivor” because it conveys agency and resilience.

Others may prefer “person who has been subjected to sexual assault” because it doesn’t define an individual solely in relation to an experience of sexual violence.” The authors advised seeking the opinion of the assaulted person and using their preferred wording.<sup>16</sup>

“Complainant” is also another option that can be used if the person has filed a complaint with the police.<sup>17</sup>

## Misinformation

Misinformation is false, inaccurate, or misleading information regardless of the intention, which leads to deception.

<sup>14</sup> WITNESS - Using Video to Support Justice and Accountability for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: <https://library.witness.org/product/sgbv-guide/>

<sup>15</sup> WITNESS - Using Video to Support Justice and Accountability for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: <https://library.witness.org/product/sgbv-guide/>

<sup>16</sup> Use the Right Words: Media Reporting on Sexual Violence in Canada Femifesto, Toronto 2017: <https://bit.ly/36Mm11Q>

<sup>17</sup> Use the Right Words: Media Reporting on Sexual Violence in Canada Femifesto, Toronto 2017: <https://bit.ly/36Mm11Q>

## Disinformation

Disinformation is the deliberate creation, distribution, and amplification of false, inaccurate, or misleading information with the intent to deceive.<sup>18</sup>

## Gendered Disinformation

This is the spread of deceptive or inaccurate information and images or media, against anyone on the basis of their gender. While gendered disinformation could target anyone, women and gender diverse people are disproportionately impacted. This also includes women who are human rights defenders, activists, political leaders, and female public figures. This is done in a way that draws on misogyny and societal stereotypes. Thereby framing women as untrustworthy, unintelligent, emotional/angry/crazy or sexual.<sup>19</sup>

Gendered disinformation can be difficult to identify because it is like a parasite. It preys on and amplifies existing stereotypes and prejudices. Certain factors such as jokes and code language, the weaponization of religion, and the media’s complicity are some of the factors that make gendered disinformation elusive. However, they either passively or actively reinforce harmful stereotypes in the society.

The poet and writer Allen Ginsberg once said; “Whoever controls the media, the images, controls the culture.” The breadth of the media has always been far-reaching, cutting across different demographics in society, and shaping public opinion on how issues are understood and discussed. With mass media, and the advent of new media, information in today’s age can be accessed faster than ever; this also means that disinformation can spread at an alarming speed.

## Further Reading

- [WITNESS Video As Evidence Field Guide: Using Video to Support Justice and Accountability For Sexual and Gender Based Violence](#)

- [Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

<sup>18</sup> News: Fake News, Misinformation & Disinformation: <https://guides.lib.uw.edu/c.php?g=345925&p=7772376>

<sup>19</sup> Gender-Based Disinformation: Advancing Our Understanding and Response: <https://bit.ly/3MYpyJM>



## Empirical Review of Previous and Similar Research

Some similar studies were reviewed for this research work;

Nwabueze and Oduah analysed contents from some foremost Nigerian newspapers - The Guardian, Vanguard and The Daily Sun in a research study to establish the representation and framing of rape cases in Nigeria.

The study revealed, among other key findings, that when SGBV cases such as rape were reported, they were buried inside the newspapers' pages, thereby giving them little visibility. Moreover, the study reported dominant frames of rape cases to include avoidance, innocence, intimidation and neutrality.<sup>27</sup>

Nwankwo, in a similar study on how Nigerian journalists report on crimes using content analysis as a research design recorded that armed robbery is given high coverage while rape, housebreaking and other related crimes are given low coverage by publishing them in inside pages.<sup>28</sup>

Eboh similarly content-analysed Nigerian newspapers to determine how rape cases were reported. The study found that although the Nigerian press reported some rape cases, readers were not given a follow-up on how those cases were tried.<sup>29</sup>

When it comes to the reportage of SGBV, it behoves the media to ensure a balanced and unbiased viewpoint. However, as the case studies and take-home points in the following sections will show, there is a dearth that exists in the expertise and knowledge required to cover SGBV. From framing of headlines, to the use of language and vocabulary, much work still needs to be done on the ethical reportage on issues as sensitive as SGBV.

## Further Reading

- [Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and "Fake News", Disinformation and Propaganda](#)

The following sections will include an overview of selected case studies, the problems existent in them, and take-home points that would serve as guidance to practitioners.



27 C. Nwabueze and F. Oduah (2015) "Media re-victimization of rape victims in a shame culture? Exploring the framing and representation of rape cases in Nigerian dailies." *Global Media Journal* 13(24)

28 Victoria Nwankwo (2011) "The role of the media in promoting human rights : an analysis of the BBC documentary, 'Chocolate: the bitter truth'"

29 Eboh, S. (2011). Print Media coverage of rape cases: A study of selected Nigerian Newspapers. A Research work submitted to the Dept. of Mass communication Federal Polytechnic Oko.

## Case Studies

### 1) The Case of Busola Dakolo and Pastor Fatoyinbo:

In the reportage of SGBV cases, the stories of survivors are often scrutinised for loopholes and used as a segue to spread mis/disinformation.

This gives disinformation merchants and misinformation agents the impetus and conducive environment to propagate disinformation, mostly using four approaches to achieve their objectives: dismiss, distort, distract, and dismay.<sup>30</sup> Inevitably, the accomplishment of these objectives leads to the stories of survivors' being quashed, entrenches the culture of silence, pivoting from the crime committed, and precluding survivors' access to justice.

An example where mis/disinformation blocked access to justice is the 2019 case of Busola Dakolo, a renowned photographer who detailed how she was raped by Biodun Fatoyinbo, a religious leader and founder of a prominent church in Nigeria. After filing her complaint and sharing her story, Busola became subject to online abuse from individuals who sided with the religious leader. The focus was placed on why she had waited a long time before filing a complaint and sharing her experience.<sup>31</sup>

#### NEWS

### COZA : What's Busola's motive for speaking out?, Oboli asks

<sup>30</sup> Deception, disinformation, misinformation, propaganda, and direct democracy: <https://bit.ly/3ok5szz>

<sup>31</sup> COZA : What's Busola's motive for speaking out?, Oboli asks - Vanguard Newspapers: <https://bit.ly/3aXFVsM>

Survivors do not owe perfect nor prompt details of their abuse because trauma is processed differently by every survivor. This lack of awareness results in victim-blaming and is one of the numerous reasons why a majority of victims do not report cases to authorities. The narrative around the duration taken to report the case also fueled the disinformation that Busola was suing the accused for a monetary claim for damages; a report which she, the survivor, clarified as misleading.<sup>32</sup>



Sahara Reporters  
@SaharaReporters

Rape: Busola Dakolo Demands N10m From Pastor Fatoyinbo | Sahara Reporters [bit.ly/306cvgJ](https://bit.ly/306cvgJ)

[Translate Tweet](#)

15:16 · 09/09/2019 · [Bitly](#)

8 Retweets 6 Quote Tweets 46 Likes



Okwy Eze @Okwy753... · 09/09/2019  
Replying to @SaharaReporters

Nonsense, she should have just said that she needs money's, evil people everywhere trying to close down the house of God.



To further compound matters, Busola and her husband, Timi Dakolo, were intimidated by the Nigeria Police Force who invited them for questioning over "a case of criminal conspiracy, falsehood, mischief and threat to life".<sup>33</sup> Subsequently, justice was impeded and a High Court in Abuja dismissed the claim of Busola Dakolo against Biodun Fatoyinbo, and ordered Busola Dakolo to pay Biodun Fatoyinbo 1 million naira in damages.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> COZA rape saga: I didn't demand N10m compensation from Fatoyinbo – Busola Dakolo - Punch Newspapers: <https://bit.ly/3EJDOTQ>

<sup>33</sup> Why we invited Dakolo, wife –Police - Punch Newspapers: <https://bit.ly/3PGEI1j>

<sup>34</sup> Court fines Busola Dakolo N1m, dismisses case against Fatoyinbo: <https://bit.ly/3EKX4jL>



## Busola Dakolo vs Pastor Fatoyinbo: Take Home Points

In the wake of the #MeToo movement, survivors have shared their stories in a bid to heal, draw awareness to the prevalence of SGBV, and shatter/end the culture of silence. Although several survivors have come out to share their stories, it has become a practice for the media to mostly focus on cases involving high-profile individuals and celebrities.

The 2020 National Human Rights Commission Annual Report shows that there were around 11,200 reported rape cases in Nigeria,<sup>35</sup> yet media coverage does not reflect the magnitude of these cases, particularly at the grassroots level. Spotlighting and sustaining coverage for only high-profile cases sets back the fight against SGBV and limits it to a preserve of the elite. Lack of ethical, detailed, and sustained reportage of SGBV cases at the grassroots level can embolden perpetrators to commit these crimes, believing that attention will not be paid to grassroots cases.

Table 5.5 Disaggregation of Complaints according to areas of Thematic Focus

SUB-GROUPS	THEMATIC FOCUS	TOTAL COMPLAINTS
Sexual and gender-based violence	Sexual violence	9,680
	Domestic violence	107,440
	Rape	11,200
	<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>128,320</b>

(Source: [National Human Rights Commission 2020 Annual Report](#))

Adopting a grassroots approach in the reportage of SGBV cases makes it easier to; fact-check cases, flag down where disinformation merchants try to distort the crime committed, and also provide an opportunity to dispel rape myths. For example, [Chicoco FM](#) is a community radio station in Port Harcourt Nigeria, that highlights issues of SGBV that occur in the community. This is done intentionally to demand justice and accountability as well as sensitize against rape culture.<sup>36</sup>

35 National Human Rights Commission 2020 Annual Report: <https://bit.ly/3k9iwW9>

36 Sex Work, Pandemic and Police: <https://bit.ly/37AEJdf>

## Biases

Religious orthodoxy and cultural bias are two amongst many other pillars on which rape culture continues to thrive in Nigeria, and the case of Busola Dakolo, is proof of how religion intersects with gendered disinformation. In an interview, a religious leader was recorded blaming the victim and dismissing her account.<sup>37 38</sup>

Below is one of the headlines published by an online newspaper:

*“VIDEO: Methodist prelate dismisses allegation against Fatoyinbo, accuses Busola Dakolo of blackmail”<sup>39</sup>*

The comment by the methodist prelate which the newspaper decided to quote reinforces victim blaming and championed the narrative that the accused should be pardoned.

*“You say somebody raped you and after 16 years, you are out to report. What is wrong? Maybe you demanded money or you wanted some payment and the person is not able to give you, and then you chose to blackmail the person. Why do you punish somebody for a sin committed 16 years ago?” - Samuel Uche Head of Methodist Church Nigeria,*

This is often the case when there is an unnecessary emphasis on a perpetrator's religion, tribe and social standing. The conventional profile associated with a perpetrator is that of an underachiever, a mental health patient, a drunken reprobate, a serial offender, or an ex-convict. When this profile does not match that of the perpetrator, they are viewed as innocent and speculated as being witch-hunted by the survivor to score a personal vendetta.

Media depictions of what a rapist should look like also feed the misconceptions of who the majority of the populace perceives to be a rapist. An overview of the #MeToo movement shows that the notion of clinging onto the conventional profile of a rapist gives leeway for perpetrators to operate under a shield.

37 Eminence Samuel Uche Of The Methodist Church Prelate, Reacts To Rape Allegations Against Fatoyinbo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MGxV10bmP0>

38 Methodist prelate dismisses allegation against Fatoyinbo, accuses Busola Dakolo of blackmail: <https://bit.ly/3OBPWdU>

39 VIDEO: Methodist prelate dismisses allegation against Fatoyinbo, accuses Busola Dakolo of blackmail - The Cable Newspaper: <https://bit.ly/3OBPWdU>

# STOP GENDER VIOLENCE



*“The media depictions and common conceptions of what a rapist looks like, and what rape as an act looks like, is actually part of the problem our legal systems face when trying to prosecute offenders. These biases put roadblocks that stop justice. Juries and judges are just as susceptible to these biases as the average person. It’s an important step towards ending rape culture that we adjust our views to see rapists as they actually are, not who we perceive capable of the crime.”<sup>40</sup>*

Below, we’ve highlighted guidelines to follow on the use of language when reporting rape cases in traditional media.

## Language and Vocabulary to Use When Reporting Rape Cases<sup>41</sup>

### DOs



**Use “said,” “according to,” or “reports” and attribute the words to a specific speaker.<sup>42</sup>**

If reporting the case after criminal charges have been made, another alternative is to use language such as; “<name of perpetrator>, who has been charged with the sexual assault of …”

**Use language that places the accountability for rape or other forms of sexual assault with the perpetrator<sup>44</sup>**

e.g. “He raped her” However, please note that where applicable, you may have to include the word “allegedly”.

Alternatively, if a trial is ongoing, you can use “the complainant says <name of perpetrator> raped her”



### DON'Ts

**DON'T overuse words like “claimed” “state” or “insists”<sup>43</sup>**

Overuse of these words can imply that the reporter disbelieves the survivor.

Always note that the language used depends on the context. Not using the word “alleged” in some contexts can have serious legal implications and could risk a survivor open to being sued by an abuser.

If you’re unsure, seek advice from a lawyer.

**DON'T describe sexual assault as belonging to the survivor. The survivor did not ask for the assault, thus it is wrong to use language such as; “her (the survivor’s) rape”<sup>45</sup>**

Use phrases like “she was raped” or “a rape occurred” without identifying the role of the perpetrator

Using language like; “her/his assault” and “her/his rape” implies that the rape belongs to the survivor and removes the perpetrator’s accountability.

40 What Does a Rapist Look Like: <https://vocal.media/viva/what-does-a-rapist-look-like>

41 Use the Right Words: Media Reporting on Sexual Violence in Canada Femifesto, Toronto 2017: <https://bit.ly/36Mm110>

42 Chicago Taskforce on Violence Against Girls and Young Women (2012). Reporting On

Rape and Sexual Violence: A Media Toolkit for Local and National Journalists to Better Media Coverage: <https://bit.ly/3PLWNS4>

43 Charges & Allegations: <http://newscrip.com/allege.html>

44 Matson, E. (2013). Rape Is Rape: Moving Rape Culture Out of Conversations About Sexual Assault. RH Reality Check: <https://bit.ly/3clgtxw>

45 Chicago Taskforce on Violence Against Girls and Young Women. (2012): <https://bit.ly/3PLWNS4>

## DOs



**Ensure to use language that accurately conveys the gravity of sexual assault. Make it clear that sexual assault is violent and non-consensual.**<sup>46</sup>

If there is a valid need to describe the specifics, ensure that they speak to the violent nature of the act, but avoid needlessly including salacious details of the assault.



## DON'Ts

**DON'T Downplay the violence of sexual assault or suggest that some forms of assault are more serious.**

e.g.: “The survivor was unharmed.” Or “The survivor was not physically hurt.”

**Additionally, do not use euphemisms or gentle words to describe sexual violence. The use of gentle words implies consent on the part of the victim/survivor.**<sup>47</sup>

Euphemisms: “engaging in” or “sex scandal”, “having carnal knowledge of”

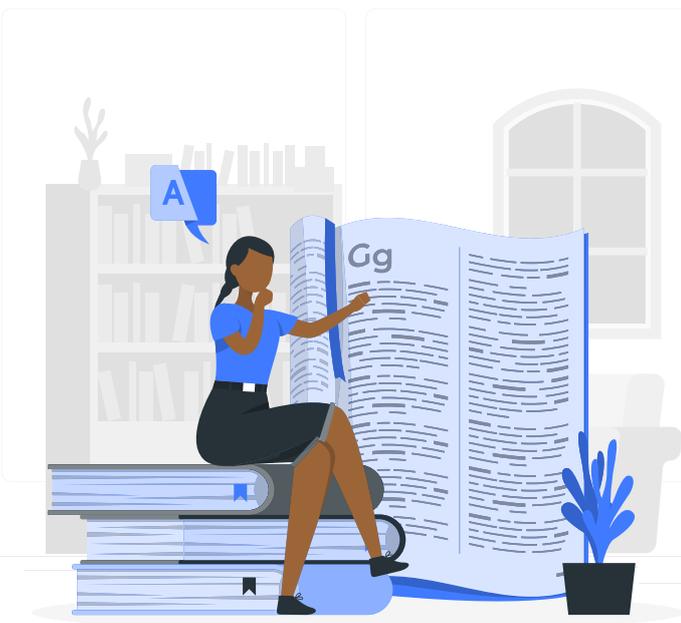
Gentle language: “fondle” or “caress”,

**Call the violence out as it is.**

In the case study referenced [here](#), the author used the incorrect term “defile” to report the sexual molestation committed by the perpetrator. It is pertinent that the right terms are used in the reportage of cases. It would have been more ideal for the author to use the term “sexually molested a child” to convey the gravity of the crime committed by the perpetrator, and also draw attention to the fact that a minor was sexually violated.

Furthermore, the word “defile” paints the picture that victims/survivors are “completely damaged” by rape. SGBV victims/survivors already risk facing stigma from family members and society. You do not want to further compound that problem by causing more stigmatisation.

Children should be referred to as minors and not “underaged”.<sup>48</sup> Using the word “underage” undermines the gravity of the crime - especially as it is not explicitly stated that the victims are children. (see definition of SGBV and related terms section)



<sup>46</sup> Chicago Taskforce on Violence Against Girls and Young Women. (2012): <https://bit.ly/3PLWNS4>

<sup>47</sup> Matson, E. (2013). 14. Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma. (2011). Reporting on Sexual Violence. <https://bit.ly/3IToWo2>

<sup>48</sup> Tweet by The New Times (Rwanda) <https://bit.ly/3k7gyFE>

## DOs



**Make the perpetrator the subject of the sentence and assign the verb to them. This places responsibility on the perpetrator for their actions.**

e.g. "According to the police report, the perpetrator forced the survivor to..."



## Tips For Conducting Media Interviews Including Video Interviews With SGBV Survivors

Interviews can give survivors an opportunity to speak, however, care must be taken to be attentive to the vulnerability of survivors. The situation must be critically assessed by the journalist to ensure that the survivor is physically, mentally and emotionally able to grant an interview. Additionally, the victim/survivor must grant informed consent before the interview. It should be noted that consent can be withdrawn freely and at any time. This must be respected.

**1.** Planning and Preparation: If a survivor has chosen to participate in an interview, it is of utmost importance to give extensive thought and planning into interview preparations to prevent re-traumatisation. Therefore, before conducting the interview,



## DON'Ts

**Do not make the survivor the subject of the sentence. This gives the impression that the survivor reluctantly agreed to whatever action the perpetrator wanted.**

e.g. "The survivor did .....against their will"

ensure you create a trusting atmosphere that will make the survivor comfortable and at ease. Also respect the survivors' boundaries, state that the survivor does not have to answer questions that may be upsetting to them, and in the course of interviewing, take care not to infringe on their boundaries.

**2.** Consent and Safety Measures: Part of the interview includes requesting consent, and putting safety measures in place. If the interview will be broadcast on-air, ask the survivor if they would want anonymity and put mechanisms in place such as face-blurring, silhouette lighting, or voice alteration to enable that.

**3.** Inform the survivor of where, when, and the formats in which the story will be published (this is also inclusive of what media outlets will have rights to publish the story). Notify the survivor if other people will be interviewed (e.g. will the perpetrator be featured as well?) This gives a better context for the interview and enables the survivor to make an informed decision on if they want to be interviewed, and what support systems they might need. If in the future you plan to use the survivor's story in any context other than what they have agreed to, ask for their permission first.<sup>49</sup>

**4.** Scheduling: Schedule the interview in a safe space that is pre-approved by the survivor, and allocate ample time so the interview can be conducted at a pace

<sup>49</sup> Use The Right words.: <https://bit.ly/36Mm11O>

that is not rushed. Interrupting a survivor while they are in the middle of recounting a traumatic experience comes off as insensitive and could be deeply hurtful to them.<sup>50</sup>

**5.** Follow Up: Give room for a follow up at the end of the interview, and seek their feedback on how the interview was for them.<sup>51 52</sup>

Also allocate time for the survivor to review the comments/video clip of the interview before sending it to anyone else– there may be something they feel uncomfortable with and want edited or removed. Finally, give a gentle reminder of available resources (e.g. crisis lines, phone numbers for accessible trauma counsellors) for support after the interview.<sup>53</sup>

## Exercise

**1** Give examples of suitable questions to ask Survivors in an interview.

**2** Create a checklist of things to put in place to create a conducive environment before interviewing an SGBV Survivor.

## Examples

The phrasing of questions during survivor interviews is important. Depending on how a question is asked, it might be perceived by a survivor as blaming them for their actions, or for what they may be unable to recall. The following examples demonstrate how trauma-informed interview techniques can be used to reframe these questions in a manner that helps survivors retrieve memories from a traumatic event and assists law enforcement in gathering more information while making the survivor feel more supported and increasing the likelihood that they stay involved in the criminal justice process.

Beginning with questions such as “Where would you like to start?” or “Would you tell me what you are able to say about your experience?” sets a supportive tone for the interview. Asking questions in this way also invites the survivor to describe what happened, their thoughts, and their feelings in their own words, which could be valuable in accessing justice for the survivor and correcting public perception.



<sup>50</sup> Use the right words, and Reporting on violence against women and girls\_ a handbook for journalists - UNESCO Digital Library: <https://bit.ly/3Mr9TCI>

<sup>51</sup> Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma. (2011): <https://bit.ly/3IToWo2>

<sup>52</sup> WITNESS. How-To Guide For Interviewing Survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: <https://library.witness.org/product/sgbv-guide/>

<sup>53</sup> Use The Right words: <https://bit.ly/36Mm11O>

S/N	Do not Say/Ask	Rather, Say/Ask	Rationale
1	Why did you...? Or why didn't you...?"	"When (a specific event happened), what were your feelings and thoughts?" or "Are you able to tell more about what happened when...?"	The rationale behind discouraging such questions and formats is that it could be perceived as faulting the survivor for taking or not taking a certain action. Asking a survivor about their thought process provides an opportunity for them to explain what they did or did not do and why. The use of "Are you able to..." reduces the pressure on the survivor to fully articulate what they did and why they did or did not act in a certain way. When experiencing trauma, survivors do not consciously choose their reactions or what they are able to remember, the survival part of the brain takes over and survivors might not understand why they reacted the way that they did. When asking about thought processes, the question should be tied to a specific event, such as, "When he locked the door, how did that make you feel?"
2	"Start at the beginning and tell me what happened." or "How long did the assault last?" and Other questions asking for a chronological account	"Where would you like to start?" or "Would you tell me what you are able to remember about your experience?" or "What are you able to tell me about what was happening before/during/ after the assault?" or "If anything, what do you remember hearing during the event?"	The original question may be difficult for the survivor to answer because experiencing a traumatic event can impact the storage of memories, which may make it difficult for the survivor to remember the length of time that the assault lasted or the chronological order of events. Asking the survivor to state the exact timeframe/timeline may increase the confusion and self-blame they experience. As a result, they may come up with their best estimate of a timeframe that may become problematic afterward. Reframing the questions and opening with "What are you able to..." can reduce the pressure on the survivor to recall specifics given the impact of trauma on memory.
3	"What were you wearing?"		The original question could be perceived as blaming the survivor for the assault due to their attire, i.e., that the suspect chose the survivor because of what they were wearing.

S/N	Do not Say/Ask	Rather, Say/Ask	Rationale
4	Why did you go with the suspect?" or "Do you think you led them on?" or "Do you think you contributed to this happening?"	"Can you describe what you were thinking and feeling when you went with the suspect?" and "Did the suspect's behaviour change after you went with them? How did this make you feel?"	The original questions could be perceived as blaming the survivor for choosing to go with the suspect or implying that it was a consensual encounter because the survivor initially engaged with the suspect. Reframing the question clarifies the survivor's decision-making process without judgement or blame. These questions also set the stage for asking about what the suspect did, how the suspect's actions and demeanour may have changed, and how this may have made the survivor feel threatened, afraid, or helpless.
5	"Why were you out at this time and at this location?"	"What are you able to tell me about what brought you to the location at this time/day?"	The original question could be perceived as blaming the survivor for being in a place where they could be assaulted. Reframing the question can invite the survivor to explain the circumstances that brought them to a particular location, which helps fill in details of the incident without laying blame on the survivor for the actions of the suspect.
6	"Did anyone see this happen?"	Were you able to identify anyone who was at the location?"	The original question may be perceived as disbelief that the incident occurred absent witnesses. Society sometimes has the perception that the only evidence in sexual assault cases is the survivor's statement that it occurred. The reality is that while most of these crimes occur in isolation without witnesses, there may have been witnesses to events leading up to or after the incident that can corroborate details.
7	"Did you say no?"	"What are you able to recall doing or saying during the incident?"	The original question could be perceived as blaming the survivor for what happened to them by not saying "no" or not saying it clearly or loudly enough for the suspect to understand. It could also be perceived as not believing the survivor when they say what happened was nonconsensual. The absence of a verbal "no" does not mean "yes" or that consent was given. Reframing the question to ask what they were able to do or say also provides an opportunity for the survivor to expand on what happened beyond the original yes/no question.

## Further Reading

[- The Role of Disinformation in Perpetuating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Africa](#)

[- How Gendered Disinformation in Nigeria Precludes Justice for Survivors of SGBV](#)



## 2) Baba Ijesha Saga

As mentioned in the previous section of this guide, part of the objectives of disinformation merchants is to distort the survivors' story and distract attention away from the perpetrated crime. In 2021, comedienne, Damilola Adekoya, popularly known as Princess filed a complaint about the molestation of her 14-year-old foster daughter at the hands of Nollywood actor, Olanrewaju James, (alias Baba Ijesha). The media narrative around the case was fraught with disinformation.<sup>54 55</sup>

Rather than draw light to the video evidence presented in trial which showed footage of the accused molesting the victim, comments from allies of the accused (and not the victim) were featured prominently in the media. Media platforms that enabled this inadvertently gave the allies of the accused a platform to spread false and misleading narratives which could intimidate the survivor and detract from the crime committed.

<sup>54</sup> Alleged defilement: Princess my ex-lover – Baba Ijesha - Vanguard Newspaper: <https://bit.ly/3KhpanU>

<sup>55</sup> Alleged Rape: Princess, Iyabo Ojo 'pranked, set up' Baba Ijesha - Actor Olofa Ina: <https://bit.ly/3LctJBa>

Below are two excerpts from news articles that published comments of the allies;

*“Everyone is shouting, ‘defilement’ but if they know what happened seven years ago...Has Princess herself revealed the number of times she seduced Ijesha? Ijesha cannot fight but we will fight for him. “There were times that Princess called Ijesha to come over to her place, that she has prepared Ofada stew, knowing full well that he has a wife, even though she is not in Nigeria.” - Ewatomilola Ayeni (niece to the accused) <https://bit.ly/3Mra4gZ>*

*“There’s no actress in our industry now that can claim to be untouched. But they pranked Baba Ijesha and set him up. I know those who had a hand in this issue won’t end well because they can’t say they*

*were’n lovers before now.” - Deji Aderemi, (alias Olofa Ina, colleague of the accused)<sup>56</sup>*

These comments not only imply that Princess (the foster mother of the victim) was a jilted lover of the accused and sought to carry out a personal vendetta, but they also have no relevance to the crime committed. The second comment by one of the allies “There’s no actress in our industry now that can claim to be untouched.”<sup>57</sup> alludes to the prevalence of sexual assaults in the film industry, chips away the dignity of women in the industry, and covertly condones rape culture.

Journalists should push back on the claims of the accused as much as they do those of their alleged victim. Finding the truth often focuses on grilling the victim while the accused’s assertions generally go unchallenged. [Additionally, the narrative has also been spun that the video evidence was scripted.](#)<sup>58</sup> Once again, this is a classic example of a disinformation ploy to distract attention from the crime and to weaponize disinformation as a phenomenon against trustworthy video evidence. In a ruling on July 14, 2022, Olanrewaju James, also known as Baba Ijesha was found guilty of sexually assaulting a 14 year-old minor and sentenced to 16 years in prison.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> How Princess tried to seduce Baba Ijesha –Actor’s niece - Punch Newspapers: <https://bit.ly/3Mra4gZ>

<sup>57</sup> Alleged Rape: Princess, Iyabo Ojo ‘pranked, set up’ Baba Ijesha - Actor Olofa Ina | Premium Times Nigeria: <https://bit.ly/3LctJBa>

<sup>58</sup> Baba Ijesha: CCTV recording of actor touching minor was a script – Defense witness tells court - Daily Post Newspaper: <https://bit.ly/3K6Difu>

<sup>59</sup> Baba Ijesha dey jailed for five years over ‘sexual assault’ charges - Court: <https://bbc.in/3zoXJGK>



## Take Home Points: What comments do you capture when reporting SGBV Cases?

The case of Baba Ijesha highlights areas that journalists should pay attention to when conducting interviews or quoting individuals and reporting SGBV cases.

When reporting on SGBV cases, it is a good practice to talk to experts like doctors, psychologists, lawyers, and social workers who can provide proper analysis of the case and educate on the causes, effects, and cultural norms that encourage sexual and gender-based violence. Taking this approach enables you to;

### Have an informed discussion

**1.** Tackle the broader issues around SGBV:

This gives an opportunity to dig deeper into issues around SGBV such as; gender inequality, stigmatisation of survivors, and continued impacts of systemic failures in handling SGBV. This way, ideas and solutions can be proffered – especially in local contexts – instead of episodic reportage.

The discussion could be part of a news segment, on a social media handle, a podcast, or even a webinar. The most important thing is to give people the chance to focus on the broader issues, how disinformation plays a role, and what they can do as active bystanders.

## Prevent room for bias

**2.** Balanced analysis:

Talking to experts gives a balanced analysis of the case rather than testimonies of friends and relatives of the perpetrator which may be biased towards the innocence of the perpetrator and ridden with cliches such as; “he/she is a good and God-fearing husband and father/wife and mother,” or “he/she is a respectable person, we would’ve never thought that...”<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, by all means possible avoid repetition of the disinformation. For example, republishing a doctored video, image, or audio in order to counter it is counter productive because, the resultant effect is a proliferation as opposed to a reduction. The objectivity of the media especially in balanced reporting is critical on the path to justice.

## Action Points

**3.** What comes next?

At the end of the discussion, give action points people can take to continue advocating against SGBV, encourage them to continue these conversations in their communities, and share contact information of organisations who have experience in handling SGBV cases. This way, the discussion can move beyond the report and into actionable steps that members of the society can take within their communities, and help shift the socio-cultural norms and stigma attached to SGBV cases.

## Factual Headlines – Why are they so important when reporting SGBV?

In an age where a majority of the populace have short attention spans, a headline is the first thing that captures the attention of a reader. Most readers are drawn to the headline of an article rather than its content. This is especially true of information shared on social media. [Studies](#)<sup>61</sup> show that most links are shared without even being opened.

<sup>60</sup> Reporting on violence against women and girls\_ a handbook for journalists - UNESCO Digital Library: <https://bit.ly/3Mr9TCI>

<sup>61</sup> Social Clicks: What and Who Gets Read on Twitter?: <https://hal.inria.fr/hal-01281190>

“People are more willing to share an article than read it. This is typical of modern information consumption. People form an opinion based on a summary, or a summary of summaries, without making the effort to go deeper.” - study co-author Arnaud Legout.

[Source: 6 in 10 of you will share this link without reading it, a new, depressing study says](#)<sup>62</sup>

In addition, from the perspective of a reader/social media user, it is presumed that the more shares or views a post/video has, the more likely it is to be true. Oftentimes, these contents are distorted or manipulated but they are persuasive enough to sway public opinion.

## Exercise

1 What are the comments to capture while developing an SGBV report?



### 3 Vera Uwaila & Aisha Umar

In the aftermath of the horrific rape and murder of Vera Uwaila, a 100-level student, numerous false information and conspiracy theories around her murder surfaced online and were fueled by newspaper headlines. One of such falsehoods was that a pastor impregnated Vera and killed her because she refused to terminate a pregnancy.<sup>63</sup>

62 6 in 10 of you will share this link without reading it, a new, depressing study says - The Washington Post: <https://wapo.st/3omLmEM>

63 Was murdered UNIBEN student raped, pregnant for RCCG pastor?: <https://bit.ly/3vaU2lG>

“Was murdered UNIBEN student raped, pregnant for RCCG pastor?”<sup>64</sup>

This fabrication was said to have first originated from a blog and ended up circulating on Twitter.<sup>65</sup> Another falsehood originated from a Facebook comment that Vera was in a relationship with two men.<sup>66</sup>

These narratives were disseminated in a bid to paint the deceased in a bad light and dampen the intensity of public call for justice.

Similarly, in the case of Aishatu Adamu, a 14-year-old Internally Displaced Person (IDP) who was raped by Hussarf Abdurauf, a humanitarian worker in Borno State, the headlines and tone used in the reportage showed a lack of empathy and respect for the dignity for the deceased.

*‘Humanitarian worker lures Borno 14-year-old IDP, rapes girl, victims stabs self, dies’*<sup>67</sup>

*“Virgin IDP, Aisha Umar Commits Suicide After Being ‘Raped By NGO Official’”*<sup>68</sup>

Additionally, these headlines are not factual as it was alleged that the victim killed herself after being raped by the perpetrator. Media reports published in January 2022 mention that neighbours claim the perpetrator invited Aisha to do some domestic chores for him, but they heard the noise of struggles after she entered his apartment. The perpetrator refused to open the door and Aisha was already in a pool of blood by the time neighbours forced the door open.

The rapist claimed Aisha killed herself, and subsequently, several media platforms adopted his account as the truth without any further investigation.<sup>69</sup>

64 Was murdered UNIBEN student raped, pregnant for RCCG pastor?: <https://bit.ly/3vaU2lG>

65 Uwa was pregnant for RCCG pastor, unconfirmed story trends on Twitter: <https://bit.ly/3ka6JHc>

66 Nigerians call for Livinus Elem’s arrest after comment about Uwa’s murder: <https://bit.ly/3OtdJNn>

67 Humanitarian worker lures Borno 14-year-old IDP, rapes girl, victims stabs self, dies The Punch Newspapers: <https://bit.ly/3Lg3Ss2>

68 Virgin IDP, Aisha Umar Commits Suicide After Being ‘Raped By NGO Official’ - Najia 360: <https://bit.ly/3L9psvq>

69 A review of Gender-Based Violence Reporting Handbook: <https://bit.ly/37M4bMG>



## Vera Uwaila & Aisha Umar :Take Home Points

In the case studies cited above, the nature of the headlines and articles showed a lack of compassion and empathy for the victims. Evidently, the headlines played a role in how these cases were interpreted by readers. Thus, when writing a headline, journalists must take caution and ask themselves these questions;<sup>70</sup>

### Does the headline respect the victim(s)?

Respect for the victim/survivors should be at the forefront during reportage. Avoid invasive and graphic framing that degrades the dignity of the victim. For example, in Vera's case study, the media houses could have debunked the conspiracy theories around Vera's murder and shifted public attention to the perpetrator.

### Does the headline have judgmental undertones?

In another case study, the headline cited below had no regard for the dignity of the survivors and included repugnant details that were unnecessary.

*"Arrested Abuja 'Prostitutes' Narrate How They Were Raped By Policemen Who Wore 'Pure Water Sachets' As Condoms"*<sup>71</sup>

The framing in this headline and the content of its article is problematic for numerous reasons. Firstly, the use of the term "prostitute" has negative connotations, especially in a country like Nigeria which is heavily rooted in [sexual purity culture](#). Secondly, focusing on the occupation/activities of the women sets a breeding ground for victim-blaming and implies that they brought the assault upon themselves. The media also took a similar approach and focused on the sexual purity of Bamise Ayanwale who was brutally murdered in a

<sup>70</sup> Use the right words, and Reporting on violence against women and girls\_ a handbook for journalists - UNESCO Digital Library : <https://bit.ly/3Mr9TCI>

<sup>71</sup> Arrested Abuja 'Prostitutes' Narrate How They Were Raped By Policemen Who Wore 'Pure Water Sachets' As Condoms - Sahara Reporters: <https://bit.ly/3EN6cEv>

bus in Lagos state.<sup>72</sup> This highlights that the contents of most articles have judgmental undertones and fail to address how the problems of societal judgement link to SGBV and entrench rape culture. When reporting the SGBV cases, referring to what the victim/survivor was wearing, what time of the day it was, the state of their virginity, or their sexual activities reinforce harmful narratives that suggest that the victim provoked the violation or "called for it".

### Does the headline focus attention solely on the perpetrator's account?

In the case of Aisha Umar, the focus was solely placed on the perpetrator's narrative of the case. Apart from the fact that this is unethical, the death of the victim also made it impossible to verify what happened, and unfortunately, the perpetrator's narrative was adopted as the truth. When reporting, if access to the victim/survivors' account is impossible, consult experts who have experience in SGBV cases, and reference police and court documents to keep the story balanced.

As discussed in the various case studies highlighted in this guide, the language, vocabulary, and framing used when reporting SGBV cases can spur the public, legal system, and society to take action against SGBV and support survivors. However, when incorrect terms and poorly thought out framing are used to report SGBV cases, this results in providing a conducive environment for harmful narratives, discrimination, and mis/disinformation to thrive.

**Note: When writing headlines, articles or producing a video, there should be a focus on the facts of the story and the protection of the victim.**

## Exercise

1

Taking note of the points highlighted in the section above, draft new headlines for the cases of Vera Uwaila and Aisha Umar.

<sup>72</sup> Slain BRT victim, Bamise's Mum inconsolable, Dad hard to pacify - Brother-in-law - Vanguard Newspaper : <https://bit.ly/3L9pRJK>



## Further Reading

- [Verify Before Sharing Media Literacy Campaign](#)

- [Centre for Journalism Innovation & Development \(CJID\) Gender-Based Violence Reporting Handbook](#)

## Additional Points to Note



### 4 Skit Makers:

<https://bit.ly/3OxUB0x>  
<https://bit.ly/3MoZeZ2>

The videos outlined in these case studies show how sexist, misogynistic, and degrading behaviour are promoted under the guise of comedy. The proliferation of these videos heavily objectify women and normalise the portrayal of women as objects of amusement. Oftentimes, women are recorded without their consent in such skits which is a direct invasion of their right to privacy. Additionally, there is a high likelihood of stigma and ridicule that these videos cause women.



### Skits Makers: Take Home Points

Popular culture already entrenches the harmful stereotype of women as simple-minded and objects of sexual gratification. This is further fuelled by the spread of digital content that promotes online abuse and SGBV.

While one may argue that technology platforms have a huge role to play in monitoring the content shared on their platforms, content creators and skit makers have an equal responsibility to ensure

that the content they produce (and their brand) does not promote impunity against women, girls, and vulnerable persons.

Although popular culture is ridden with content that objectifies women and plays to gender stereotypes, there are artistes who have set exemplary behaviour by speaking on consent and addressing the culture of shame and silence around SGBV. For example, the song “Matter”<sup>73</sup> by popular Nigerian reggae-dancehall singer and songwriter Patoranking speaks about seeking consent from a lover before engaging in sex. This informs people that consent must be sought first and not assumed. Similarly, the music video for the song “If You Ask Me”<sup>74</sup> by renowned Nigerian singer-songwriter Omawumi is a stellar example of how popular culture can be instrumental in speaking up against SGBV. In the song, she uses the local pidgin English in Nigeria to narrate a case of sexual child molestation and includes a call to action to encourage people to speak up against SGBV.

Below is a “**Triple R Approach**” (**recognize, report and raise awareness**) that content creators (particularly skit makers) can take to help curb content that promotes SGBV;



**1. Recognize:** As a skit maker, it is important to recognize that there are already existing negative stereotypes in society and popular culture about how women are viewed. Understanding this problem means that a more mindful and intentional approach can be taken when creating skits. Even within the world of comedy there should be boundaries. Trivialising sexual and gender based violence is a boundary **that should never be crossed** under the guise of comedy/satire. Awareness of this fact means that content creators and media professionals can act to curb hateful and abusive content by not contributing to the mass of abusive and offensive content that already exists online.



**2. Report:** Content creators, media professionals, and members of the public can take on the role of a watchdog and report, or alert relevant authorities to remove abusive content and penalise the creator.

<sup>73</sup> Lyrics to Matter by Patoranking: <https://bit.ly/3kabTmE>

<sup>74</sup> Omawumi - If You Ask Me: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPiP-EF01hg>

Where the abusive content is written, document it by taking a screenshot and saving it in a folder as evidence that can be shown to the relevant authority. In the scenario where the abusive content is published on a website, alert the website owner by drawing attention to the abusive content published on their website, and attach evidence such as screenshots and screen recordings that you have.



**3. Raise Awareness:** Discourage people from engaging with abusive content by writing articles or creating skits that address online abuse. Educate people to understand that when they encounter online/offline abuse, the power resides with them to take on the role of an active bystander:

**i) Active bystander:** People can choose to be active bystanders **by safely intervening**, confronting inappropriate behaviour and doing something to improve the situation.

In the context of intervening online, this could be posting comments that admonish people on the sexist, misogynistic, and chauvinistic nature of the content. Also, by reminding people of the consequences of playing an active or passive role in the spread of content that trivialise harassment, sexual harassment, and similar attacks.

There is a responsibility on content creators to enlighten their audience on how to safely intervene offline. This could be; giving a disapproving look and not laughing at sexist or violent jokes, talking to an individual calmly about the problematic nature of their behaviour, reporting the account to the platform, caring for a person who has experienced abuse, or asking organisations with expertise on SGBV for help.<sup>75</sup>

## Focus Group Discussion: New Media & Online Content

1

What other creative ways can you use your platform to call out content that promote online SGBV?

2

How can you involve your colleagues in spotting and reporting abusive content?

<sup>75</sup> Be an active bystander: <https://bit.ly/3OOct5za>



## Image-based online abuse

The introduction of AI-generated media manipulation has introduced new forms of SGBV. With the proliferation of these technologies, perpetrators can violate the consent and bodily autonomy of individuals by using artificial intelligence to digitally insert an individual's image into sexual videos and photos without their consent. These are referred to as deepnudes or deepfake porn.<sup>76</sup>

More than 90% of deepfake victims are women, who are subject to online harassment or abuse. This form of abuse and disinformation thrives on socio-cultural norms about women's sexuality and sexual purity. On one end of the spectrum, there is the "virgin" archetype that women should remain sexually pure, and on the other end of the spectrum is the "whore" archetype that women are obscenely sexual and will use their sexuality to get what they want.

## Further Reading

- [Prepare, Don't Panic: Synthetic Media and Deepfakes](#)

<sup>76</sup> Deepfakes satire and the politics of synthetic media: <https://cocreationstudio.mit.edu/just-joking/>



## Reportage of SGBV Cases against Men and Gender-Diverse persons

It is also key to highlight and have a better understanding of the SGBV issues that men experience. Quite often, disinformation is spread that men do not experience sexual assault or that their experiences are less traumatizing. This misleading notion is further strengthened by the socio-cultural norms linked to masculinity and the gender stereotypes that exist.

The result of this is that male SGBV cases do not receive an adequate level of attention and reportage. Added to this problem is that many male SGBV survivors/victims are reluctant to come forward and report to relevant authorities, or share their experiences with the media due to stigma, thereby continuing to entrench a culture of silence.<sup>77</sup>

In the Central African Republic, findings by researchers show that armed groups have raped men and boys for years in an emerging pattern of sexual violence that is “underreported and largely ignored”<sup>78</sup> These findings can assist in sparking changes to improve media reportage of male SGBV cases.

By educating the society, misrepresentations and myths around SGBV against men and boys can be dispelled such as;

- i) That men cannot be raped,
- ii) That men are unaffected by rape,
- iii) That men should be able to defend against rape,
- iv) And also that male rape only occurs in prison.

The example cited [here](#) carries a headline that reads: **“Married babysitter who had baby with boy, 13, is jailed for 30 months”<sup>79</sup>**, thus implying that the victim had consensual sex with the perpetrator. This disregards the trauma experienced by the victim/survivor and this practice appears to be particularly common when reporting SGBV cases of male victims/survivors – thus further supporting the erroneous preconceived idea that male sexual assault is not distressful. As stated in the SGBV Definitions section, and the Language and Vocabulary section of this guide, it is pertinent to use the right terms, regardless of the gender of the survivor.

Likewise, more also needs to be done to ensure the ethical reportage of SGBV cases amongst gender-diverse persons. According to findings by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this marginalised demographic often faces violence at the hands of strangers and intimate partners.<sup>80</sup> There are also high rates of hate-motivated violence, amongst gender-diverse people, and they often take the form of sexual assault. “The term “gender-diverse” is used to refer to persons whose gender identity, including their gender expression, is at odds with what is perceived as being the gender norm in a particular context at a particular point in time, including those who do not place themselves in the male/female binary.”<sup>81</sup> For example, individuals who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Queer or Intersex (LGBTQI) are gender-diverse persons.

Because of the stigma and discrimination gender-diverse (LGBTQI) people already face, it is essential to protect their anonymity when they share their experiences unless

<sup>77</sup> “That never happens here”: Sexual and gender-based violence against men, boys and including LGBTQI+ people in humanitarian settings: <https://bit.ly/3PRcDL1>

<sup>78</sup> Rape of men and boys in Central African Republic is ‘ignored’ crime: <https://reut.rs/3NLdV9E>

<sup>79</sup> Rape of men and boys in Central African Republic is ‘ignored’ crime: <https://reut.rs/3NLdV9E>

<sup>80</sup> NISVS: An Overview of 2010 Findings on Victimization: <https://bit.ly/3Q06lrR>

<sup>81</sup> The struggle of trans and gender-diverse persons: <https://bit.ly/3aVUuwM>

they have explicitly given their consent for their identity to be disclosed. (See Tips For Conducting Interviews Including Video Interviews With SGBV Survivors section of this guide)



## SGBV against women and girls with disabilities

Research shows that women and girls with disabilities are sexually assaulted at least twice as much as their non-disabled counterparts.<sup>82</sup> Perpetrators may target disabled women and girls because of their limited physical mobility or means of communication, or because of cultural disinformation that exists in society.

In the reportage of SGBV against women and girls with disabilities, the media plays a role in safeguarding women and girls with disabilities. The term “safeguarding” focuses on protecting children and vulnerable adults from being harmed by policies, programs, and practices within organisations.

The case studies highlighted in this guide give a breakdown of how certain media practices harm the agency of victims/survivors and delegitimize their stories. Unfortunately, this sad reality is also applicable in a lot of the media coverage on SGBV against women and girls with disabilities. Oftentimes, the media does not take into account the unique dangers and challenges they face and their vulnerability.

When these challenges are not addressed,

<sup>82</sup> Fact Sheet: Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities: <https://bit.ly/3NLgnN6>

disabled women and girls are left behind and are more susceptible to risk and danger. This is often compounded by disability-based discrimination which means that disabled women and girls are discriminated and excluded based on their gender and disability.

In areas where research and technology are unavailable, people cannot access explanations for conditions. This lack of understanding around disabilities within the African setting causes misconceptions about disability with devastating consequences. Disabled people are often considered weak, worthless and in some cases subhuman by their societies. Disability-based violence is linked to this social stigma and some societies attach myths to disability, or view disability as a curse, or a punishment from God.<sup>83</sup>

For example, in Nigeria, there is a high level of physical and sexual violence faced by women with mental illnesses as the myth exists that raping a woman with a mental illness could bring wealth or prolong the perpetrator’s life.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, in Uganda, and other parts of Africa, there is an increased risk of sexual violence faced by women with albinism as the myth exists that unprotected sex with a person with albinism is a cure for HIV and will lead to blessings or good fortune.

<sup>85</sup>Consequently, the society views persons with disabilities as people who are to be reviled or pitied, but are overall not considered as persons deserving equal rights.<sup>86</sup>

However, Nigerian laws like the [Discrimination Against Persons With Disabilities \(Prohibition\) Act, 2018](#),<sup>87</sup> the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#),<sup>88</sup> and several state laws all stress that persons with disabilities must be protected, and their rights and dignity respected.

<sup>83</sup> Gender Based Violence Learning Paper: ADD International’s Approach. A LEARNING PAPER: <https://bit.ly/3z7lumE>

<sup>84</sup> Religion, culture, and discrimination against persons with disabilities in Nigeria: <https://bit.ly/38CBRgs>

<sup>85</sup> Gender Based Violence Learning Paper: ADD International’s Approach. A LEARNING PAPER: <https://bit.ly/3z7lumE>

<sup>86</sup> Gender Based Violence Learning Paper: ADD International’s Approach. A LEARNING PAPER: <https://bit.ly/3z7lumE>

<sup>87</sup> Discrimination Against Persons With Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018: <https://bit.ly/3M2MBSE>

<sup>88</sup> Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): <https://bit.ly/3a9gCmT>

These legal instruments and treaties highlight that institutions and individuals alike both have a key role to play in ensuring that persons with disabilities are not discriminated against.

Thus, media houses should conduct regular training to educate staff on the right terms to use in the reportage of SGBV against women and girls with disabilities. The incorrect use of terms in cases involving disabled SGBV survivors/victims can have a dangerous impact on their self-esteem and how they are viewed by society. Oftentimes, the focus is on the disability of the survivor/victim and not on the violence/sexual assault perpetrated. Additionally, the use of dated and derogatory words to describe the disability of the survivor/victim further compounds this problem – as is the case in the example cited below.

*'Murder of hunchback: Senator Ogunwale moved to Abuja,' The Sun News, 11<sup>89</sup>*

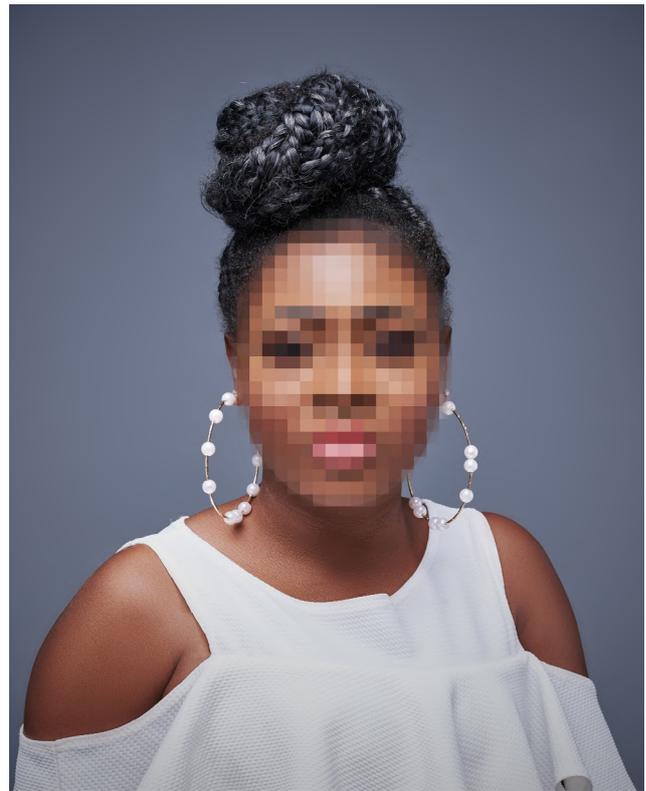
The headline cited above refers to the murder of a 22-year-old woman, Taibat Oseni in Osun state who had angular kyphosis and whose murder implicated a Nigerian senator. According to the Osun State Police Command, Taibat was kidnapped from her home and then taken to a 15-year-old abandoned building owned by a senator where she was killed and the protrusion on her body removed.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>91</sup>

The choice to focus on the disability of the victim and the use of the word “hunchback” instead of the medically correct term “angular kyphosis” goes back to the point earlier stated of institutions and individuals playing a key role in the implementation of extant laws regarding the discrimination of persons with disabilities. There is a need to understand the right terms to use so that the dignity of disabled survivors/victims can be upheld.

As a media practitioner, ensure that you search for the right terms to use, and do not focus solely on the disability of a survivor/victim. When unsure of how to frame a headline or story involving a disabled SGBV victim/survivor, seek guidance from reputable civil society organisations such

as the Grassroots Initiative for Gender and Development ([GRID](#)) which focus on issues concerning persons with disabilities.



## Imagery

If you decide to use images in SGBV cases, the privacy of survivors **must always** be protected and if images of the survivor/victim must be used, ensure that they are fully informed, have given consent for their image to be used in a publication, and are aware of the possible outcomes that could result from the publication of their image. It is usually advised to get a written and signed agreement in order to protect you and your media.<sup>92</sup> This rule however does not hold for minors as they are incapable of granting consent. It is vital to treat such cases sensitively and protect their identity to ensure that they do not face stigmatisation.

<sup>89</sup> Religion, culture, and discrimination against persons with disabilities in Nigeria: <https://bit.ly/38TFVQj>

<sup>90</sup> Religion, culture, and discrimination against persons with disabilities in Nigeria: <https://bit.ly/38TFVQj>

<sup>91</sup> Nigeria: FCID Takes Over Osun Murder Case: <https://bit.ly/3m0olk8>

<sup>92</sup> Use the right words, and Reporting on violence against women and girls\_ a handbook for journalists - UNESCO Digital Library: <https://bit.ly/3Mr9TCI>

# Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed;

- 01** While reporting SGBV, media must avoid the following: mentioning identifying details of the victim (such as age/occupation), location of the incident (such as abandoned buildings, old warehouses), a photograph of the location, description of the steps involved in the crime (such as lured the woman on the pretext of marriage) and judgmental language (regarding survivor's history, clothes, whereabouts at the time of the event). Mentioning these details in the report may contribute to victim shaming besides providing clues to perpetrators.<sup>93</sup>
- 02** Detailed investigation and fact finding must be made into rape cases prior to publishing.
- 03** That journalists always follow up on published rape cases as readers will know how the appropriate legal authorities resolve rape cases.
- 04** Prioritise survivor's safety, right to dignity, confidentiality, protection from retribution or harm and also consider how a media story could potentially violate any of these core principles.<sup>94</sup>
- 05** Media reporters can add context to individual incidents by referring to the whole spectrum of sexual violence, reporting data on the prevalence of sexual violence and related issues in that region, counteracting myths and outdated attitudes, and contacting experts to educate the readers/viewers.<sup>95</sup>
- 06** That headlines should always be cast in national newspapers calling on victims of rape to always report to the police and media houses nearest to them.
- 07** News organisations must refrain from posting breaking news on their online portals, including social media, until all the case facts have been ascertained. Also, specific media portals allow online readers to post comments; hence the media organisation should review, monitor and censor comments appropriately.<sup>96</sup>
- 08** They do not amply utilise features in presenting sexual violence stories. Doing that could entail analysing the facts of the stories and injecting emotional slant to them to precipitate public outcry against the problem.

## Further Reading

[- WITNESS SGBV Webinar - Africa](#)

<sup>93</sup> Menon et al (2020). Asian Journal of Psychiatry, *Volume* 54, December 2020, 102449

<sup>94</sup> International Federation of Journalists, 2014. IFJ Guidelines for Reporting on Violence Against Women: <https://bit.ly/3zvOXXf>

<sup>95</sup> Reporting on Sexual Violence, 2013. A Guide for Journalists: <https://bit.ly/3Jb6FTm>

<sup>96</sup> Reporting on Sexual Violence, 2013. A Guide for Journalists: <https://bit.ly/3Jb6FTm>

## Conclusion



<sup>97</sup> (Source: [Use The Right Words](#) )

Numerous stakeholders play a role in the sourcing, creation, editing, and publishing of news stories and news videos. Though a journalist may have crafted a well-thought-out article or documentary, they may not have the final say in what is included within the final publication. Social media managers may decide to use a different caption from what the journalist originally intended. Or, Editors may decide to change the headline or documentary title.

Hence, taking all this into consideration, all stakeholders within the media ecosystem must be educated on the ethical reporting practices in order for all hands to be on deck in the fight against SGBV.

<sup>97</sup> Use the Right Words: Media Reporting on Sexual Violence in Canada Femifesto, Toronto 2017: <https://bit.ly/36Mm11O>

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