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ASSESSMENT OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN LEBANON

Executive Summary

Implemented by

The Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women
(LECORVAW)

United Nations Population Fund - Lebanon



RESEARCH CENTER AND TEAM

The Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women (LECORVAW)

13 years of combating violence in Lebanon (1997-2010)

The Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women (LECORVAW) was created in March 1997 with the main objective of divulging the taboo issue of violence against women (VAW) and working on establishing social and legal structures that can prevent this social problem. LECORVAW has over the past few years made inroads in transforming the social perception of the Lebanese public on the issue of VAW and in breaking the silence by mobilizing public support against female abuse. LECORVAW has two branches in Beirut and Tripoli.

LECORVAW's strategy is based on two parallel but intertwined pillars:

- (a) Responding to and addressing directly all on-going cases of VAW
- (b) Reducing and eventually eliminating future cases of VAW by raising awareness and lobbying for legal reform

LECORVAW aims at accomplishing these goals through the following four main areas of action:

- (a) Direct aid to women victims of violence through the listening and counselling centers
- (b) Collective projects aiming at raising awareness on the issue of VAW
- (c) Legal reform of the personal status code, the penal code and the discriminative laws
- (d) Research and publications

Research Team

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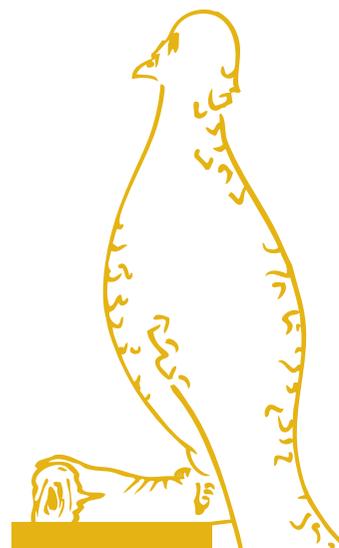
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BACKGROUND

Violence is nurtured by multiple aspects and can appear through acts, behaviours, sayings and signs which may, in turn, generate other violent acts, or interact in such a way as to become difficult to restrain and control. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 1998 defined Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as "violence involving men and women, in which the female is usually the victim; and which is derived from unequal power relationships between men and women. Violence is directed specifically against a woman because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately. It includes, but is not limited to, physical, sexual and psychological harm. It includes that violence which is perpetrated or condoned by the state".¹ The 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".²

In Lebanon, the media sector has undergone a phase of significant expansion, representing a diversity and multiplicity of means and contents. In the light of repetitive and regular acts of aggression, mainly GBV, being commonplace in society at large, and increasingly present in every form of mass media, both the audio-visual and print media have increased their coverage of social issues in television and radio programmes, and in newspaper and magazine articles and columns. With an aim to end forms of discrimination which encourage such violence and facilitate its occurrence, a number of local civil society organizations have initiated programmes and campaigns to this effect.



In view of the situation in Lebanon with regard to aggression and violence being prevalent and overtly displayed in the various strands of mass media, it was deemed valuable to conduct a comprehensive study in order to assess the media coverage of GBV in particular, and investigate the influence and consequences this type of violence may have on society at large.

This assessment required taking into consideration the following factors:

- (a) The multiplicity and variety of the various parties controlling the coverage of GBV by the media; as well as the multiplicity and potential conflict of media standpoints and objectives
- (b) The ambiguity in terms of the concepts of violence and gender; as well as the difficulty of associating one with the other by parties working under the constraints of time and mass appeal
- (c) The multiplicity and variety of the parties at the receiving end of such media messages and contents; as well as the multiplicity of responses and strategies adopted by these receivers and consumers to disseminate the messages and signs carried by such content

OBJECTIVES



This study on the coverage of GBV by the media in Lebanon aimed at addressing four main objectives. The first objective was to collect and analyze earlier research on the coverage of GBV by mass media in other countries, including published studies, reports and articles, in order to gain a deeper insight into the complexity of this issue and obtain a better grasp of its scope; and to verify the theories and findings of this research in a Lebanese context.

The second objective was to observe the coverage by the media of GBV, including all diversifications and distinctions, in order to pinpoint the strengths, weaknesses and consistencies of such coverage; as well as to identify the relation with the surrounding context, on the one hand, and the adopted mechanisms, methods and modes of media work, on the other.

The third objective was to distinguish between the coverage by the media of factual acts of violence and the GBV coverage in drama productions and in programmes addressing this issue; in other words, contrasting the reporting by the media of factual events, including acts of violence, with the coverage of violence, especially GBV, in social affairs and entertainment programmes.

The fourth objective was to reach beyond focussing on media coverage of GBV through accountability, and attempt to identify media mechanisms and methods other than those which are conventional and commonplace.



In an attempt to avoid prejudiced, misinterpreted or exalted accountability, this study focussed on analysis and evaluation of the following variables:

- (a) The media content with the purpose of demonstrating its overt and covert implications of discriminative ideas and opinions which reveal implicit forms of violence, be they verbal, psychological, moral or symbolic; and of showing the relation between stereotypes and modes of media work which enhance or diminish such typecasting
- (b) The media structures and systems which define and frame the work context of broadcasters; and expose the interconnection of these structures and systems with the economic, social and cultural systems under which they operate
- (c) The work methods of broadcasters and their efforts to avoid prevailing gender stereotyping in programming, as well as examining the way they control the margin of leeway granted to them
- (d) The receiving party with regard to awareness and acceptance of such media content; as well as the level of accountability placed on transmitters of such content by receivers, and their own behaviour following exposure to content including such stereotyping
- (e) Intellectual, academic and research structures with regard to the inclusion of GBV issues in their agendas, and presenting such issues as pertinent and attractive topics for media professionals
- (f) Civil society actors with regard to their interaction with researchers, on the one hand, and broadcasters, on the other, as well as their interaction with lawmakers, in order to keep the GBV issue open for debate and discussion

METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS OF WORK



Methodology

The objectives exposed several concerns relating both to the media context, work and content; and to media producers, transmitters and receivers or consumers. These concerns brought to the forefront the following assumptions:

- (a) Mass media, as with the law-enforcement sector and the judiciary, tends to focus on behavioural violence manifested by outward and visual signs, while the destructive violence represented in psychological, moral and symbolic forms often is not regarded as an issue requiring special consideration and investigation.
- (b) GBV, in most instances, is a topic dealt with by the media when associated with a circumstantial reaction to incidents or events which have occurred and are evident, rather than a subject based on its prevention.
- (c) Methods and modes of media work are controlled by the aim for mass appeal and sensationalism, thus becoming commercial and stereotyped in their ways of handling symbolic violence. There is a dialectic relation between “spectacular” and “understated”; the spectacular would not exist without the hidden factor, and wildly spectacular issues enhance those which are hidden and bring them back into consideration. In addition, sensationalist and dramatic media style attracts large audiences and, thus, increased advertising revenues; however, the screening of commercial breaks interrupts the programmes in question, and also cuts the tension and violence on screen, attributing ignorance to the perpetrator and ridicule to the subject.

- (d) Media exposure of GBV may appear confusing due to the difficulty of distinguishing between violence which is gender-based, and that which is based on social, civil, geographic and confessional differences. Media content tends to expressly reflect the type of violence carried by social attitudes and mentality; for example, violence towards female victims of rape and sexual harassment. Add the particularity of Lebanese society, where modern everyday life, including latent violent tendencies, coexists with a society bound by traditions; and where the stereotyping of male and female roles imply, legitimize and, at times, even normalize acts of violence. Such coexistence makes GBV prone to duplication, both in the “modern” and the “traditional” society where violence is the common denominator.

For the purpose of conducting this study and in order to accommodate the aforementioned variables, it proved necessary to adopt a deconstructive analytical approach. GBV does not in itself represent a social problem; however, the dynamics of the social actors bring about conditions which allow for the forming and development of such problems which, in turn, raise the following questions: (a) How did the researchers work on the problematization of the GBV issue? (b) How were the echoes of this problem reflected among the concerned associations and organizations? (c) How did this problem react with the media sector, and what impact did it have on the media work, methods and modes?

Process of work



In order to carry out this study, a team of researchers was formed, comprising of undergraduate students from the Lebanese University, Beirut. Though the majority were volunteers, all received adequate training on concepts and issues relevant to the study. Moreover, the team was sensitized on the underlying and potentially hidden aspects of violence. The following tasks were executed by the team of researchers:

- (a) Compiling a literature review on earlier research published on media treatment and coverage of GBV; a total of 49 sources were identified and examined, including 22 published in the Arabic language, 17 in French and 10 in English. Sources included books, reports, studies, surveys and interviews. The review aimed at studying approaches applied by other researchers and authors with respect to media coverage of such a complex and complicated issue as GBV; and identifying possible discrepancies in methodology and approach resulting from social, legal, political and gender contexts which were present and which differed according to place and time period. The review noted the predisposition of the authors and researchers, be they journalists, social activists or academics at national or local institutions.

- (b) Collecting data and statistics on the media sector in Lebanon with emphasis on print and audio-visual media; and preparing charts and listings of the most prominent and respected newspapers and magazines, and the most popular and influential television and radio stations, as well as computing staff numbers and readership and audience figures. A survey was conducted on the most active non-governmental organizations in order to ascertain whether booklets and other information material on GBV had been issued by them.
- (c) Identifying and selecting radio and television programmes and newspaper and magazine columns in order to examine regularly occurring audio-visual and print media content; and preparing tools for monitoring of media content of television and radio news broadcasts, talk shows and entertainment programmes, as well as Lebanese-produced serials, in addition to that of selected columns and articles published in newspapers and magazines. A schedule was set up and distributed among members of the research team, and the sample was monitored during a period from late February to early April 2010. Every team member received training on the use of the monitoring tools.
- (d) Selecting a sample of an estimated 30 radio and television broadcasters; and preparing interview questions in order to evaluate their level of awareness of and sensitivity towards GBV, and to assess their attitude in general towards GBV.
- (e) Forming focus groups in a number of governorates throughout the country and preparing material with the purpose of ascertaining opinions, preferences and suggestions with regard to mass media and their coverage of GBV among Lebanese audiences at large. A separate focus group of actors, script writers and directors was formed for the purpose of recording opinions, preferences and suggestions, as well as exploring use of GBV within their work.
- (f) Selecting young journalists new to their profession in order to raise awareness among them on the issue of GBV and its coverage; and requesting them to gather and provide current data directly linked to GBV in the print media for the purpose of realizing two objectives: to sensitize them towards this issue, and to make them assume responsibility and accountability for their work.



LIMITATIONS, CHALLENGES AND FACILITATING FACTORS

In order to track the selected variables relating to the media coverage of GBV, seven monitoring grids had been designed, prepared and distributed among the members of the research team. This task, which proved the most demanding for the researchers, faced multiple challenges, as well as deficiencies and discrepancies, when it came to the monitoring of the core, divergence, background and ramification of the meanings and connotations carried by media content and messages. The difficulties experienced by the members of the research team during the assignment of monitoring were due to the following factors:

- (a) Discrepancies in GBV sensitization and deficiencies in readiness and aptitude for monitoring. The monitoring task required high level of awareness most unlikely to be found in equal measure among a number of individuals; one person is unable to perform with consistent impulse at all times, or be an objective observer.
- (b) Insufficient capacity to meet the scope of the research, including difficulties in achieving the following tasks:
 - Identifying GBV; often confusing acts of GBV with other types of violence correlated with ethnicity, race and social class or standing, as well as with factors of attraction and stimulation, for example in news broadcasts
 - Detecting and evaluating symbols and suggestions of violence, as well as identifying gender partiality in scenes of high emotion in entertainment programmes
 - Determining margin of concern expressed by media to GBV due to interconnection between the nature of media work and the hierarchy which forms the media agenda, as well as the hierarchy within mass media; and the inherent differences which exist between the various types of media

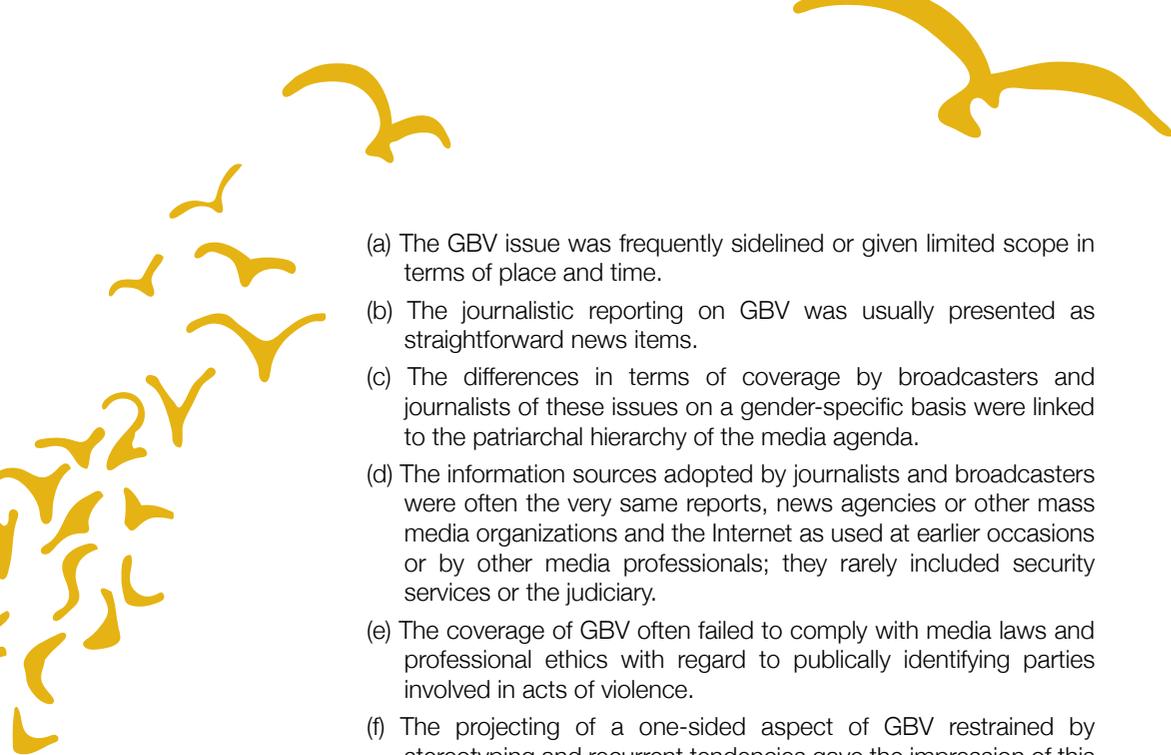
MAIN FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Coverage of gender-based violence in audio-visual and print media

While sidestepping the important issue of accuracy, the development and application of the monitoring grids enabled the team of volunteers to exceed expectations and anticipated targets to deliver indicators which enabled the researchers to get a clear overview of the coverage of GBV by the various types of media operating in Lebanon, as well as detecting projected trends and directions over a period of time. The monitoring grids also proved valuable when studying those factors and developments which had contributed to the realizing of a qualitative change in the field, mainly when observing the association of these aspects with the feedback from journalists and broadcasters, scriptwriters and actors, as well as from members of society at large, both male and female, and the change brought by the contexts surrounding the coverage, as mentioned above.

In order to understand the concepts of the media coverage of GBV, including all diversifications and distinctions, and in order to facilitate the survey and expand the findings, the monitoring process focussed on three aspects: first, in terms of news reporting in newspapers, magazines and news broadcasts on television and radio; second, in terms of television and radio programmes on specific topics, including talk shows and entertainment programmes; and third, in terms of drama.

With regard to common denominators concerning the news media coverage of GBV in audio-visual and print media, the following findings and results were identified:

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- (a) The GBV issue was frequently sidelined or given limited scope in terms of place and time.
 - (b) The journalistic reporting on GBV was usually presented as straightforward news items.
 - (c) The differences in terms of coverage by broadcasters and journalists of these issues on a gender-specific basis were linked to the patriarchal hierarchy of the media agenda.
 - (d) The information sources adopted by journalists and broadcasters were often the very same reports, news agencies or other mass media organizations and the Internet as used at earlier occasions or by other media professionals; they rarely included security services or the judiciary.
 - (e) The coverage of GBV often failed to comply with media laws and professional ethics with regard to publically identifying parties involved in acts of violence.
 - (f) The projecting of a one-sided aspect of GBV restrained by stereotyping and recurrent tendencies gave the impression of this type of violence as being a normal act and part of everyday life.
 - (g) The sequence of GBV coverage, focussing first on the victim and then on the actual act of violence, while somehow ignoring the perpetrator, appealed to the heart rather than the mind.
 - (h) The visual impact was given added importance for the audio-visual media, with news broadcasts thus attaching greater importance to physical violence; while newspapers tended to focus on verbal violence, and verbal and legal violence creating headlines on cover pages of magazines.
 - (i) The media coverage was widely diverse, ranging from being over-simplistic, rash and sensational, to that of carefully researched and analysed through thorough investigation, exploring dimensions and insights. News broadcasts and reporting tended to project a vague association of violent incidents to status, most often female status, which enabled the projecting of a positive change, sometimes overt and other times covert. This change can be represented by the following tendencies:
 - Regarding GBV as a social phenomenon which drives journalists and broadcasters to break the stereotyping mould of the simpler process in preparing news, and in investigating information and facts
 - Reaching beyond the mere act of violence to open new horizons for coverage
 - Modifying indicators of media coverage from simplified, adverbial news formula, to raising the issue publically for discussion

These indicators listed above result from the association of media coverage with the contexts, displaying a comprehensive change mainly in terms of studies aiming to activate and amend the legal framework, as previously mentioned.



Coverage of gender-based violence in terms of programming

In programming, there are three types of coverage which designates and identifies the priorities and agenda of issues analysed in this study; they are radio morning shows, television talk shows and television comedy shows. The specifically-designed analytical monitoring grids enabled the researchers to deduce the following tendencies and aspects in terms of GBV coverage:

1- Radio morning shows

- Women were often guests on live morning shows which discussed topics relating to recurring, everyday activities or past events, while limited scope was awarded GBV.
- Activities and interventions undertaken by the concerned associations and organizations, and to succeeding relevant legal interventions, produced a partial impact on GBV coverage; mainly, legal violence was addressed, with focus given to women victims of GBV, whereas the perpetrators were ignored.
- Presenters tended to speak on behalf of the persons concerned with the problem or issue discussed; some were inclined to exaggerate their role in order to attempt to accomplish missions which, at times, exceeded their mandate and power and which, in turn, led some radio stations to shun away from presenting features on GBV.

2- Television talk shows

As data and statistics on GBV coverage were unavailable and priorities for television talk shows and news broadcasts regarding GBV coverage converge, monitoring was curtailed and thorough analysis precluded; however, the following features and trends could be observed:

- Covert coverage, rather than clear and explicit reference to GBV was projected in shows on social topics and human issues and problems.
- Gender mobility of persons dealing with GBV issues was noted; however, whereas men and women started out on equal basis with regard to programming and presenting, men had almost exclusive command of directing and, thus, also control of the visual image of women, as well as that of men.
- Coverage and approach tended to be theatrical and sensationalistic, often at the expense of the persons concerned and of the issue of GBV. Inviting professional experts as guests usually aimed not at increasing knowledge, but rather at unveiling personal details and exposing individuals concerned to the studio audience and television viewers with little or no regard of possible psychological harm they, and those watching, may suffer.

- Programmes aimed towards the sensational aspect, based on either projecting the “perfect”, however stereotyped image of the patient woman who understands and sympathizes with her husband even after he committed acts of violence against her; or presenting a woman who, instead of weakness, expresses exaggerated despotism to generate excitement, shock and awe.
- Coverage sought to dissipate the arguments presented and inverse them in order to strengthen sensationalistic tendencies and preserve established norms. Talk show hosts often pretended to hold contradicting views in order to stimulate the discussion and sensationalize the issue, preserving established concepts and exaggerating their roles by becoming the focus of attention at the expense of the topic discussed.

3- Television comedy shows

The following trends with regard to issues and topics relating to GBV coverage in television comedy shows were deduced:

- Men were in control and patriarchal mentality was clearly evident, even though women at times appeared emancipated, challenging restrictions and the prevailing stereotyped image of timidity and chastity. Comedy shows reinforced established norms of society by using sarcasm and spontaneity, thus giving the impression that GBV was accepted, “normal” behaviour which could be accommodated and endured.
- Big-name stars were engaged in order to attract greater audiences and, thus facilitating the process of viewers identifying themselves with celebrities and projecting their dreams and desires.
- Linguistic indicators and gender images discriminatory against women, or against various vulnerable and marginalized groups, were being used; such coverage ignored media ethics of respect for humanity regardless of race, gender and religion, as well as social, health and mental conditions.

Views and aspirations of broadcasters on media coverage of gender-based violence versus reality

Through interviews conducted with a sample of broadcasters working in the field of television and radio, the following gender characteristics were identified and analysed:

- (a) Most respondents were male, carrying a multitude of symbolic indications, as well as reflecting the gender stereotyping of the media coverage of GBV.
- (b) Female respondents displayed, with regard to media sources for GBV coverage, greater willingness to break deep-rooted gender norms firmly established in the cognitive background of society.

- (c) Visual aspects in terms of GBV tended to discourage men in general from probing into what were regarded as female issues, thus manifesting a one-sided, stereotyped aspect of this type of violence which corresponded to the prevailing male attitude of society. This approach was clearly displayed by respondents providing answers characterized by generality and projecting expectations in terms of the places where violence may occur, the persons likely to commit acts of violence and the persons likely to be victims of such violence.
- (d) Approach expressed by respondents, as with attitude projected in the media coverage of GBV, ranged from over-simplicity, haste and mass appeal, to in-depth analysis; with some respondents being acutely aware of ongoing changes in society at large and attempting to avoid prevailing stereotyping in their coverage of GBV, while others expressed accepted and well established ideas and opinions.
- (e) Stereotyped attitudes prevailed in the coverage of GBV, implying it was foremost an issue concerning women and, therefore, overlooked and regarded as being of less importance; some respondents themselves displayed a similar attitude.
- (f) A manifested lack of professionalism, ethics and cognition when tackling GBV issues was implicitly illustrated with respect to factors of media interest in this topic.
- (g) Positive changes in terms of media coverage of GBV, varying from significant to modest, influenced responses, feedback and suggestions with regard to activating media coverage and avoiding prevailing stereotyping.
- (h) Media coverage tended to be vague and imprecise as responsibility fell between media and society which, in turn, had an effect on the cognitive background of the respondents.

Views and aspirations of scriptwriters and actors on media coverage of gender-based violence versus reality

The following observations with regard to GBV coverage in television drama serials were recorded by the researchers, and also expressed and underscored by scriptwriters and actors working in the field of drama production and who participated in the focus group discussion:

- (a) The staging and settings of many drama serials featuring GBV appeared artificial and far removed from the reality, ambitions and aspirations of women victims of violence.
- (b) The representation of GBV was featured according to prevailing stereotyped and simplistic norms, resulting in dramas often failing to resonate with the audience at large, as the milieu shown did not correspond to the lifestyles and daily routines of most viewers.

- (c) The plots appeared weak and failed to track a realistic course of GBV violence, being often tortuous, winding and repetitive, though storylines focussed on GBV; and endings seemed artificial and contrived, lacking the basics and fundamentals of a real-world situation, therefore resulting in little more than reproductions of violence.
- (d) The dramas in general fell short of projecting the existing controversy surrounding GBV as an individual issue and a social concern; rather, they fabricated an image of head-strong, but not resilient women far removed from the often grim and difficult attributes characterizing reality.
- (e) The production of television serials and dramas had become commercial business subject to offer and demand which, in turn, expanded the capacities of exploring deeply into depicting human issues. While many dramas projected settings of financial and political violence, productions in general tended to shy away from complexities and difficulties in representing GBV. Both scriptwriters and actors appeared more inclined to tackle the concerns and symbolic violence drama productions endured from media and financial monopolies, on the one hand; and from the Lebanese political sectarian system, on the other.
- (f) The gender-specific differences within the storyline and plot were often projected when it came to evaluating and understanding causes and reasons behind GBV. In the mechanisms of GBV coverage, images of women who possessed qualities of strength and positivity seemed artificially fabricated, far removed from the true potential of women in the real world, with most serials and dramas featuring a reality limited to the rich and powerful.

Aspects of public perspective toward media coverage of gender-based violence

The discussions held with the appointed focus groups of members of the general public produced different and diversified feedback which can be summarized in the following points:

- (a) Gender-specific preferences of the participants in terms of mass media and its contents reflected the same gender-specific coverage as projected by main-stream media. Their preferences suggested an imitation between sender and receiver; in other words, between the reality of GBV coverage and its paradoxes and ambiguities, in addition to the contrasts brought by the receiver or consumer, thus implying complexities which confirmed that watching and unravelling GBV were as complicated as the process of symbolization.
- (b) Indicators of consistency in terms of media coverage of GBV were detected in the underlying messages expressed by participants,

partially resulting from problems obstructing media work in general and the alternating between seriousness and excitement, advertising and information, and private and public. On the one hand, the general public might request the media for solutions to their problems; on the other hand, most members of society at large disliked interference in their private affairs. While praising the media for having the audacity to address social issues considered taboo, many were also quick to accuse broadcasters and journalists of taking advantage of victims for the purpose of publicity, mass appeal and monetary gain.

- (c) Gender differences in the approach of the participants to the GBV issue could be detected and observed by looking at certain underlying implications in their responses and feedback.
- (d) Feedback from the participants in focus groups consisting of members of society at large was deemed as important as that of the professional media broadcasters in the sample, thus proving that the media coverage of GBV matched the image held by the community and the people targeted. Even though both society and the media sector were experiencing ongoing adjustments and alterations, they remained trapped within a larger circle of restricting parameters where it was difficult to recognise the source and direction of change.
- (e) Media coverage of GBV tended to be directed and produced by men, who were reluctant to deeply venture into causes behind psychological violence, could not empathise with symbolical and economic violence, and were overcautious in approaching sexual violence. Such variations in coverage were detected by the participants and echoed in their cognitive background; whereas the study revealed gender-based differences among the audiences and viewers who disregarded economic factors and occasionally implied legal factors. Male participants considered physical violence as the most dangerous, while both male and female participants regarded sexual violence as less harmful.
- (f) Suggestions brought forward by the general public for improving the media coverage of GBV closely corresponded to proposals provided by media professionals, as well as to the expected gender specifications of such suggestions.



RECOMMENDATIONS



With the aim of broadening the horizons for reflection and preventing the issue of GBV becoming clichéd and stale, and in order to open a serious and effective discussion in the public field, it is vital to adopt the constructivist approach, placing GBV in all its diversifications and differences on the agenda for change. This requires initiating a plan of action which needs to be elaborated by all parties concerned, based on the forming of a network of professionals from media and academia, activists from civil society and youth organizations, members of syndicates and trades unions, civil servants, legislators, religious figures and educators with the aim of generating the following outcomes:

- (a) Though the proposed approach being basically conceptual in nature, openness towards academia and research is essential, and motivating these institutions to elaborate and discuss the concept of GBV in order to mainstreaming this issue within curriculum development and research, and including this subject in academic courses and research projects.
- (b) For the purpose of translating these ideas into action, the following steps are recommended:
 - Raising awareness among members of the various concerned parties on GBV concepts in order to gain a more complete understanding of the complexities of this issue; moreover, encouraging them to translate these concepts into action within their respective communities
 - Enhancing and developing communication and media skills, both within civil society organizations and with outside parties, especially the media sector

- Coordinating and linking the various activist organizations and associations involved in fighting GBV with the aims of sharing experience and expertise, avoiding duplication of activities and elaborating an agenda and set of priorities for each
 - Establishing a data base on GBV and ensuring it is updated at regular intervals by all concerned stakeholders
- (c) Initiating a plan of action based on concepts free from discrimination and marginalization requires the active involvement of concerned civil society organizations and of the media sector, in particular male broadcasters and journalists.

Each civil society organizations shall assume the responsibility for the following tasks and actions:

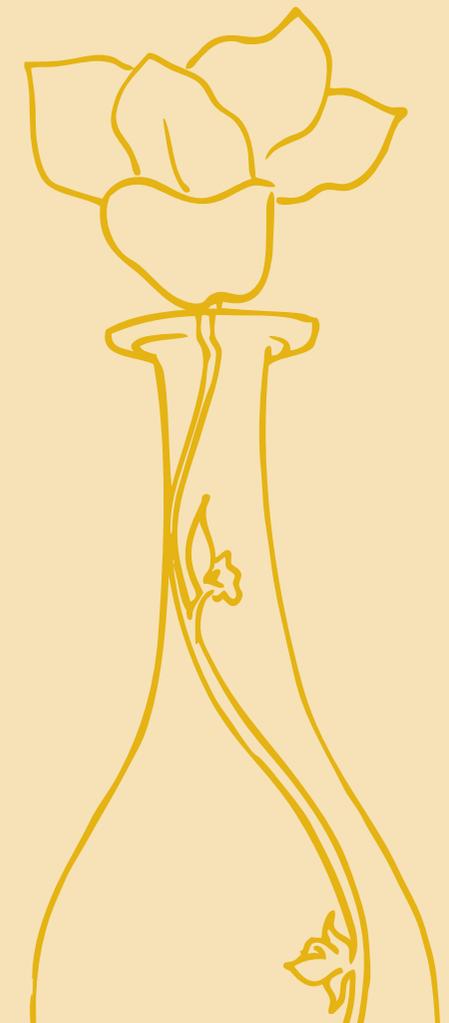
- Set up and train a team within each respective organization for the purpose of handling communication; with the first phase including not only responding to direct requests from the media but, more importantly, categorizing media organizations and sources in order to identify their potential needs and requirements. The next phase encompasses linking broadcasters and journalists to such interest groups as professional syndicates and trades unions, legislators, judges and academics, as well as providing data and facts on GBV.
- Elaborate mechanisms of contacting and collaborating with various regional interest groups and associations through the cooperation with local ruling bodies, clubs and youth organizations. Such mechanisms shall aim at organizing meetings in the presence of members from the press and the audio-visual media, innovators, and civil society organizations. These meetings will tackle the role of the media in fighting GBV and shall, based on feedback from the participants and through activating members of society at large, initiate monitoring plans, develop data bases, set up records and design and maintain web sites. Such measures would help institute an alternative approach by the media, highlighting strengths in order to encourage positive action, while noting weaknesses for further adjustment.
- Publish manuals for the training of trainers on media and on the role of media in fighting GBV, through the assistance of academics, professionals in various fields, and experts on GBV, in addition to broadcasters and journalists.

Such training manuals shall fulfil the following four criteria:

- a. The cognitive dimension pertaining to the GBV issue based on communication with academics and researchers in different disciplines in order to become familiarized with and gain understanding of the concepts, and identify their background and courses. Furthermore, the cognitive dimension shall also explore the various types, aspects and forms of violence, as well as the parties concerned with violence.

- b. The professional dimension in approaching the issue, based on breaking with the prevailing stereotyping and enquiring into mechanisms of creating and renewing media skills. Within this scope, television and radio broadcasters shall possess the ability to explore information and the skills to conduct a public discussion on sensitive issues, engaging key actors for added knowledge, insight and expertise, in addition to possessing the skills of presenting and processing socially complicated and confusing issues.
 - c. The ethical dimension based on acquiring skills on dealing with the sources and individuals concerned in order to not compromise their situation for the purpose of publicity and/or monetary gain which may result in negative and destructive effects on the psychological condition of the person/s in question, as well as on the audience and general public.
 - d. The interactive dimension with civil society organizations must be based on mutual accountability and respect between media and civil society organizations through the organizing of workshops and open discussions.
- (d) Working on augmenting change of attitude and approach within society towards GBV in order to provide a secure and indirectly improved environment for the renewed and active media work can be achieved through the following actions:
- Closer contact with religious leaders through constructive and effective discussions on how to address challenges faced by society through finding practical and flexible solutions. Such peaceful discussions may invigorate the GBV debate and reverberate in the media industry.
 - Focussed and informed discussions with legal advisors and legislators through professionals working in the legal sector, and through criminal court judges working to fight GBV. Such discourse shall aim at identifying legal and judicial mechanisms to prevent exploitation of victims of GBV by media professionals for the purpose of sensationalist publicity and headline news; establishing clear guidelines on, and criteria for the handling of information and sources.
 - Joint meetings with innovators, artists and academics on their respective work and the mechanisms which enable them to interact with, and explore such complex and intricate gender-based issues as GBV.
 - Discussions with various government bodies and official departments on the mechanisms of work to enable them to resist all forms of GBV, whether implicit or explicit. This process will result in greater justice among male and female citizens, and in motivating a nationalistic behaviour which is urgently needed by the administrations to activate their work.

- Discussions with the private and public economic sectors on activities and outcomes in terms of forms of gender discrimination which may generate direct or indirect violence. These discussions shall revolve around the mechanisms which can be adopted to stop gender discrimination, as the increasing rate of GBV may have a negative impact on productivity of the younger generation, as well as on the economy itself.



FOOTNOTES

1. UNFPA, Violence Against Girls and Women: A Public Health Priority (New York: UNFPA Gender Theme Group, Interactive Center, 1995), page number.
2. United Nations General Assembly, Proceedings of the 85th Plenary Meeting: Declaration on the elimination of violence against women (Geneva, 20 December 1993).