ELEVEN WAYS TO BOOST YOUR WORK WITH NEWS MEDIA

How you can help the media report prevention of violence against women

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SECTOR WORKERS

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Action Area 2

Upskill and develop resources for the specialist PVAW field and related organisations to engage effectively with media on prevention.
OVERVIEW

- Considerations for PVAW and working within our capacity
- News rooms, news production, deadlines, newsworthiness, building relationships
- Handling requests, interviews, working with Media-Comms staff
- The centrality of key messaging, PVAW themes for messages, message tailoring
Introduction to this resource

Background on why and for whom this resource has been developed and how to use it.

1. Plan for your organisational capacity
   Ways to manage your own and your organisation’s capacity to work with media on prevention of violence against women (PVAW).

2. Recognise the complexity of PVAW work
   Considerations on the complexity of PVAW as a topic and specialised field of work.

3. Know some Media Industry basics
   Outline of key structures of media outlets that influence how news is produced, and which can inform your interactions with media, including media workplace hierarchies and roles, media type, style and audience.

4. Be responsive to news immediacy and deadlines
   The effect of news immediacy, pressures and timelines on media needs and capacity to report PVAW, and ways we can support effective reporting within this environment.

5. Prepare tailored PVAW messages for all communications (including tricky questions)
   Information on developing, using and building key messages into your communications, keeping a primary prevention focus, tailoring to your audience and answering difficult questions.

6. Keep key statistics at hand
   Tips for using statistics effectively.

7. Be responsive to media requests for personal stories
   Thoughts and suggestions for addressing media requests for fresh, personal stories from women who have experienced violence.

8. Know some basics about giving comment or media interviews
   Tips on giving interviews, providing comment and staying on message with your key PVAW messages.

9. Build the newsworthiness of your content
   Newsworthiness is a key media term and refers to how engaging a news piece is likely to be to a news audience. This section considers ways that you can increase the perceived newsworthiness of PVAW information and comments.

10. Build media trust and commitment to PVAW
    Ways to build media trust in you as a source, your information, and the validity of PVAW as a key community issue.

11. Work with Media & Communications staff
    Not all agencies have a media and communications worker or department. However for those who do, this section raises ideas for fostering relationships and effective collaboration.

Quick reference supplements

Quick Reference Supplement 1: Critical themes and concepts for PVAW messaging
   Three critical ‘themes’ and further concepts to focus your PVAW communications with media, and support development of your own tailored PVAW messages.

Quick Reference Supplement 2: Useful statistics and evidence on VAW
   Selected statistics and evidence on violence against women and its prevention.

Quick Reference Supplement 3: Characteristics of key messages
   Further information on the characteristics of key messages, to support development and tailoring.

Quick Reference Supplement 4: Further Resources
   Resources for further statistics and factsheets on VAW and its prevention, and media information.

Quick Reference Supplement 5: Glossary
   Definitions on gender and forms of violence against women.
Priority themes for PVAW

Prioritise the following three themes in your communications with media, to support a move away from individual or incident-based news coverage and to increase a prevention focus in media reporting and community understanding.

Theme 1. Talk about the causes of VAW

E.g. International research is clear that gender inequality is a key underlying factor for violence against women.

Theme 2. Explain the influential role of other factors

E.g. Other factors such as harmful use of alcohol, poverty, discrimination, and the way violence in general is used and accepted in our community all play a part in VAW; they interact with gender inequality and need to be addressed alongside it.

Theme 3. Talk about what everyday people, governments and communities can do to prevent VAW

E.g. Violence against women is preventable; prevention requires everyone to play a part in changing the culture, attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence against women, in particular inequalities between men and women.
International research is clear that gender inequality is a key underlying factor for violence against women.

Disrespecting women does not always result in violence against women; but all violence against women begins with disrespecting women.

Gender inequality exists within social structures, norms and practices that work together to create an environment where women and men are valued differently.

Gender inequality can be seen in a history of laws and policies that have formally restricted the rights and opportunities of women.

Gender inequality continues to exist today, often in ways that are invisible to many people, through the unequal social value, power, resources and opportunities available to women and men.

Gender inequality is present in our society in many ways. Change the Story tells us that the key aspects of gender inequality that are linked to violence against women are when:

- There is an imbalance of power between men and women in families and relationships as well as in workplaces, schools and other arenas of public life
- Roles for men and women and ideas about masculinity and femininity are rigidly defined
- Peer relationships between boys and men that support or promote aggression and disrespectful attitudes and behaviour towards girls and women
- Communities condone or excuse violence against women.

‘Everyday’ sexism is part of, and reinforces gender inequality.

Violence against women is the extreme end of gender inequality, but less extreme forms of ‘everyday’ sexism create and reinforce gender inequality and violence:

- The threat of violence impacts on all women, limiting different aspects of their lives.
- Sexist jokes, comments and behaviours reflect and reinforce sexist attitudes. They excuse and support the gender stereotyping and discrimination that often leads to violence against women.
- If no-one speaks up when a sexist comment or joke is made, it sends the message that these attitudes and behaviours are okay.
Evidence for Theme 1

Prevalence of VAW

1 in 5 Australian women have experienced sexual violence and 1 in 3 Australian women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15.

More than one woman a week is murdered in Australia by a current or former partner. In 2015, 79 women were murdered in Australia in the context of gender-based violence. Thousands more are injured or made to live in fear.

Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to preventable ill-health, death and disease for Victorian women aged 15-44. Violence contributes more to the health burden for this group than many other well-known risk factors such as smoking and obesity.

The fear of violence including harassment, is a permanent constraint on the mobility of women and limits their access to resources and basic activities. High social, health and economic costs to the individual and society are associated with violence against women. Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into subordinate positions.

A woman is hospitalized every three hours in Australia due to family violence.

Around 800,000 women in Australian workplaces are experiencing domestic or family violence, and one in five women experience sexual harassment in the workplace at some time.

Nine out of ten Australian women have experienced either verbal or physical street harassment.

Of women who have experienced violence from an ex-partner, 73% have experienced more than one incident of violence.

The gendered nature of violence

Around 95% of all victims of violence – whether women or men – experience violence from a male perpetrator.

Studies by the United Nations, European Commission, World Bank and World Health Organization all locate the underlying cause or necessary conditions for violence against women in the social context of gender inequality, which is the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women, and discrimination associated with that inequality. Gender inequality can play out within families and households, institutions and social structures.

'Gendered drivers' are particular expressions of gender inequality which consistently predict higher rates of violence against women:

- Condoning of violence against women
- Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
- Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
- Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

At an individual level, one of the most consistent predictors of the perpetration of violence against women are traditional views about gender roles and relationships, attitudes that support male dominance, and attitudes that reflect sexual hostility towards women. Violence is more common in families and relationships in which men control decision-making and is less so in relationships in which women have a greater level of independence.

Women are significantly more likely than men to have experienced:

- an episode of stalking as an adult: 19% compared to 7.8%
- sexual assault since the age of 15: 17% compared to 4%
- physical assault by a male in their home during the last 20 years: 62% compared to 8.4%
- emotional abuse by a partner since the age of 15: 25% compared to 14%.
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