



Change Initiative - Cambodia Team
ITP: Media Development in a Democratic
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Gender-Sensitive Reporting Guideline for Cambodian News Media

Full Report
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Endorsement

*This guideline on Gender-Sensitive Reporting for
Cambodian News Media is endorsed by:*



I. Acknowledgment

This guideline was produced by a Cambodia Change Initiative Team led by Mr Singhtararith Chea, Ms Samphors Hang, Mr Sarat Ruos, Ms Sreypheap Seng, Ms Vicheika Kann, Ms Naren Kuch; and the support from Mr Narin Sun, National Programme Facilitator, who has been coordinating and facilitating our team since the beginning. This Change Initiative is part of the International Training Programme (ITP) on Media Development in a Democratic Framework – ASIA 2020.



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II. Background

2.1 What is gender equality?

According to the UN, “gender” refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men.

These attributes, opportunities, and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. Gender can be based on context and time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other essential criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, and age.

In many societies, including that in Cambodia, many gender roles and expectations are based on negative stereotypes, leading to inequality in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities based on those stereotypes. Persons of all genders are entitled to the same basic human rights, including the right to freedom of speech and participation at all levels of society. The elimination of negative gender stereotypes is necessary to promote full equality of all genders in society. Substantive equality, meaning equality in actual practice, not just as a policy, is the ultimate goal.



Photo courtesy to Rehash Trash women's empowerment project, Credit: Antal-Gabelics

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia states that “all forms of discrimination against women shall be abolished. The exploitation of women in employment shall be prohibited. Men and women are equal in all fields especially with respect to marriage and family matters...” (Article 45).



2.2 What is the role of media in promoting gender equality?

Media play crucial roles in society. They report on current events, provide frameworks for interpretation, mobilise citizens concerning various issues, reproduce predominant culture and society, and entertainment (Llanos and Nina, 2011). Therefore, it is undeniable that the media is an important factor in promoting gender equality, both within the working environment (including employment benefits; recruitment, hiring and promotion of women at all levels; and addressing inequalities within the organization) and in the representation of women and men at all levels and in every aspect of content (including fair gender portrayal and the use of neutral and non-gender specific language, and selection of topics).

2.3 What is Gender Sensitive Reporting?

According to UNESCO, for the media to accurately mirror our societies and to produce complete and diverse coverage, it is very important that the news reflect the world as seen through the eyes of both women and men. Women should be involved at all levels of media organisations, including reporters and decision-makers. According to the report by Luba Kassova, “The Missing Perspectives of Women in News”, women’s under-representation in the news is addressed through four main indicators: 1) the proportion of women in news organizations, 2) the proportion of women in newsgathering, 3) the proportion of women protagonists in stories, and 4) the proportion of stories devoted to gender equality. In the case of Cambodia, according to The Gender-in-Media Landscape Study (Cambodia) conducted by FOJO Media Institute in 2018, there were more men than women working in the media, including in management positions and female journalists have faced some levels of harassment while exercising their profession.

However, having more women in the newsroom is not enough to guarantee gender-sensitive reporting. The nature of news, the choices made about what is newsworthy, and the way the story is reported must change. Women need to be used more as the sources and subjects of stories. They need to be interviewed as commentators and experts. In Cambodia, the female population is more than half of the total population. Therefore, it is important for women and men not to be isolated in gender-based ghettos and avoid any separation on gender lines regarding who writes about what. All female and male journalists can play a role in changing attitudes towards women and break down gender-based stereotypes.



III. Objective

This gender-sensitive reporting guideline has been developed to support the media in their efforts to depict the Cambodian news content in a more gender-sensitive and gender-responsive manner, thus contributing to more inclusive and equal reporting of the experiences and the needs of women, girls, boys, men and others in neglected groups.

With this Gender-Sensitive Reporting Guideline, we aim to see more positive and empowered women representation in all forms of news media in Cambodia. Therefore, this guideline can contribute to the reduction of inequality, women's degradation and marginalization in Cambodia's society.



Photo courtesy to Voice of Democracy (VOD)

IV. Gender-Sensitive Reporting Guideline

The Gender-Sensitive Reporting Guideline is designed around four sections, each covering an aspect of gender-sensitive reporting:

- *Basic principles of the press*
- *Selection of sources and stories to achieve a balanced representation of women and men in media, which reflects the composition of society and human experiences*
- *Fair portrayal of women and men through the elimination of stereotypes.*
- *Use of gender sensitive language.*

4.1 Basic Principles of the Press

It is important to highlight the basic principles of the press in Gender-Sensitive Reporting guideline as a ground rule. Reporters or members of the media are responsible to provide citizens with accurate and verified information. They are strictly adhering to the seven core principles of journalism:

Accuracy	Get the facts right.
Independence	Do not act formally or informally on behalf of special interests. Declare anything that might constitute a conflict of interest.
Fairness	Provide context and present a range of competing perspectives to build trust and confidence in reportage.
Confidentiality	Protect confidential sources to maintain trust and keep them safe.
Humanity	Serve public interests and consider problems faced by disadvantaged groups.
Accountability	Correct errors promptly, prominently and sincerely; listen to the concerns of audiences and respond to them.
Transparency	In practice supports accountability and assists in the development and maintenance of trust in journalism.



4.2 Selection of sources and stories to achieve the balanced representation of women and men in media, reflecting the composition of society and human experiences

To achieve more gender equality in news media content, all media organizations including printed, broadcasting and online news media must: principles of journalism:

Work to achieve a balanced representation of women and men seen, heard, or read about in news and current affairs. Keep gender disaggregated data and set clear goals and indicators. Also, be mindful of including perspectives and voices from people typically overlooked by the media (e.g., marginalised women)

Present a balanced gender representation for news anchors and presenters in news media including in Television, Radio, and Online News and Talk show. More importantly, their role must be equal in presenting the news content or engaging in the discussion. For example, female news presenter or talk show moderator should also present in male-dominated areas politics and government, economic and business, war and conflicts, science and technology, sports, etc.

Work to achieve a balanced representation of women and men as the sources in the news media in all spheres of societies, including the often male-dominated areas, such as politics and government, economic and business, war and conflicts, science and technology, sports, etc.

Work to achieve a balanced representation of women and men as the sources of information, opinion, and expertise in the news (e.g., make sure you pay attention to involving women as experts and professionals, not only as “ordinary” persons or victims).

Ensure that your sources represent a range of opinions coming from diverse groups, including from often neglected groups (e.g., LGBTIQ+ group, persons with disabilities, ethnic communities, etc.). If relevant, consult women’s rights NGOs and other groups working on gender equality or representing the group in question to get a more balanced view.

Increase the proportion of stories focusing specifically on women or issues particularly relevant to women (e.g., gender-based violence, women’s rights, women’s achievements, etc.). Also, you need to pay attention to covering stories focusing on issues of gender equality/inequality (stories about specific cases of equality or inequality between women and men, relevant policies, legislative issues, programmes designed to promote gender equality).

4.3 Fair portrayal of women and men through the elimination of stereotypes

To ensure fair portrayal of women and men, all media organizations including printed, broadcasting and online news media must:

Present accurate information and descriptions regarding gender representations. Avoid stories with stereotypes, including openly sexist interpretations of women's characteristics and roles in society. Furthermore, do not make any gender-based assumptions, including in depiction of traditional feminine/masculine characteristics and male/female roles (e.g., do not present certain jobs or roles as only appropriate for, or held by, women or men, i.e., farmers are men and elementary teachers are women, or using common stereotypes reinforcing gender roles, e.g. portraying women as mothers, homemakers, etc.).

Address or present people fairly regardless of social roles which can perpetuate the notion that one gender is more suited than another. Do not represent females and males as possessing stereotypic gendered attributes and characteristics. For example, do not imply that girls are timid and boys are brave, males are admired for their accomplishments and women for their physical attributes, females are passive, and males are active. Equally, in the case of crime, violence, and disasters do not portray only women as victims and men as survivors.

Make sure you include stories that show multidimensional representations/portrayals of women and men (indicating a journalistic effort to challenge/counter gender-based stereotypes).

Avoid depiction of sexuality in all form of news contents including in text, audio, video, and images, particularly depicting women as sexual objects. Also, pay attention to having a balanced proportion of ads that show women and men appearing assertive rather than passive in any form of content, showing occupations of women and men in ads, etc.

Make sure you have a fair portrayal of women and men in commercial ads, commercial messages and images, trying to minimise ads for various product categories or services that stereotype or naturalise gender roles (e.g., household goods associated with cooking and cleaning, food, beverages, products for children, electronic goods; mainly women in services such as education, health, childcare, and men in banking and investment, real estate, sport events).



4.4 Use of gender sensitive language

Do (s)	Don't (s)
Choose gender-sensitive language title for people and occupations that promotes more inclusive and equitable representations for females and males. For example, use the term like worker in entertainment business rather than using the term KTV girl.	Avoid using certain titles for people and occupations which often reflect inequitable assumptions about males and females. For example, don't use term like KTV girl, sex workers
Be mindful and ethical when choosing the title for an article. The article title should present factual information that reflects the whole article.	Avoid using leading title to attract more readers, especially by presenting sexual arousing title (click bait).
The report shall use appropriate words or phrases in the news articles to promote cultured society.	Avoid using direct or indirect words or phrases to describe reproductive organs or any sexual activities, for entertainment, faulting, and down grading.
Describes the scene or people with factual narratives which can let the reader to draw her/his own conclusions. (show, don't tell)	Avoid including writer's opinion, judgement, emotional language and conclusion in the articles, especially regarding gender stance. For example, don't use terms like weary girl, beautiful woman, short woman, ugly, sexy lady etc. Do not assign motives to alleged perpetrators, such as lustful, jealous, and scorned.
The report shall be neutral and provide context and present a range of competing perspectives to build trust and confidence in reportage.	Avoid using provocative or hate speech or blame or fault to women or men in the article, especially for all violence that has happened to them. For example, the report shall refrain from adding personal insight or comments that clothing, lifestyle, profession, job, character, sexual orientation, time, or place of the crime may have played a role in violence.

Do (s)	Don't (s)
Media shall use appropriate and accurate language in order to uphold the dignity of the sources or the victims especially when describing disturbing or violence scene.	Avoid term like 'volatile relationship, lazy, shameless, adultery, strong sex drive' and other derogatory languages which is inappropriate especially when describing violence against women.
When referring to men or women make sure they are addressed in the same manner despite their relationship, profession, rank, etc.	Avoid using language that promote patronizes, or trivializes women, as well as to language that reinforces stereotyped images of both women and men. For example, don't use terms like "the little lady" or "better half" when referring to someone's spouse or wife.
Consent shall be introduced clearly and agreed between the reporter and the source before the interview begins, especially when describing disturbing or violence scene. This also applies to the use of quote, photo, audio, and video. For underage persons, the reporter should seek consent from their guardians or parents.	Avoid quoting or using any photo, audio, or video without consent, especially when your sources are underage, vulnerable, and disadvantage.
In an attempt to write an article on violence against women, the writer should consult with the Media Code of Conduct for Reporting on Violence against Women, a joint Prakas by the Ministry of Information and Ministry of Women Affairs.	Reporters shall not report in a way that describes in detail, shows or depicts in detail violent acts related to sexual assault that causes unnecessary distress to the victim, viewers or those involved.

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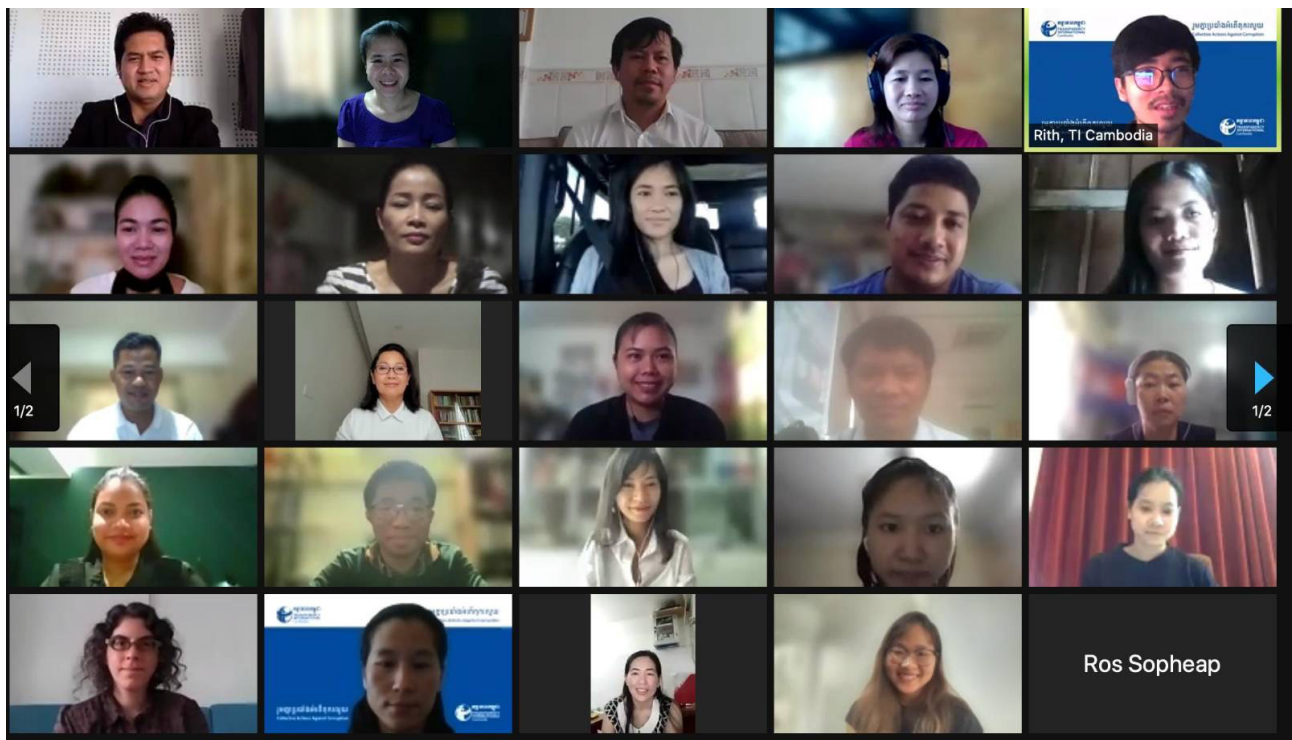
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Participants from media sector, government, academic and civil society who took the time to participate and provide crucial and critical inputs on the guideline in an online consultation workshop.

