



# HANDBOOK FOR MEDIA

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING  
ON SEXUAL AND  
GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV)

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SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV)**

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Handbook Author: **Amir Hamza Bangash**  
Editor: **Qamar Naseem and Sana Ahmad**  
Cover illustration: **Arsalan Ahmad**  
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This publication is intended to propose the best practices and ethical guidelines for media on SGBV reporting. The content expressed is based on international ethical standards of reporting and does not necessarily reflect the personal views of the Blue Veins and The Australian Government.

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## About this Handbook

This handbook aims to summarize the ethical and credible standards of reporting for journalists to help them to better understand the importance of sensitive and responsible reporting on sexual and gender-based violence in context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This handbook intends to equip media professionals with the ability to prioritize ethical standards of reporting on SGBV and promote the best public interest.

Blue Veins is implementing the project "Policy, Advocacy, and Research to Strengthen implementation of Pro-women legislation and improve SGBV Response Services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" in collaboration with Caritas Austria and funded by The Australian High Commission.

The project has been designed with three core objectives:

- To ensure SGBV survivors have improved access to justice due to improved services.
- To lobby with stakeholders to pass and fully implement Domestic Violence Bill, Child Marriage Restraint Amendment Bill in KP.
- To provide institutional support to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women and Women Parliamentary Caucus, and provide technical support for setting up system and structure.

Media is one of the key stakeholders, who has the potential to play a lead role in changing perceptions of sexual and gender-based violence that in turn can help galvanize a move for change. Blue Veins recognizes media have a critical role to play in ending sexual and gender-based violence. Media reporting on SGBV carries extra responsibility as media replay messages that render invisible the real causes of SGBV and how to address them in a responsible manner.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) has presented particular challenges to the media in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The silence surrounding these issues, cultural barriers and lack of information among general public contributes in hesitancy among the media professionals to expose all issues related to sexual and gender-based violence.

The content of these guidelines is based on international accepted good practices on ethical and professional reporting, as well as on numerous journalistic codes and policies that are practiced by the most influential and respected media outlets in the world.

We anticipate that this handbook will help in changing the culture of acceptance that surrounds sexual and gender-based violence by publishing articles about perpetrators and victims while taking into account ethical and credible standards of reporting. It is expected that the handbook will enable its audience to be informed about issues of sexual and gender-based violence and report incidents of SGBV in light of the principles mentioned in the handbook.

*“Generating reports and publishing it, is not only the role of media, but producing a story, following credible and ethical standards which protects the interest of public and transforms the public opinion to strengthen social change is equally important.”*

**Aftab Ahmad**

**Senior Sub-Editor “The News”**

## Executive Summary

Media has become one of the most important socializing influencers in people's lives. Negative and stereotype images of women in the media and the ways in which the media reports SGBV issues some time denotes acceptance of gender-based violence as a norm. We have observed with concern that each journalist brings to the newsroom his/ her views opinion, beliefs, and attitudes. These inform the way in which the journalist views a particular issue. Thus, the media is not a passive transmitter of information to society but a source of information that comes with value judgments. Because the media informs our understanding of issues, it has a critical role to play in processes of transformation.

Rates of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are staggeringly high. Media regularly reports different cases of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and is one of the key areas of interest to media but it is observed that often this reporting is sensational and does not take into account the best interests of the survivor/victim and does not reflect the SGBV as a wider social problem. Photographs and illustrations used in reporting SGBV cases often contain images and details of victims, survivors, and perpetrators which is not ethical and can undermine the safety, security, and well being of survivors and those who are supporting her/him.

It is important for media to take into account basic ethical and safety principles while reporting on SGBV cases as such reporting has a great potential to facilitates advocacy with policy makers on the relevant laws, their implementation and improve SGBV response services. The development of these guidelines is a major step toward improving ethical and safety considerations that preserve the safety, confidentiality, and dignity of survivors, their families, communities, and their supporters.

We believe that it is important for journalists to write about SGBV to break the silence around violence and do so in a way that is ethical, responsible and educational. Yet, regrettably, sometimes news about SGBV is published in an insensitive and inaccurate manner, thereby sensationalizing incidents of SGBV and fueling secondary victimization of survivors/victims. In developing this handbook, it is understood that journalists and editors work under immense pressure and challenge of "Exclusive or Breaking News" and that at times it may feel that ethics should take a backseat when reporting on a big breaking story.

We anticipate that these guidelines will facilitate all relevant stakeholders who are engaged in media reporting as these guidelines propose best practices for journalists and other media professionals who are reporting on SGBV issues in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

**Shaheen Quresh**  
**President (Blue Veins)**

## The Role of the Media and SGBV

While media has played a critical role in highlighting the plight of survivors, awareness raising and advocacy for the prosecution of SGBV cases, there are still many gaps that must be addressed for the media to effectively report SGBV cases without further marginalization of survivors, trivializing of SGBV and undermining investigation as well as prosecution of SGBV cases.

Sexual and Gender-based violence (SGBV) is often covered print and electronic media. Its prevalence in society makes it a 'hot topic' for media and its complex nature makes it an interesting issue for feature writers. However, the fact that gender-based violence is so complex can mean that even journalists with the best of intentions can misrepresent some of the issues and perpetuate myths that are harmful to those who experience SGBV and also to women more generally. On the other hand, good reporting can play a vital role in increasing understanding of gender-based violence and challenging its place in our society and many journalists and bloggers do produce high-quality work which confronts violence and gender inequality.

On several occasions, sexual and gender-based violence takes place within the home and the family and family pressure and attitudes ensure that it remains largely unreported. In recent years the issue of sexual and gender-based violence has gained greater visibility and the media has come a long way in terms of its reporting. By making gender-based violence more visible through the media, the press forces society to acknowledge it as a problem and to place pressure on policy makers to legislate against it and, where legislation already exists, to enforce such legislation. Sensitive reporting on gender-based violence can also help survivors or and others by providing them with the information they need to protect themselves or others or seek help and justice.

There is also an important role for features, analysis pieces and blogs that can provide greater analysis and understanding of the psychologies of gender-based violence in a way that will improve readers' understanding of both the actions and reactions of the survivor and the perpetrator.

While media cannot be alone hold accountable for societal perceptions on issues related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), we have the expectation that they are not complicit in reinforcing them. They also have the unique opportunity to use their power to change society's perceptions on key issues and even mobilize action.

## Understanding Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and its key types:

It is extremely important for a journalist to not only use the correct terminology while reporting on SGBV issues but at the same time should have a clear understanding of the issue so that they can report accurately and take an informed position. Reporting on sexual and gender-based violence is a very wide subject and cannot be covered in one handbook, but for the benefit of journalists, we are providing below a list of frequently used terms related to SGBV.

**SEXUAL and GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:** Violence against another person because of their sex and gender. The violence can be physical, sexual, psychological, economic or cultural. While SGBV is largely experienced as violence against women, it can affect all people, including men, transgender and intersex person).

**CONSENT:** means when someone unambiguously and voluntarily agrees to do something, fully understanding the consequences of their decision, and they do so without any coercion, such as the use of force or threats to their safety.

**INFORMED CONSENT:** To be distinguished from 'consent' above, as it refers specifically to the approval or assent when someone carefully understands the consequences of a decision and consents freely without any force.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:** A pattern of behavior which involves gender-based violence by one person against another in a domestic setting. It includes spouses, persons cohabiting, family members and children.

**INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE:** Intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of violence against women and includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and controlling behaviors by an intimate partner. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) occurs in all settings and among all socioeconomic, religious and cultural groups. The overwhelming global burden of IPV is borne by women while in countries like those that Pakistan IPV is also widely faced by transgender community.

**RAPE:** Non-consensual and unlawful sexual activity and usually sexual intercourse carried out forcibly or under threat of injury against a person's will. Rape is a form of physical violence, based on coercion and physical force without or against the will or consent of the person.

**COMPELLED RAPE:** A person is said to commit compelled rape, when he unlawfully and intentionally compels another person without their consent, through the use of threats or the use of force, to rape a third person.

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

**SEXUAL ASSAULT:** Illegal sexual contact that usually involves force upon a person without consent or is inflicted upon a person who is incapable of giving consent. Sexual assault' covers a wide range of unwanted sexual behaviors that are often used by offenders as a way to assert power and control over their victims.

**COMPELLED SEXUAL ASSAULT:** Similar to compelled rape, when a person unlawfully and intentionally compels, through the use of threats or the use of force, another person without their consent, to sexually assault a third person. In such a person is said to commit compelled sexual assault.

**SURVIVOR/VICTIM:** A person who has experienced sexual and gender-based violence is called survivor/victim. Whilst the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' are sometimes used interchangeably, 'victim' is a term most often used in the legal and medical sectors, while 'survivor' is a term generally preferred in the psychological and social support sectors.

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

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

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

**VERBAL ABUSE:** When someone repeatedly uses words to demean, frighten, or control someone, it's considered verbal abuse. Verbal abuse is a form of emotional abuse, including constant criticism, repeated insults and name-calling.

**CULTURAL/RELIGIOUS ABUSE:** When a person is harmed as a result of practices that are part of their culture, religion or tradition.

**ECONOMIC ABUSE:** When an individual has control over the access to economic resources, to which the other person is entitled under law or requires out of necessity, resulting being financially dependent. This form of abuse can be used as means to control the financial independence of individual.

**HARASSMENT:** Harassment is a form of discrimination. It includes any unwanted physical or verbal behavior that offends or humiliates another person. Harassment covers a wide range of behaviors of an offensive nature. Engaging in a pattern of conduct that induces fear of harm, upsets or disturbs another.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT:** Unwanted sexual advances or obscene remarks, including verbal and non-verbal conduct. Examples include touching, unwelcome jokes, whistling, rude gestures, unwanted questions about your sex life, requests for sex, staring at your body in an offensive way, or promising rewards in exchange for sexual favors, to name a few.

**FORCED MARRIAGE:** Forced marriage is the marriage of an individual against or without her or his will or consent.

**EARLY OR CHILD MARRIAGE:** Early or Child marriage is a form of marriage or union where one of the or both contracting parties are under the legal age of marriage prescribed by the law of the specific country.

**WOMEN TRAFFICKING:** Women trafficking includes all acts involved in the recruitment and/or transportation of a woman within and across national borders for work or services by means of violence, or threat of violence, abuse of authority or dominate position, debt bondage, sexual exploitation, deception, or other forms of coercion.

**INTIMIDATION:** Uttering or conveying a threat, or causing another to receive a threat, thereby inducing fear.

**PATRIARCHY:** A system within families, communities, society or government in which men hold the power while women and other gender diverse communities are largely excluded from it.

**INTER SECTION ALITY:** The overlap of different social identities related to systems of privilege or oppression, that, when intersecting, create a whole with multiple social identities, privileges and experiences of oppression, that is more complicated than each of the individual identities. These social identities can include gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and disability to name a few.

**HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES:** Cultural, social and religious customs and traditions that can be harmful to a person's mental or physical health. It is often used in the context of early/forced marriage, SWARA, Watta Satta, Ghag and others. Other harmful traditional practices affecting children include so-called "honour" crimes and dowry-related violence and others.

**FEMALE INFANTICIDE:** Sex selection typically occurs because of discrimination against women and girls and a systematic preference for boys. This can lead to neglect and/or discrimination against girls in access to care, food and other resources and in extreme cases to female infanticide.

**SON PREFERENCE:** Son preference refers to a whole range of values and attitudes which are manifested in many different practices, the common feature of which is a preference for the male child, often with concomitant daughter neglect. It may mean that a female child is disadvantaged from birth; it may determine the quality and quantity of parental care and the extent of investment in her development; and it may lead to acute discrimination, particularly in settings where resources are scarce. Although neglect is the rule, in extreme cases son preference may lead to gender-biased selective abortion or female infanticide

\*Please Note: The definitions provided here refer to commonly accepted international standards. Local and national legal systems may define these terms differently and/or may have other legally-recognized forms of GBV that are not universally accepted as GBV.

## Stereotyping Vs Reality about SGBV

### STEREOTYPING

Rape is always perpetrated by a stranger.

A woman can't be raped by her husband.

Only women can be raped.

The survivors was raped because s/he was wearing provoking (or other revealing clothing)

SGBV only affects poor and uneducated rural women.

People rape because of too much frustration in society

### REALITY

In most of the cases the perpetrator is known to the survivor

Forcing someone to have sex when they don't want to is rape, even if they are married or have had sex many times before.

Anyone can be raped, including men and gender non-conforming people.

Appearance and clothing have nothing to do with who is raped. Women are raped no matter what they wear: even children and elderly women are rape. Rape is the rapist's fault, not the survivor's, no matter what they are wearing.

SGBV can affect anyone regardless of race, class, ethnicity, religion, educational level, sexuality and gender.

Rape is not about sexual desire, but about gaining power and control over another person. Rape happens in all societies.

Perpetrators are mentally not stable and sick.

Perpetrators can come from any walk of life. They could be family members, influential figures in the community or anyone who does not conform to the stereotype of a perpetrator.

Survivors allow intimate partner/domestic violence to happen and they can easily leave if they really want to.

Many survivors are prevented from leaving violent relationships due to feelings of shame, guilt, lack of safe housing, economic dependency, and fear.

### **Why Many Cases of SGBV are not reported?**

Often the cases of SGBV are not reported to relevant authorities and there are several reasons that a person would not report a case of SGBV to the police or tell friends and family. These are considered to be barriers to reporting. Following are some of the barriers but are not limited to:

- **FEAR OF NOT BEING BELIEVED OR BEING ACCUSED OF LYING:** By their family, community, police, and the courts.
- **ACCESSABILITY OF POLICE STATIONS:** Particularly in rural areas, many survivors do not report a case as the police stations are either too far away or not friendly to women in terms of accessibility.
- **STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION:** The fear of social exclusion and ridicule by their family and community, and wanting to avoid being labelled as “Bad who does not care for their family honor”.
- **SHAME, GUILT, HUMILIATION AND EMBARRASSMENT:** Feelings that the incident was their fault and that they could have prevented it.
- **SECONDARY VICTIMISATION:** Reliving the trauma when reporting to police or medical personnel, and a lack of sensitivity and victim blaming by officials leading to re-traumatization.
- **INTIMIDATION:** The fear of reprisals instilled by the perpetrator. This is often coupled with a lack of confidence that the legal process will result in a conviction and ensure the safety of the survivor.
- **FEAR OF UPSETTING THE STABILITY OF THE FAMILY:** Wanting to keep the peace in the home and do not create a hostile situation for their dependent children.

- **ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY:** The fear of the loss of economic support by the perpetrator.
- **LACK OF INFORMATION:** Not knowing about the help that they can receive and are entitled to by law.
- **LACK OF TRUST IN POLICE:** The belief that the police will not take the incident seriously and will fail to investigate and solve the crime.
- **CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS BARRIERS:** Survivors remain in abusive relationships out of cultural and religious obligations. At times they are told to “pray about it” as a solution or resort to cultural means of resolving disputes (e.g. payment of damages by the perpetrator, jirgra and family members mediations).

## Guiding Principles for Media Professionals

- **USE OF SAFE LANGUAGE:**

It is important to avoid judgmental language as it could imply survivor blame. Also, forms of SGBV should not be presented as “normal” or part of the culture of the crisis-affected context. Unless justifiably relevant to the story, survivor and perpetrator ethnicities should not be reported. It is also recommended to avoid using the term “alleged” rape or sexual assault or referring to a survivor as an “accuser” as this could reinforce the disbelief that a crime actually occurred and has the potential to reinforce negative stereotypes.

Journalists should never report details that could put survivors at further risk. Names, photographs, or other identifying information of survivors, their family members, or even at times those actors who are providing assistance should not be used. Other information including certain specifics of the incident and the physical characteristics of the survivor may also put survivors and those helping them at risk and should be avoided. Any breaches to this best practice can put survivors' and their supporters lives at risk.

- **TRUST AND SAFEGUARDING PUBLIC INTEREST:**

Trust and public interest are the most important resources of the media. Print and electronic media play a significant role in strengthening social cohesion. Media in the Pakistani context is the main source of public information and it strengthens media credibility and reliability. Therefore, it is vital for the media to promote the public interest and ensure responsibility, professionalism, and transparency. The media should give top priority to safeguard public interest and is obliged to foster fairness, freedom, and a comprehensive approach to public matters. Media must meet with their responsibility to stimulate, strengthen, and defend the freedom of expression and the citizens' right to information.

- **ACCURACY AND VERIFICATION**

Accuracy is the most important journalistic principle and the foundation of ethical professional journalism. Before making a story on sexual and gender-based violence journalist should ensure that the information delivered is based on real facts, truth and verified by independent sources. A journalist should keep in mind five Ws of journalism: 'Who?', 'What?', 'When?', 'Where?' and 'Why?' (with the additional question of 'How?'). Good Journalists are expected to provide accurate and in-depth analyses that will enable citizens not only to know about the facts of the incident/issue but also the root causes and factors which support such incidents to take place. Such reporting has a great potential of bringing social change in society and triggering action.

- **PRIVACY**

Privacy is a human right and it implies to all citizens; every individual has a right to be left alone or to have control over unwanted publicity of their private and personal information. The media should respect privacy and should not violate it without good reason and public interest. It is extremely important for the media to fulfill the ethical, legal and regulatory obligations which require assessing a balance between privacy and the media's right to release public interest information. The media must establish balance between public interest in the freedom of expression and the citizens.

- **IMPARTIALITY**

While reporting on any issue/ incident of sexual and gender-based violence journalist should remain impartial at all times. This means that they refrain from showing bias toward any point of view or siding with one position over another when reporting or preparing a story for print, radio, or online. Journalists, like all individuals in society, have a right to their own privately held convictions, views, and opinions. However, they need to set them aside when performing their journalistic duties, as the public deserves fact-based reporting and information backed analyses.

Therefore, it is important that the journalist's personal views and opinion must not influence their practices, especially when covering contentious stories and issues. At the same time, the media has the responsibility to present views and opinions of a broad cross section of groups and individuals in society.

- **TRANSPARENCY**

Transparency is another principle of credible reporting. A journalist has the added responsibility to provide the viewers, listeners, and readers with a means to evaluate their journalistic output. Transparency about how they process and produce news and information is of key importance in this regard. Information sources only in exceptional circumstances, when deemed in the public interest, they can remain anonymous.

- **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Journalists should take responsibility for their work and must hold themselves accountable to their readers, listeners, and viewers. Being accountable and responsible is particularly important when it comes to feedback about whether the journalist has fulfilled the fundamental journalistic standards according to his or her audience— reporting impartially, providing reliable information, and protecting privacy. Like all other professions, mistakes and errors are also inevitable in journalism, but to correct them in a prompt and timely manner is vitally important. As a good practice journalists should learn from their mistakes and don't repeat them in the future. Journalists must conduct themselves in a professional manner when acknowledging their mistakes.

- **INDEPENDENCE OF EDITORIAL POLICY**

The media and journalists should be free of outside political, corporate, and other influence. The audience should have certainty that media is covering the issue with responsibility and is not under pressure or influence and does not have any personal interests. At the same time, there should be no limitations on journalists' convictions, beliefs, or interests when they are not performing their professional duties.

But at the same time media should adhere to ethical and professional standards. This also includes photo Journalists, video editors, and all other professionals involved. Owners should not interfere with media editorial policies. They must not use the media content for their own political, economic, or personal interests.

- **FAIRNESS**

The media should be fair and principled to their sources and collaborators, as well as to the audience. Media reporting should reflect the relevant facts of SGBV case and the important positions. Journalists are obliged to treat individuals, survivors, victims, perpetrators, institutions, events, and subject matters ethically and with due respect. The media and journalists are obliged to be open, honest, sincere, and fair towards their sources and audience. The media may act differently only if such actions are in the service of public interest, for instance, when treating matters of legal or security issues, or confidential information.

- **MINIMIZING HARM**

The media should present the realities and facts while keeping the balance as they have the responsibility to protect the vulnerable from harm and insult. In cases of violence, where the content involves material that might harm or offend part of the survivor/victim or perpetrator, the media should always demonstrate editorial responsibility, referring to the professional standards and codes of ethics. The media should avoid to publish or broadcast content that can harm the physical, mental integrity of any individual. Therefore, there is an additional responsibility for media to provide appropriate protection for the public/audience against offensive and harmful content and should always demonstrate editorial responsibility.

- **CONSULT SGBV EXPERTS**

The input of local SGBV experts will always increase the depth of understanding and accuracy of reporting by providing relevant contextual information. These experts are usually well-placed to support journalists

and other media professionals to ensure survivors' rights are protected. If there is ever a question of a story's potential for violating survivors' rights, these experts can also guide media professionals to ensure that they are presenting their story in such a way so as to not increase the risk of further abuse or retribution against survivors, their families, or others who are helping them get care.

- **PROVIDE INFORMATION ON LOCAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND ORGANIZATIONS WHO ARE ADDRESSING SGBV**

With the consent of service providers, media reports can include the contact information of local support organizations and services in order to allow survivors/witnesses, their families and others who may have experienced or been affected by SGBV to access the care they need. It is critical to obtain the consent of service providers prior to printing or broadcasting information on services. In countries where parties to the conflict have been implicated in perpetrating SGBV, media professionals must use caution to ensure that service-providing entities do not face retaliation or risk in result of their publicity.

- **REPORTING ON CHILDREN ISSUES**

Child issues and interaction with children is extremely important and sensitive for media as they often interact with them as contributors, collaborators, survivors, sources of information, actors, and hosts. The media has a responsibility to provide children and young people with interesting, exciting, educational content and help them make sense of the world they live in. The media should have well-defined policies in place to protect the welfare and dignity of children and young people contributing to their content. That implies protecting their right to express themselves, to state their opinions, and participate in public life, as guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

When including children and young people in media production, it is necessary to ensure that they will not suffer unnecessary anxiety or distress. Their participation must be clearly justified editorially when

required. Consent should be obtained in accordance with the position of the child/young person and the nature of their contribution to the production. It is necessary to ensure the physical and emotional development and dignity of the persons under the age of 18, and particularly protect children under 15 years of age during the preparation and delivery of information/programming and internet content, regardless of whether their parents, legal guardians or other responsible adults have given permission.

Except in very limited circumstances, journalists or other media professionals should avoid any direct interviews with children. If an interview is required for the story, in addition to applying all of the principles described above, the following steps should be taken when it comes to children:

- 1) The interview should never take place without another adult being present. The adult would normally be a parent, but might be someone else who is acting in the place of a parent, such as a teacher, or someone working for a children's protection agency.
- 2) Older children can speak for themselves, but there is a danger that even young people in their teens may be misled or make a snap decision they later regret. Journalists should consider whether even older teenagers properly understand how material is to be used and whether they can give informed consent. Indeed, the older the child, the more necessary it is to explain the use of material fully and let them make a decision.
- 3) If media is convinced that no harm will be caused and that it is in the best interest of the child, they must receive consent from the child's parent or legal guardian and even if there is such consent children should be asked about the consent too. Even if the parent/guardian has agreed, the child has the final say.

### **Guidelines for conducting interview with SGBV survivors/victims:**

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence occurs in variety of forms of violent acts and affects the survivor/victims across their life cycle. In result of the degrading and violence acts of SGBV, Survivors/victims not only experience physical violence but they may experience a range of psychological and social consequences of GBV, including shame, guilt, depression, isolation, abandonment and abuse by the people around them. There are several recognized guiding principles to be observed for the media principles while interviewing a GBV survivor or victim. Purpose of these guiding principles is to prevent human rights violation and not to do harm either directly or indirectly to the interviewee and also to generate ethical and good reporting.

Following are the guiding principles and tips for the media persons to be observed during/ before and after the interview:

- **PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is very important for the interviewer to keep respect for interviewee's (survivor/victim) privacy and confidentiality before, during and after the interview. Before conducting the interview, interviewee should be informed about the context and content of the interview and ask how they would like to be identified. Not only the identity but also the data provided or shared during the interview should also be protected and maintained with strict confidentiality. In some serious nature cases of GBV like rape, sexual assault, or attempt to murder etc. disclosure of data can put the survivor or victim at further danger or risk.

- **INFORMED CONSENT**

For ethical and good reporting, it is important to obtain prior consent from the interviewee. Informed consent is the interviewee's agreement to be interviewed and the informed consent can be ensured only when the interviewee has been provided, prior to the interview, details about the outreach of the interview and how and for what it will be used. To ensure the safety, dignity and privacy of the interviewee, required elements of the

informed consent needs to be ensured including the disclosure of the purpose, content and use of interview, voluntary willingness to be interviewed and outreach of the interview. To safeguard the authenticity, it is better to take consent in written form. In case of children, young people, people with mental illness or any other disability consent should be taken from guardian.

- **SUPPORT AND FACILITATE THE INTERVIEWEE**

It is a moral obligation for the interviewer to help and facilitate the interviewee (survivor/victim) before and during the interview to make them feel more comfortable by explaining the interview process. To make it sure that the survivor or victim shares the detail without any pressure whole interview process should be explained to him/her, outline the areas you want to discuss in advance of the interview, giving the interviewee enough time to prepare. If interviewee wants to be accompanied by some else for the support, he/she should be allowed to have them whom they trust and who can act as a survivor advocate.

- **SAFE AND APPROPRIATE PLACE FOR INTERVIEW**

The guiding principles to conduct safe and ethical interview with a survivor/victim especially when an interviewee is woman or child, requires that the interview should be conducted at appropriate and safe place. To consider the requirements of safety and confidentiality issues of interviewee, they should be contacted before interview to recommend a safe location and time for them. It should be the priority for every individual to avoid exposing the (survivor/victim) to further abuse.

- **BE PREPARED BEFORE THE INTERVIEW**

Survivor or victim of Sexual and Gender Based Violence faces range of challenging consequences including psychological, mental, physical and social effects. It is important for the interviewer to be prepared before interview about the impacts of SGBV has on survivors or victims and trauma they may be experiencing. This will aid in compassion and sensitivity of the interviewer when interviewing them.

For effective interview, reporters should familiarize their selves with as much background as possible of the issue and its impacts.

- **USAGE OF PHOTOS OR VIDEOS**

Interviews with the survivors or victims of violent acts of the Sexual and Gender Based Violence requires special consideration and preparation. A fundamental principle of interviewing any survivor is doing no harm to the survivor or putting at risk either directly or indirectly. It should be ethical practice of interviewer to take a written consent before interview from the survivor either they want to be captured or not. Any use of images or videos should present the subject in a way that upholds their dignity and generality. As a guiding principle, always ensure that your approach, content and attitude before, during and after the interview respect the dignity and human rights of your interviewee.

- **RESPECT AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE DIFFERENCES**

It is important to understand that each survivor or victim has different and individual experiences of SGBV based on their sex, gender identity, economic status, marital status, age, disability, social and economic status and other locations. For an effective reporting and interviews, it is important to understand the differences and respect the information and individual experiences everyone shares during interview.

- **DIFFERENCE OF GENDER OR SEX**

Taking into consideration the difference of sex or gender between the interviewer and interviewee is also one of the guiding principles. Differences of sex and gender has great impact on communication style and interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. Woman survivor or victim may not feel comfortable to be interviewed by male interviewer.

- **RESPECT THE INTERVIEWEES WILLINGNESS AND RIGHTS**

An interviewee cannot be forced or pressurized to answer or respond to each question or explore every information. Survivor has a right to choose

when and what to share. Let the survivor share the amount of information that they are comfortable with. The more comfortable they will be, which will allow for a better interview.

- **AVOID PARTIALITY, INSENSITIVE QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS**

Questions, comments and content of the interview should not be insensitive to the cultural and social values and norms. Interviewer should avoid asking insensitive or irrelevant questions or showing judgmental reaction or response to the answers or information explored by the interviewee. Social and cultural sensitivity and of the issue should be taken into account at the time of interview. Interviewer should maintain non-judgmental interaction throughout the interview to ensure effective and ethical reporting.

- **INTERVIEW WITH CHILDREN**

While interviewing a child survivor or victim, exceptional consideration, care and measures needs to be taken to ensure safety of child victim/survivor. Children survivors cannot be discriminated on the basis of their age, sex, gender, race, social or economic background, education, or any other status. Interview with child survivor must be conducted more carefully and with respect. Best interest and safety of child should be the priority. Judgmental comments, behavior and questions should be avoided. Informed consent in written form should be taken from minor or their legal guardian. Capacity and state of mind of the children as per their age should also be considered for interview. The child interviewee who has suffered a trauma of any violent act cannot be coerced to answer every question or for story telling of hate their have suffered. Especially when interviewee is a victim of sexual abuse, exploitation or other physical abuse and there is a high possibility that the interview or coverage can cause further harm or mental distress. Because such incidents have bad impacts on psychological health of children.

- **ENDING THE INTERVIEW AT GOOD NOTE**

Once the interview is done it is important to take into trust the interviewee by ending it at good and positive note and allowing them to review their answers. After all the questions has been addressed, interviewee should be assured that you bring the conversation back to the safe area and for safe use. Keep a follow up of the issue and ensure the safety and confidentiality of the information and data shared for the best interest of the interviewee.

### **Recommendations for reporting on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:**

- Frame gender-based violence as a gender equality and human rights abuse.
- Use of language is key e.g. use survivor not victim unless it is a murder or self-identification.
- Do not sensationalize or minimize the crime.
- Do not reinforce negative gender stereotypes e.g. walking alone, drinking, sexual history.
- Include information on helplines and prevention and response services – local and national if possible.
- Include a trigger warning for material where sexual and gender-based violence is depicted or described in detail.
- Sexual and gender-based violence is cross-cultural and can happen to anyone, anywhere.
- Take time to research and understand the issues, consult with experts and survivors, use up to date statistics – try to contextualize the incident within wider patterns and prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence, and include expert commentary from academics or organisations working on the issues.
- Ensure the safety of survivors at all times e.g. if interviewing, do not print name etc. and all details of crime.
- Do not identify survivors fully by age and job, described their injuries and attempt to re-construct the abuse in question, without their consent or publish a photo of them.
- Try to report more fully on successful prosecutions and successful recovery of survivors.

### **Working with the Editors**

While it is very important to sensitize journalists' reporters on ethical reporting on sexual and gender-based violence, it is equally important to engage and sensitize the editors, as they are the ones who edit their words, decide where the story is placed and write the headline that goes above it. It is very important for editors to be sensitized about the various dynamics of sexual and gender-based violence and also the various social and commercial forces which influence their decision-making process.

### **Personal well-being of journalists is important**

Coping with the trauma for journalists who report on SGBV is very important as it influences their personal wellbeing and mental health. Usually, there is a little trend of talking about the journalist wellbeing but it is important because like anyone else, journalists are affected by what they witness in the course of their duties. For many journalists and reporters reporting on sexual and gender-based violence can be traumatic, especially where children are involved and journalists need some coping mechanism to deal with the stress. Stress that goes unmanaged can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological challenges.

The starting point is to acknowledge that person working on sensitive issues have witnessed something that has deeply affected him/her and to identify the positive coping mechanism that works best for a person. This may involve confiding in someone trustable, prayer or meditation, or seeking counseling. In recognition of the devastating impact that trauma can have on their reporters, media houses needs to offer counseling services to their staff.

## Conclusion

Media as a key stakeholder in prevention and eradication of sexual and gender-based violence has an extra responsibility and great influence in the society and they should use their potential wisely to ensure that public discussions which take place in media and the reports covering various forms of SGBV are accurate and sensitive to the needs of survivors as well as of the perpetrator. To ensure ethical and credible reporting on the issue, it is very important for the media persons to take into account numerous factors as explained in this handbook, when covering and reporting on SGBV in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

We anticipate that this handbook will significantly provide its readers the necessary guidance and resources to report responsibly on SGBV and sensitively interview a SGBV survivor.

## ANNEXURE

### PEMRA Code Of Conduct

According to Electronic Media (Programs and Advertisements) Code of Conduct, 2015:

#### **(3) Fundamental principles: —**

The licensee shall ensure that:

- (1) No content is aired which—
  - (a) is against the Islamic values, ideology of Pakistan or founding fathers of the nation including Quaid-e-Azam and Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal;
  - (b) incites or condones dislodgement of democratic setup against the command of the constitution of Pakistan, provided that discussions on improvement of democracy shall constitute a fair comment.
  - (c) includes a call to arms against the Federation of Pakistan or anything against the integrity, security and defense of Pakistan;
  - (d) passes derogatory remarks about any religion, sect, community or uses visuals or words contemptuous of religious sects and ethnic groups or which promote communal and sectarian attitude or disharmony;
  - (e) contains anything indecent, obscene or pornographic.
  - (f) contains abusive comment that incites hatred and contempt against any individual or group of persons, on the basis of race, caste, nationality, ethnic or linguistic origin, color, religion, sect, gender, age, mental or physical disability;
  - (g) is in violation of copyrights or other related property rights as protected under any law for the time being in force;

- (h) is likely to incite, aid, abet, glamorize or justify violence, commission of any crime, terror or leads to serious public disorder;
- (i) is known to be false; or there exist sufficient reasons to believe that the same may be false beyond a reasonable doubt;
- (j) contains aspersions against the judiciary or armed forces of Pakistan:
- (k) amounts to intimidation, blackmail or false incrimination of any person;
- (k) is defamatory as defined in the law for the time being in force; or
- (l) depicts behavior such as smoking, alcohol consumption, narcotics and drug abuse as glamorous or desirable:

Provided that where showing of smoking, alcohol consumption, narcotics and drug use is necessary for dramatic or educational purposes, a clear warning as to injurious effects of the same shall also be shown simultaneously.

(2) Without prejudice to any other restrictions in this regard, while reporting the proceedings of the Parliament or a Provincial Assembly, such portion of the proceedings as the Chairman of Senate, the Speaker of National Assembly or, as the case may be, Speaker of the Provincial Assembly may have ordered to be expunged, shall not be broadcast or distributed and every effort shall be made to release a fair account of the proceedings.

(3) Statements of proscribed organizations or their representatives or members shall not be aired unless such statement is an admission which maybe in the larger public interest for exposing ideology, abuse of religion or barbarianism provided always that such broadcast does not in any way aid, abet, glorify or give excuse to their means and ways in any shape or form.

(4) Private behavior, information, correspondence and conversation should not be brought into public domain unless there is a public interest that outweighs the protection of privacy

**4. News and current affairs programmes: —**

The licensee shall ensure that: -

- 1) News, current affairs or documentary programmes shall present information in an accurate and fair manner.
- 2) Any political or analytical programme, whether in the form of a talk show or otherwise, shall be conducted in an objective manner ensuring representation of the concerned parties and the guests shall be treated with due respect.
- 3) Programmes on sub-judice matters may be aired in informative manner and shall be handled objectively:

Provided that no content shall be aired, which tends to prejudice the determination by a court, tribunal or any other judicial or quasi-judicial forum.

- 4) News shall be clearly distinguished from commentary, opinion and analysis.
- 5) Unnecessary details and footages of gory scenes including bloodshed and dead bodies shall not be aired.
- 6) Content based on extracts of court proceedings, police records and other sources shall be fair and correct.
- 7) In talk shows or other similar programmes, the licensee and its employees shall ensure that:
  - a) information being provided is not false, distorted, or misleading and relevant facts are not suppressed for commercial, institutional or other special interests;
  - b) the programme is conducted in an objective and unbiased manner;
  - c) programme does not debase or demean a person or group of persons;

d) does not intrude into private life, grief or distress of individuals unless such individual is a public figure and such intrusion is justified in the public interest.

- 8) Any personal interest of a reporter or presenter which may call into question due impartiality of the programme shall be disclosed prior to airing of the programme through an appropriate disclaimer.
- 9) News or any other programme shall not be aired in a manner that is likely to jeopardize any ongoing inquiry, investigation or trial.
- 10) **Editorial oversight:** The licensee shall ensure that its representatives, hosts and producers of the programme shall discuss and review the contents of the programme prior to programme going on air / being recorded, and ensure that its contents conform to, in letter and spirit, this Code of Conduct.

**5. Programming mix and live coverage:** — No licensee shall broadcast any live programme unless there is an effective delaying mechanism put in place in order to ensure effective monitoring and editorial control in conformity with this Code.

**6. Conflict of interest:** — The Licensee shall ensure that all those responsible for content development do not take prior advantage of information gained in the course of their professional duties for private gain, including but not limited to programs relating to stock market and financial matters.

**4. Plagiarism: — The licensee shall ensure that: -**

- 1) Its functionaries, particularly those who are responsible for content design do not indulge in plagiarism and where content is borrowed from another source, appropriate credit shall be given to such source.
- 2) In all programmes where facts and figures are referred to, the source thereof should be quoted for the purpose of credibility of programmes. In case of no known source, appropriate clarification shall be made by the hosts.

**8. Coverage of incidents or accidents, violence and crime: —**

The licensee shall ensure that: -

- 1) Coverage of incidents of accidents, violence and crime shall not incite, glamorize or in any way promote violence or anti-social behavior and such coverage does not prejudice the success of an ongoing security operation.
- 2) Appropriate warning shall be given up front for content which may be potentially disturbing or upsetting so as to enable viewers to make an informed choice.
- 3) Scenes with violence or suffering such as close-up shots of persons brutally tortured or killed shall not be shown.
- 4) reporting of incidents of crime, accident, natural disaster or violence does not create hurdles in dispensation of the duties of the law enforcement agencies, rescue agencies, hospitals and doctors, etc.
- 5) Extreme caution shall be exercised in handling themes, plots or scenes that depict sex offence and violence, including rape and other sexual assaults.
- 6) Identity of any victim of rape, sexual abuse, terrorism or kidnapping or such victim's family shall not be revealed without prior permission of the victim or victim's guardian where victim is a minor.
- 7) During any ongoing rescue or security operation, identity and number of victims or other important information shall not be revealed unless the same is warranted by the rescue or security agency incharge of the operation.
- 8) there is no live coverage of any ongoing security operation by the law enforcement agencies and licensee shall air only such information as may be warranted by the security agency incharge of the operation.
- 9) Licensee shall not air head money or bounty other than announced by the competent authority.
- 10) Licensee shall ensure that coverage of the activities in conflict zone are carried out in accordance with the guidelines issued by the concerned law enforcement agencies.

- 11) Licensee shall not air speculative or biased reporting that may compromise any security operation.
- 12) Licensee shall ensure that any of its reporter, camera man or other crew does not enter the area where security operation is being carried out without prior permission of the security agency incharge of the operation.
- 13) Licensee shall provide necessary protection gear and training to its reporters, cameramen and other crew deployed for coverage of any crime incident or conflict zone.

**9. Re-enactment: —**

- 1) Dramatic re-enactment shall ensure same rigors as required for a factual programme reporting crime.
- 2) Re-enactment of any sex crime shall not be allowed.
- 3) Standards in respect of entertainment programmes, relating to obscenity and gory scenes shall apply to such re-enactment also.

**10. Religious tolerance and harmony: —** Licensee shall ensure that:

- 1) The programmes aired by it do not contain any derogatory statement or visual which is likely to lead to bias, hatred or disharmony with reference to any religion, sect, community or ethnic group.
- 2) Beliefs and practices of any faith are described accurately when discussed and interfaith harmony is promoted at all times.
- 3) No programme or comment is aired which incites or condones acts of violence and encourages violation of law in the name of religion, sect, community or ethnic group or any other pretext.

**11. Privacy and personal data protection: —**

The licensee shall ensure that: -

- 1) Door stepping for factual programmes does not take place unless a request for an interview has been refused and door stepping is warranted by identifiable public interest.

**Explanation:** — Door stepping means the filming or recording of an interview or attempted interview with someone or announcing that a call is being filmed or recorded for broadcast purposes without any prior warning.

2) no interviews are conducted or attempted to be conducted without consent of the interviewee, save in public interest.

**12. Protection of children:** — (1) Programmes and advertisements meant for children shall not—

- a) Be presented in a manner which may be disturbing or distressing to children or which may in any way adversely affect their general well being;
- b) be frightening or contain violence; or
- c) be deceptive or misleading or against commonly accepted social values;

(2) The licensee shall include appropriate warning through a disclaimer before airing any content that may not be suitable for children.

(3) Due care must be taken over the physical and emotional welfare and the dignity of persons under eighteen years of age who take part or are otherwise involved in programmes. This is irrespective of any consent given by the participant or by a parent, guardian or other person over the age of eighteen years in loco parentis.

**13. Language:** — The licensee shall ensure that: -

Content shall maintain proper standards of language.

(2) Abusive or vulgar language shall be prohibited.

(3) If an abuse takes place that contains language or gesture that is considered apology worthy by the licensee and its representative, the representative must ask the guest to apologize immediately after the offense has taken place.

**14. Advertisements:** — It would be responsibility of the Licensee that:

- 1) Advertisements shall be in conformity with the laws for the time being in force.
- 2) Advertisements intended for children shall not directly ask the children to buy the product.
- 3) Advertisements shall not promote obscenity, violence or other activities harmful to human health or property.
- 4) Advertisements of any alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, illegal drugs or narcotics shall not be aired.
- 5) Any health-related advertisement shall not be aired without prior permission of the Federal Government or Provincial Government, as the case may be, as required under the relevant applicable laws and the advertisement so aired after obtaining necessary permission shall strictly comply with the terms and conditions of the permission.
- 6) Advertisements of lotteries, gambling or betting as prohibited under Pakistan Penal Code (Act XLV of 1860) or any other law for the time being in force shall not be aired.
- 7) A licensee shall not advertise or promote black magic, quackery or superstition.
- 8) Exploitation of religious or nationalistic sentiments and use of religious or national symbols and anthem purely for the purposes of promotion of a product or any quality in such product shall be prohibited.
- 9) Advertisements shall be readily recognizable as such and kept separate from programmes.
- 10) Advertisements in the form of subtitles, logos or sliding texts shall not exceed a maximum of one tenth of the whole screen.
- 11) Advertisements relating to telemarketing, teleshopping or other offers to make phone calls shall conspicuously identify the applicable charges inclusive of all taxes.

**15. Responsibility for advertising: —**

- 1) Licensee shall be held liable for airing of illegal or prohibited advertisements.
- 2) A sponsor, advertiser or other authority shall not influence the content of a programme in such a way as to impair the responsibility and editorial independence of the broadcaster.

**16. Programmes and advertisements to comply with the local laws: —**  
Licensee shall ensure that: -

- 1) Programmes and advertisements comply with the laws for the time being in force.
- 2) Where prior permission for airing of any advertisement or programme is required to be obtained under any law, such advertisement or programme shall not be aired unless requisite prior permission has been obtained.

**17. Monitoring committee: —** Licensee shall comply with this Code and appoint an in-house monitoring committee under intimation to the PEMRA to ensure compliance of the Code.

**18. Errors and corrigendum: —** Where any false news or information is aired, the licensee shall acknowledge and correct it on the same medium without any delay in the same manner and magnitude as that of the false news or information was aired. The corrigendum shall be aired at appropriate time.

**19. Facts and opinion: -** The licensee shall ensure that: -

- 1) If during a talk show or news show a guest makes or asserts an opinion that is presented as a fact, on a serious issue, the channel and or its representative must intervene and protect the audience by clarifying this is an opinion and not a fact.
- 2) If the host / moderator is giving his or her own opinion, he or she must also clarify that this is a personal opinion and not a fact.

**20. Responsibility for compliance and training of employees:**

- 1) It shall remain the sole responsibility of the Licensee to ensure that the content aired by it complies with the Code.
- 2) Licensee shall arrange for regular training of its employees that may be helpful in performing their duties better.

**21. Public interest:** - A programme may be considered in the public interest if it:

- i. exposes or detects crime;
- ii. exposes significant anti-social behavior;
- iii. exposes corruption or injustice;
- iv. protects people's health and safety;
- v. prevents people from being misled by any statement or an individual or organization; or
- vi. discloses information that assists people to better comprehend or make decisions on matters of public importance.

**22. Airing of any allegations etc.:-**

- 1) Licensee shall not air any allegation against any person or organization unless the licensee has credible information justifying such allegation and a fair opportunity to defend such allegation has been provided to the person or organization against whom allegation is being leveled.
- 2) Where a serious allegation has been made by a guest and the accused is not available despite reasonable effort, the licensee shall adhere to the principle of innocent unless proven guilty, and the channel's representatives will, to the best of their ability, represent the accused point of view and defense.
- 3) Licensee shall ensure that reasonable opportunity of defense and reply is provided to any person or organization against any allegation leveled against such person or organization.
- 4) With regard to serious accusations, the licensee shall not allow any deceptive or misleading mode or manner to portray any material as evidence of wrongdoing or that which is otherwise not evidence at all.

**23. Hate speech: -**

- 1) Licensee shall ensure that hate speech by any of its employees or any guest in a programme is not aired.
- 2) The licensee shall not relay allegations that fall within the spectrum of hate speech, including calling someone anti-Pakistan, traitor, or anti-Islam.
- 3) Where hate speech is resorted to by any guest, the channel and its representative must stop the participant and remind him and the audience that no one has the authority to declare any other citizen as a Kafir or enemy of Pakistan, Islam or any other religion.

**Explanation: -** Hate speech includes any expression that may incite violence, hatred or discrimination on the basis of religion, ethnicity, color, race, gender, origin, caste, mental or physical disability.

**24. Standards of behavior: -**

- 1) This Code presents the standards to be complied with by all the licensees and it shall always be the sole responsibility of the licensee to ensure the content aired by it. is in compliance with the Code of Conduct.
- 2) This Code represents an affirmative declaration of understanding and compliance with basic values and objectives that licensees, including its employees and officials shall adhere to, and these shall be observed in letter and spirit.

### Sources:

- 1) Unless otherwise noted, these Guidelines have been adapted from two key resources: Reporting guidelines to protect at-risk children, UNICEF ([http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_tools\\_guidelines.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_tools_guidelines.html)) and IFJ
- 2) Guidelines for Reporting on Violence Against Women, Ethical Journalism Initiative (<http://ethicaljournalisminitiative.org/en/contents/ifj-guidelines-for-reporting-on-violence-against-women>)
- 3) Guidelines on Ethical Journalism and Quality Reporting (Verein freies radio Wien)
- 4) Reporting on Sexual Violence: A Guide for Journalists, MNCASA, [http://www.mncasa.org/index\\_451\\_3523309454.pdf](http://www.mncasa.org/index_451_3523309454.pdf),
- 5) [www.unicef.org/media/media\\_tools\\_guidelines.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_tools_guidelines.html)
- 6) Managing Gender-based Violence Programs in Emergencies, E-learning Companion Guide, UNFPA
- 7) Reporting on Gender-Based Violence: A Guide for Journalists and Editors (Health News and Smoke Gender Justice)
- 8) How should journalists report gender-based violence (bristolzerotolerance)
- 9) <http://www.chitaskforce.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Chicago-Taskforce-Media-Toolkit.pdf>
- 10) <https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/resources/Full-version-of-Handle-With-Care.pdf>

- 11) <https://library.witness.org/product/guide-to-interviewing-survivors-of-sexual-and-gender-based-violence/>
- 12) PEMRA Regularity Act 2015

