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MEDUSA



REWRITING MEDIA NARRATIVES ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Inclusive Communication and Intercultural Sensitivity

Professional Learning Suite
For Journalists and Communication Professionals

Section: LANGUAGE

Module No. 4

by: INDEPCIE sca

INDEPCIE

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1. Why this subject matter

Inclusive communication and intercultural sensitivity are essential competences for journalists and communication professionals, particularly when reporting on gender-based violence (GBV). Media narratives do not exist in a vacuum: they are shaped by cultural assumptions, social norms, and dominant perspectives that influence how stories are framed, interpreted, and shared with the public.

When journalists fail to recognize cultural diversity and intersectionality, reporting may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes, exclude marginalized voices, or overlook important dimensions of victims' experiences.

This is especially relevant in GBV reporting, where factors such as ethnicity, migration status, religion, socio-economic background, disability, or language barriers can influence both the experience of violence and access to support systems.
Media coverage also plays a crucial role in determining whose stories are visible, whose perspectives are heard, and whose experiences remain underrepresented. Journalists who lack intercultural awareness may unintentionally rely on cultural assumptions, simplify complex realities, or frame communities through narrow or stereotypical narratives.

Developing intercultural sensitivity enables journalists to:

- recognize how cultural contexts influence experiences and perceptions of violence;
- avoid ethnocentric interpretations and “othering” narratives;
- identify gaps in representation and include diverse perspectives;
- report on migration, cultural diversity, and intersectional identities with accuracy and respect;
- contribute to a more inclusive and socially responsible public discourse.

By adopting an interculturally sensitive approach, journalists can produce more accurate, balanced, and representative coverage, ensuring that diverse communities are portrayed fairly and that public understanding is informed by context rather than assumptions.”

2. Learning Outcomes



01

Recognize and critically **reflect on** their own **cultural biases** and assumptions in communication practices.

02

Apply **inclusive communication strategies** that take into account cultural diversity, migration experiences and intersectional identities when reporting on gender-based violence.

03

Analyze media narratives to **identify exclusion**, **stereotyping**, **underrepresentation**, and the absence of diverse voices in coverage related to cultural diversity and intersectionality.

3. Definitions

Inclusive communication refers to the use of language, narratives, and communication practices that respect diversity, avoid discrimination, and ensure that individuals and communities are represented fairly, accurately, and respectfully.

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Intersectionality refers to the way different aspects of a person's identity—such as gender, ethnicity, migration status, religion, disability, age, or socio-economic background—interact and influence their experiences, opportunities, and access to support.

Together, these competences enable journalists and communication professionals to report on gender-based violence in ways that are inclusive, culturally aware, and representative of the diversity that exists within contemporary societies.

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4. Cultural Diversity and Representation in Media

Media coverage plays an important role in **shaping public understanding** of gender-based violence. However, not all experiences receive the same visibility. Certain groups may be overrepresented through stereotypes, while others remain largely invisible.

Journalists influence public perception not only through the information they include, but also through the voices they choose to amplify. Questions such as “Who is speaking?”, “Who is being represented?” and “Who is missing from the story?” are essential for inclusive reporting.

Women affected by gender-based violence may experience **additional barriers** linked to migration status, ethnicity, religion, disability, language, or social exclusion. When these factors are ignored, media coverage can provide an incomplete picture of reality.

Inclusive journalism seeks to reflect the diversity of experiences within society, ensuring that underrepresented communities are neither stereotyped nor excluded from public narratives.



5. Cultural Assumptions and Intercultural Communication

Journalists, like all individuals, interpret events through cultural frameworks shaped by their own experiences, values, and social environments. Without reflection, these assumptions can influence reporting choices and affect how audiences understand a story.

Some common challenges include:

- **Ethnocentrism**: interpreting situations primarily through one's own cultural perspective.
- **Cultural framing**: explaining events according to dominant cultural norms while overlooking alternative perspectives.
- **Othering**: portraying individuals or communities as fundamentally different, distant, or outside the perceived social norm.
- **Cultural essentialism**: presenting culture as the primary explanation for behaviour while ignoring broader social, economic, legal, or structural factors.

Developing intercultural sensitivity helps journalists recognise these tendencies and approach stories with greater openness, curiosity, and contextual awareness

Typical Errors in Journalistic Practice

Typical errors include:

- **Othering language:** portraying people primarily through labels such as nationality, migration status, or ethnicity.
- **Cultural stereotyping:** reducing complex realities to simplified cultural explanations.
- **Missing voices:** relying exclusively on institutional sources while excluding community perspectives.
- **Single-story framing:** presenting an entire community through one dominant narrative.
- **Erasure of diversity:** ignoring the multiple identities and experiences that shape people's lives.

5. Impact on Media Narratives on Gender-Based Violence

When intercultural sensitivity is lacking, media coverage may:

- reinforce stereotypes about migrants, ethnic minorities, or religious communities;
- associate violence with particular cultures while overlooking broader structural factors;
- contribute to the marginalisation of underrepresented groups;
- exclude important perspectives from public debate;
- create distorted perceptions of entire communities.

For example, cases involving migrant women may be presented primarily as cultural issues rather than as manifestations of gender-based violence that occur across all societies. Such framing can reinforce prejudice while obscuring the complexity of the problem.

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6. Positive reframing

Inclusive and interculturally sensitive journalism involves:

- Using precise and respectful language.
- Providing cultural and social context without oversimplification.
- Including diverse voices and community perspectives.
- Consulting experts with intercultural knowledge when relevant.
- Recognising intersectionality and diversity within communities.
- Challenging stereotypes rather than reproducing them.
- Reflecting the complexity of social realities.
- Asking not only what happened, but also whose perspectives are represented and whose are missing.





8. Case study

A national newspaper reports on a case of gender-based violence involving a recently arrived refugee woman. The article repeatedly highlights her nationality and cultural background. The report includes statements from police officers, politicians and legal experts, but does not include any voices from refugee organisations, intercultural mediators, women's associations, or members of the affected community. The article suggests that violence is common in her culture but provides little social or structural context.

Discussion

- Which voices are represented in the story?
- Which perspectives are missing?
- How is culture being framed?
- Does the article risk reinforcing stereotypes about a community?
- How could the story be made more inclusive and interculturally sensitive?
- What additional voices could improve the quality and inclusiveness of the coverage?



9. Practical Exercises

01
Who is missing frome the story?

Objective: To develop the ability to identify whose voices, perspectives, and experiences are represented—or excluded—in media coverage of gender-based violence.

Duration: 40 minutes

Materials:
- News article related to gender-based violence
- Representation Analysis Worksheet
- Flipchart or whiteboard
- Markers

Instructions (step-by-step):

1. The facilitator provides participants with a news article reporting on a case of gender-based violence involving individuals from diverse cultural, ethnic, or migrant backgrounds.
2. Participants read the article individually and highlight:
    a. Who is quoted or interviewed.
    b. Who provides expert opinions.
    c. Which institutions are represented.
    d. Which communities are mentioned.
3. In small groups, participants complete a Representation Analysis Worksheet by categorising the voices included in the story:

Stakeholder	Included	Missing
Victim or survivor		
Family members		
Women's support organisations		
Community representatives		
Migrant or refugee associations		
Intercultural mediators		
Gender experts		
Public authorities		
Legal professionals		

Groups discuss:

- Which voices dominate the narrative?
- Which perspectives are absent?
- How might the missing voices change the audience's understanding of the story?

Each group presents its conclusions and proposes at least three additional sources or perspectives that should be included to create a more balanced and inclusive report.

Expected Output:
A completed representation map identifying dominant voices, missing perspectives, and recommendations for more inclusive reporting.

Debriefing / Reflection Questions:

- Which groups were most frequently absent from the coverage?
- How does the selection of sources influence the public understanding of gender-based violence?
- What risks arise when only institutional voices are included?
- How can journalists ensure that diverse communities are fairly represented in their reporting?
- How does representation contribute to interculturally sensitive journalism?

9. Practical Exercises

02
Reframing across cultures

Objective:
To practice rewriting media content in a way that reflects cultural diversity, includes multiple perspectives, and avoids exclusionary or stereotypical representations.

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials:

- A news article containing intercultural communication challenges (real or fictional)
- Paper or laptops
- Examples of inclusive journalism guidelines
- Source Diversification Worksheet



Instructions (step-by-step):

1. Participants receive a news article covering a gender-based violence case involving individuals from a migrant, ethnic minority, refugee, or culturally diverse background.

2. Working individually or in pairs, participants identify:
   a. References that unnecessarily emphasise nationality, ethnicity, religion, or migration status.
   b. Missing social, cultural, or structural context.
   c. Perspectives and voices that are absent from the story.
   d. Examples of "othering" language or cultural stereotyping.

3. Participants then rewrite the article by:
   a. Using precise and respectful language.
   b. Providing relevant context without cultural determinism.
   c. Including more balanced and diverse perspectives.
   d. Avoiding assumptions based on cultural background.
   e. Highlighting the issue as a form of gender-based violence rather than a characteristic of a particular community.

4. As a second step, participants complete a Source Diversification Worksheet by identifying at least three additional sources that could improve the article, such as:
   a. Women's support organisations.
   b. Community representatives.
   c. Intercultural mediators.
   d. Researchers or subject specialists.
   e. Migrant or refugee support organisations.

5. Participants compare their revised versions and discuss how different editorial choices affect representation and audience perception.

Creative Extension (Media Representation Example)

Participants analyse a media product that explores identity, representation, and cultural diversity, such as The Hate U Give (2018).

Context for learners:
The film follows a young woman navigating different cultural environments while confronting issues of representation, media narratives, community identity, and social justice. It offers valuable examples of how perspectives can change depending on whose voice is heard and whose experiences are centred.

Participants discuss:

- Whose perspective drives the narrative?
- How are different communities represented?
- What role does media framing play in shaping public opinion?
- How could similar principles be applied to reporting on gender-based violence?

Expected Output:

- A revised version of the article.
- A completed Source Diversification Worksheet.
- A short explanation of how the revised version improves intercultural inclusion and representation.

Debriefing / Reflection Questions:

- Which editorial changes had the greatest impact on representation?
- Which voices were missing from the original article?
- How did the inclusion of additional perspectives change the story?
- How can journalists avoid reducing complex realities to cultural stereotypes?
- What role does source diversity play in inclusive communication?



9. Practical Exercises

03
The intercultural Newsroom

Objective: To develop intercultural communication and editorial decision-making skills when reporting on gender-based violence in culturally diverse contexts.

Duration: 50 minutes

Materials:
• Role cards (journalist, editor, intercultural mediator, community representative, gender expert)
• Scenario description
• Optional: recording device (phone)

Instructions (step-by-step):

1. The facilitator presents a scenario involving the reporting of a gender-based violence case affecting a person from a migrant or minority community.
2. Participants are assigned roles:

- • Journalist
- • Editor
- • Intercultural mediator
- • Community representative

• Gender expert

3. They simulate an editorial meeting where they must decide:

• Which voices should be included in the story
• Whether cultural background is relevant to the coverage
• The angle of the story
• Headlines
• Language and framing

4. Participants work together to develop an editorial approach that is accurate, inclusive, and interculturally sensitive.

5. Optionally, the role-play can be recorded and reviewed.

Expected Output:
A brief editorial plan outlining key sources, framing decisions, and recommendations for inclusive reporting.

Debriefing / Reflection Questions:
• Which perspectives were most influential during the discussion?
• Were any important voices initially overlooked?
• How did cultural considerations affect editorial decisions?
• How can journalists balance accuracy, context, and inclusion in intercultural reporting?

Checklist time!

Checklist:

Before publishing, ask:

- Am I using neutral and respectful language?
- Have I avoided cultural stereotypes and generalisations?
- Does the story accurately reflect cultural and social context?
- Whose voices are included in the story?
- Whose voices may be missing?
- Have I considered migration-related or intersectional factors?
- Am I relying only on institutional sources?
- Could any wording reinforce "othering" or exclusion?
- Would members of the represented community recognise themselves fairly in this coverage?

Resources

- UNESCO. (2012). Gender-sensitive indicators for media: Framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content. https://www.media-diversity.org/additional-files/Gender-Sensitive_Indicators_for_Media_EN.pdf
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Authors

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medusa.erasmusproject@gmail.com

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