

CONFLICT SENSITIVE REPORTING MANUAL

FOR FIJIAN JOURNALISTS

This guide has been produced with
the financial assistance of

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für die Welt





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PREFACE

It is my pleasure to introduce this manual on conflict-sensitive reporting for Fijian journalists, produced by Dialogue Fiji, a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting peaceful dialogue and understanding in Fiji.

As an organization that works towards building a culture of peace in Fiji, we believe that the media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and promoting peaceful coexistence in society. However, we recognize that the media can also exacerbate conflicts if not practiced in a sensitive and responsible manner. Therefore, we have developed this manual to guide journalists in their reporting, especially during times of conflict or tension.

The manual aims to provide guidance to journalists on how to report conflicts in a way that is sensitive to the context, the actors involved, and the potential impact on society. It emphasizes the need for accuracy, impartiality, sensitivity, and the avoidance of stereotypes. We believe that these principles, when applied consistently, can help prevent the escalation of conflicts and promote understanding and peaceful resolution.

The manual also provides practical tips and techniques for conflict-sensitive reporting, such as effective interviewing, fact-checking, and verification. It encourages journalists to use a range of sources and perspectives to provide a balanced view of the conflict. It also highlights the importance of ethical considerations, such as informed consent, minimizing harm, and avoiding bias.

It is our hope that this manual will contribute to the development of a more responsible and professional media in Fiji. We encourage journalists to read and apply the principles and techniques outlined in this manual to their reporting. We also hope that media organizations will support their journalists in implementing conflict-sensitive reporting practices, and that the public will hold the media accountable for their reporting.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the team at Dialogue Fiji who worked hard to produce this manual, as well as the many journalists and media professionals who contributed their expertise and insights. We hope that this manual will be a valuable resource for journalists in Fiji, and that it will contribute to building a more peaceful and harmonious society.

Nilesh Lal
Executive Director,
Dialogue Fiji.

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We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World) for providing the funding support for the development of this conflict-sensitive reporting manual for Fijian journalists. Their commitment to promoting peace and justice in the world has enabled us to produce a valuable resource for the Fijian media community.

We would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the reviewers who generously gave their time and expertise to provide feedback and guidance during the development process. Your insights and suggestions have greatly enriched the content of this manual.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the Fijian journalists and media organizations who have contributed to the advancement of conflict-sensitive reporting in Fiji. Your commitment to ethical and responsible journalism is crucial in promoting a culture of peace and constructive dialogue in our society.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This conflict-sensitive reporting manual is designed to assist Fijian journalists in their reporting on conflict situations. The purpose of this manual is to promote accurate, impartial, and sensitive reporting that avoids stereotypes and contributes to preventing the escalation of conflicts.

SECTION 1

provides an introduction to the manual, outlining the purpose and importance of conflict-sensitive reporting in Fiji. It emphasizes the need for journalists to understand the context of conflicts and their root causes.

SECTION 2

focuses on understanding conflict and its various forms in Fiji. It identifies the different factors that contribute to conflict in the country, including economic, political, and social factors. Examples of conflicts that have occurred in Fiji in the past are presented to illustrate the complexities and challenges of reporting on conflicts.

SECTION 3	discusses the principles of conflict-sensitive reporting, including accuracy, impartiality, sensitivity, and avoiding stereotypes. It explains how applying these principles can help prevent the escalation of conflicts and provides guidance on how to approach reporting on conflicts in a way that is constructive and responsible.
SECTION 4	outlines various approaches to conflict-sensitive reporting, including peace journalism, solution-focused journalism, and constructive journalism. It offers examples of each approach and provides guidance on how to apply them in the Fijian context.
SECTION 5	covers ethical considerations in conflict-sensitive reporting, including informed consent, minimizing harm, and avoiding bias. It provides guidance on how to handle sensitive information and avoid compromising the safety of sources.
SECTION 6	provides practical tips and techniques for conflict-sensitive reporting, including effective interviewing, fact-checking, and verification. It also emphasizes the importance of using a range of sources and perspectives to provide a balanced view of the conflict.
SECTION 7	provides guidance on how to report on reconciliation efforts in a conflict-affected society. It emphasizes the importance of constructive reporting that promotes dialogue and understanding between conflicting parties.

This manual is designed to help journalists report on conflicts in Fiji in a responsible and constructive manner. It provides practical guidance on how to approach conflict-sensitive reporting, emphasizing the importance of accuracy, impartiality, sensitivity, and avoiding stereotypes.



Section 1

INTRODUCTION

Reporting on conflicts is an essential part of journalism, and plays a vital role in informing the public about important events and issues. However, conflicts can also be complex and sensitive, and require a careful and sensitive approach in order to minimize harm and promote understanding. This section will introduce the purpose of the manual and the principles of conflict-sensitive reporting, as well as discussing the importance of conflict-sensitive reporting in Fiji and the impact it can have on society.

The Purpose of the Manual

- ✓ The purpose of this manual is to provide guidance and support for Fijian journalists who are reporting on conflicts in their country.
- ✓ It aims to equip journalists with the knowledge and skills they need to report on conflicts in a way that is sensitive, ethical, and constructive.
- ✓ The manual is based on the principles of conflict-sensitive reporting, which emphasizes the importance of avoiding harm, providing accurate and impartial information, and promoting dialogue and understanding.

The manual is divided into several sections, each of which will explore different aspects of conflict-sensitive reporting. These sections will cover topics such as understanding conflict, the principles of conflict-sensitive reporting, approaches to conflict-sensitive reporting, ethical considerations, and reporting techniques and tools.

What is Conflict?

Conflict can be defined as a disagreement or opposition between two or more parties that have differing interests, needs, or goals. Conflict can occur at different levels, from personal disputes to large-scale conflicts between communities or nations. It is a normal part of human interaction and can arise due to a variety of reasons, including but not limited to cultural differences, political disagreements, economic disparities, historical grievances, and social inequality.



In the context of journalism, conflicts often arise when different groups or individuals have conflicting views or interests. Journalists have a critical role in reporting on conflicts, as they are responsible for providing accurate and unbiased information to the public. However, reporting on conflicts can be a challenging task, as journalists must navigate complex political, social, and cultural factors that may influence their reporting.

To report effectively on conflicts, it is important for journalists to have a thorough understanding of the nature of conflicts, including the root causes, the different parties involved, and the potential consequences of the conflict. This knowledge can help journalists to avoid stereotypes and biases in their reporting, and to provide a more balanced and accurate view of the conflict.

Moreover, it is important for journalists to be aware of their role in shaping public perceptions of conflicts. The media has the power to shape public opinion and to influence the outcome of conflicts. Therefore, it is critical for journalists to report in a responsible and ethical manner that promotes peace and reconciliation, rather than fueling further violence and conflict.

The Importance of Conflict-Sensitive Reporting in Fiji

Fiji is a diverse country with a complex history of political, economic, and social conflict. In recent years, Fiji has experienced significant political turmoil, including several coups, and subsequent periods of political instability. This has led to a climate of tension and suspicion, and has made reporting on conflicts in Fiji a challenging and sensitive task.

In addition to political conflicts, Fiji has also experienced social and ethnic tensions, including tension between iTaukei and the Indo-Fijian community, as well as conflicts related to land use, distributive policies and development. These conflicts can have significant impacts on local communities, including the loss of life and livelihoods, as well as long-term social and economic consequences.

Effective conflict reporting can play an important role in promoting understanding and dialogue, and in preventing the escalation of conflicts. By providing accurate and balanced information, journalists can help to counteract rumors and misinformation, and can promote a more nuanced understanding of complex issues. They can also highlight positive initiatives and success stories related to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, which can help to inspire hope and foster a sense of optimism about the future.

The Principles of Conflict-Sensitive Reporting

At the heart of conflict-sensitive reporting is a commitment to avoiding harm and promoting understanding. This involves a number of key principles, including accuracy, impartiality, sensitivity, and dialogue and understanding.



Accuracy

Journalists have a responsibility to provide accurate and factual information to their audiences. This means taking the time to verify sources and information, and being transparent about any uncertainties or limitations in the reporting. Inaccurate reporting can be harmful and can exacerbate tensions and conflicts.



Impartiality

Journalists should strive to be fair and impartial in their reporting, and should avoid taking sides in conflicts. This means presenting multiple perspectives and viewpoints, and avoiding the use of loaded or emotional language. Journalists should also be aware of their own biases and work to minimize their influence on their reporting.



Sensitivity

Journalists should be sensitive to the experiences and perspectives of those affected by conflict, and should avoid causing further harm or trauma through their reporting. This means respecting the privacy and dignity of victims and their families, and avoiding sensationalism or exploitation. Journalists should also be aware of the potential impact of their reporting on vulnerable or marginalized groups, and work to minimize harm.



Dialogue and Understanding

Journalists can play a key role in promoting dialogue and understanding between different groups affected by conflict. This means seeking out diverse perspectives and opinions.



Section 2

UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT IN FIJI

Fiji has a complex history of conflicts, ranging from political unrest and coups to inter-ethnic tensions and labour disputes. These conflicts have had a profound impact on Fijian society, affecting social cohesion, economic development, and human rights, media freedom and democracy. In a multi-ethnic society like Fiji, understanding the dynamics and root causes of conflict is essential for journalists, as it allows them to provide accurate, nuanced, and sensitive coverage.

Impact of Conflict on Fijian Society

Conflicts in Fiji have resulted in significant human suffering, with many individuals and communities experiencing displacement, loss of property, and disruption of essential services such as healthcare and education. In addition to these direct impacts, conflicts can exacerbate pre-existing social divisions and tensions, hindering efforts towards reconciliation and nation-building. For instance, ethnic tensions between the Indo-Fijian and indigenous Fijian communities emanating from the four coups that Fiji has experienced led to a significant loss of trust between the two groups, making it more difficult to rebuild social cohesion in the aftermath of the conflict.

Different Types of Conflicts in Fiji

Fiji has experienced a range of conflicts over the years, each with its own unique causes, dynamics, and impacts. The first military coup in May 1987 led by Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka overthrew the government, resulting in tensions between the indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities. A second coup in 2000, led by businessman George Speight, resulted in the overthrow of the government and further inter-ethnic tensions. The coup of 2006, which saw the military take control of the

government, led to further political instability and human rights abuses.

Other conflicts in Fiji have been related to labor disputes, land rights, and environmental issues. For example, a strike in 2007 by around 1500 nurses, thousands of teachers and other public servants left hospitals paralysed and school classrooms empty around the country. Similarly, land disputes have led to tensions between indigenous Fijians and those of Indian descent, particularly in relation to the ownership of land used for sugar cane farming resulting in serious decline of the sugar industry, which used to be the economic mainstay for the country, rendering the country economically vulnerable and reliant on the volatile tourism industry. Journalists reporting on conflicts in Fiji need to be aware of the specific causes and dynamics of each conflict in order to report accurately and sensitively.

The Role of Media in Conflict

Media can play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of conflicts, either exacerbating tensions or promoting peace and reconciliation. Sensationalist reporting, biased coverage, and hate speech can fuel tensions and polarize communities, while accurate and impartial reporting can help to promote understanding and dialogue. Journalists need to be aware of their role in shaping public perceptions of conflicts and strive to report in a way that promotes peace and reconciliation.

For example, during the 2000 coup, some media outlets were accused of being biased towards one community or the other, which further inflamed tensions. Similarly, in the aftermath of the 2006 political crisis, journalists were subjected to censorship and harassment by the military regime, which hindered their ability to report accurately and independently on the conflict. By adopting a conflict-sensitive approach to reporting, Fijian journalists can help to build trust and understanding between different communities, and contribute to a more peaceful and cohesive society.

Understanding the Root Causes of Conflict

Understanding the root causes of conflict is an essential step towards conflict-sensitive reporting. Conflicts do not arise in a vacuum, but rather, they are often the result of deep-rooted issues that have been left unaddressed. These issues can range from economic inequality, political power struggles, social exclusion, to historical grievances.

One of the root causes of conflict in Fiji is perceived **economic inequality**. Despite the country's economic growth over the past few years, there is still a significant disparity between the rich and poor. Many Fijians from across the ethnic divide struggle to make ends meet, and the high cost of living makes it difficult for them to fend for themselves

and their families. This economic inequality can create tensions between different groups, especially if some people feel that their needs are not being met while others enjoy the benefits of the economic growth. In Fiji, the problem poverty tends to be ethnicised, especially by politicians, who are the major sources of news for the media. Journalists should be careful not to publish one-sided stories pushing a particular agenda. Towards this end, journalists should be guided by the basic principles of the profession. They should balance stories by including cross section of views and doing their own research, instead of publishing unchallenged statements by the government or political actors.

Another root cause of conflict in Fiji is **political power struggles**. Political instability has been a recurring problem in the country, and many conflicts have been sparked by disagreements over the distribution of power. This can include disputes over electoral processes, government appointments, and legislative decision-making. When different groups feel that they are not being adequately represented in the political process, it can lead to tensions and even violence, especially in tense, multiethnic societies.

Social exclusion is also a significant cause of conflict in Fiji. Discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation can create social tensions that can escalate into violence. This exclusion can take many forms, from the denial of basic rights to more subtle forms of discrimination, such as limited opportunities for education or employment. When groups feel marginalized and excluded, they may resort to violence as a means of expressing their frustration and seeking redress. Subsequently, a conflict-sensitive reporting approach would not just be aware of these social exclusion and discrimination, but also ensure that they are kept on the news agenda, with regular reporting, rather than ignored or swept under the carpet. Reporting on these issues on in an informed and regular manner is a way of drawing attention to them. This is often the first step to addressing such issues,

Finally, **historical grievances** are another significant root cause of conflict in Fiji. The country has a complex history of colonialism, indigenous rights, and political struggle. When these grievances are not addressed, they can simmer beneath the surface and erupt into conflict. According to various reports and studies, conflict over land was one of the major reasons for the 1987 coup. Fears of land grab was used to provoke tensions in the community.

It is essential for journalists to understand the root causes of conflict to report on them effectively. By identifying the underlying issues, journalists can help to contextualize conflicts and provide a deeper understanding of why they are happening. This understanding can also help to inform reporting that is sensitive to the needs and perspectives of different groups, avoiding simplistic or biased reporting that could exacerbate tensions.



Section 3

PRINCIPLES OF CONFLICT-SENSITIVE REPORTING

Conflict-sensitive reporting is guided by several principles that help to ensure that media coverage of conflicts is accurate, impartial, sensitive, and avoids stereotypes. In this Section, we will explore these principles in more detail and discuss why they are essential to effective conflict-sensitive reporting.

A. Accuracy

The first and most important principle of conflict-sensitive reporting is accuracy. Journalists have a responsibility to ensure that the information they present to the public is factual and supported by evidence. Inaccurate reporting can fuel tensions and exacerbate conflicts, which is why accuracy is so crucial.

To ensure accuracy, journalists must take the time to gather and verify their information thoroughly. They should seek multiple sources, cross-check information, and confirm any claims made by sources before publishing them. Additionally, journalists should be transparent about their sources and methods, allowing their audience to evaluate the reliability of the information presented.

B. Impartiality

The second principle of conflict-sensitive reporting is impartiality. Journalists should strive to report on conflicts in a way that is fair and balanced, presenting different perspectives and avoiding taking sides. This can be challenging, especially in situations where there are clear victims and perpetrators of violence. However, it is crucial to avoid

presenting a one-sided view of the conflict, which can further polarize and inflame tensions.

Impartiality requires journalists to be objective in their reporting, setting aside personal biases and prejudices. They should also be mindful of the language they use, avoiding emotive language that might convey a biased perspective. Journalists must also be careful to report on both the causes and consequences of the conflict, avoiding simplistic explanations that ignore the complexity of the situation.

C. Sensitivity

The third principle of conflict-sensitive reporting is sensitivity. Sensitivity refers to the need to consider the potential impact of media coverage on all parties involved in the conflict. Journalists must recognize that their reporting can have significant consequences, both positive and negative, and must take steps to minimize harm.

To be sensitive in their reporting, journalists must take into account cultural and social norms and avoid perpetuating stereotypes or stigmatizing any particular group. They should also avoid sensationalizing the conflict, which can be traumatizing for those directly affected by the violence. Journalists should strive to present information in a way that is respectful and dignified, minimizing any potential harm to individuals or communities.



D. Avoidance of Stereotypes

The fourth and final principle of conflict-sensitive reporting is the avoidance of stereotypes. Stereotypes are oversimplified or generalized beliefs about particular groups of people that can be harmful and divisive. Stereotyping can exacerbate tensions and lead to further violence, making it essential for journalists to avoid perpetuating them in their reporting.

To avoid stereotypes, journalists must be aware of their own biases and assumptions and challenge them when necessary. They should also be mindful of the language they use, avoiding terms that can be used to dehumanize or stigmatize individuals or groups. Journalists must be sensitive to the power dynamics at play in the conflict, avoiding reinforcing harmful narratives that perpetuate inequality or oppression.

E. Benefits of Conflict-Sensitive Reporting

Adhering to these principles of conflict-sensitive reporting can have several benefits for both journalists and the public. By ensuring accuracy, impartiality, sensitivity, and avoiding stereotypes, journalists can help to prevent the escalation of conflicts and promote peaceful resolution. Conflict-sensitive reporting can also help to build trust between journalists and the public, which is essential for effective journalism.

For the public, conflict-sensitive reporting can help to provide a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the conflict. It can help to promote empathy and understanding between different groups and reduce polarization and division. Conflict-sensitive reporting can also help to build trust between journalists and the public, which is essential for effective journalism.

Peace Journalism

Peace journalism is a specific approach to conflict-sensitive reporting that aims to shift the focus of reporting from violence and conflict to constructive alternatives and peace initiatives. Peace journalism is based on the idea that mainstream journalism tends to focus on violence, conflict and their negative effects, rather than exploring the underlying causes of conflict and highlighting peaceful solutions. It seeks to highlight the constructive and positive aspects of conflicts, such as dialogue, reconciliation, and peacebuilding initiatives.

In the Fijian context, peace journalism can be particularly useful for reporting on conflicts related to issues of identity, religion, and politics. These conflicts are often complex and deeply entrenched, with multiple stakeholders and underlying issues that are not immediately obvious. Peace journalism can help to unpack the complexities of such conflicts and present a more nuanced and balanced view of the issues at hand. By highlighting the positive efforts and initiatives of those involved in the conflict, peace journalism can also inspire hope and promote positive change.

One key principle of peace journalism is to avoid promoting the interests of any particular group or party in the conflict, including the media outlet itself. Instead, peace journalism seeks to give voice to all stakeholders and perspectives involved in the conflict. It aims to create a space for dialogue and understanding, where all sides can have their say and be heard. This approach can help to build trust and credibility with all stakeholders, and can also help to prevent the media from being used as a tool of propaganda or misinformation.

Another important aspect of peace journalism is its emphasis on solutions and alternatives to violence and conflict. Peace journalism seeks to highlight the work of individuals and groups who are actively engaged in finding solutions to the conflict, such as community leaders, peacebuilders, and civil society organizations. By highlighting these efforts, peace journalism can help to promote a more positive and constructive narrative around the conflict, and can also inspire others to get involved in peacebuilding efforts.

One key principle of peace journalism is to avoid promoting the interests of any particular group or party in the conflict, including the media outlet itself.

In order to apply the principles of peace journalism in practice, there are a number of techniques and tools that journalists can use. These include:

1 Framing

Peace journalism involves a particular framing of the conflict, which focuses on the underlying causes of the conflict and the potential for constructive solutions. This framing can help to shift the focus away from violence and towards positive alternatives.

2 Sources

Peace journalism seeks to give voice to all stakeholders in the conflict, including those who are not often heard in mainstream reporting. Journalists can actively seek out sources from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and ensure that their reporting reflects a range of viewpoints.

3 Language

Language is a powerful tool in shaping the narrative around the conflict. Peace journalism uses language that is neutral and non-inflammatory, avoiding emotive language that could exacerbate tensions.

4 Imagery

Images can be a powerful way to communicate the realities of the conflict to audiences. Peace journalism seeks to use images that are balanced and non-sensational, and that highlight positive initiatives and solutions.

5 Context

Providing context is an important part of peace journalism. By giving audiences a deeper understanding of the historical, social, and political context of the conflict, journalists can help to create a more nuanced and balanced view of the issues at hand.

6 Solutions

Peace journalism places a strong emphasis on solutions and alternatives to violence and conflict. Journalists can actively seek out and highlight the work of individuals and groups who are engaged in peacebuilding efforts, and provide a platform for these efforts to be showcased.



Section 4

APPROACHES TO CONFLICT-SENSITIVE REPORTING

In the previous sections, we discussed the importance of conflict-sensitive reporting and the principles that guide it. In this section, we will explore different approaches to conflict-sensitive reporting that journalists can use to cover conflicts in a way that promotes peace, understanding, and constructive solutions.



Peace Journalism

Peace journalism is an approach to reporting that emphasizes the importance of accuracy, fairness, and sensitivity in covering conflicts. It encourages journalists to go beyond the usual “who, what, when, where, why, and how” questions and to consider the broader context and deeper root causes of conflicts.

Peace journalism also seeks to give voice to all sides of the conflict, including marginalized and underrepresented groups, and to explore nonviolent alternatives to violence and war. It aims to create a space for dialogue, negotiation, and reconciliation and to encourage empathy and understanding between conflicting parties.

Peace journalism has been used successfully in a number of conflict zones around the world, including Northern Ireland, South Africa, and the Middle East. In Fiji, peace journalism can be particularly effective in promoting dialogue and understanding between different ethnic groups and in highlighting the underlying structural issues that contribute to conflicts.



Solution-Focused Journalism

Solution-focused journalism is an approach that focuses on solutions rather than problems. It seeks to identify and highlight positive and constructive actions that individuals and groups are taking to address conflicts and to create positive change in their communities.

Solution-focused journalism aims to inspire and empower readers, to create a sense of hope and possibility, and to encourage people to take action themselves. It also helps to balance negative and sensationalist news coverage and to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of conflicts.

In Fiji, solution-focused journalism can help to counteract the negative effects of “doom and gloom” reporting and to provide readers with practical examples of how conflicts can be resolved through constructive means.



Constructive Journalism

Constructive journalism is an approach that focuses on the constructive aspects of conflicts rather than the negative ones. It seeks to provide a more balanced and nuanced view of conflicts and to highlight positive developments and solutions.

Constructive journalism also encourages journalists to engage with their audiences and to provide them with the information and tools they need to take action themselves. It aims to create a sense of shared responsibility and to promote active citizenship and community engagement.

In Fiji, constructive journalism can help to create a more informed and engaged citizenry, to promote social cohesion and reconciliation, and to encourage constructive solutions to conflicts.



Other Approaches

There are other approaches to conflict-sensitive reporting that journalists can use, depending on the specific context and the nature of the conflict. These include:

Development journalism: an approach that focuses on the role of development in conflict prevention and resolution, and that highlights the positive impact of development projects on local communities.

Advocacy journalism: an approach that involves taking a clear and explicit stance on a particular issue or conflict, and that seeks to influence public opinion and policy through reporting and advocacy.

Investigative journalism: an approach that involves in-depth research and analysis of a particular issue or conflict, and that seeks to uncover hidden or suppressed information and to hold powerful individuals and institutions accountable.

Participatory journalism: an approach that involves actively engaging with the communities affected by conflicts, and that seeks to empower them to tell their own stories and to participate in the reporting process.

Choosing an Approach

Choosing the right approach to conflict-sensitive reporting depends on a variety of factors, including the nature of the conflict, the intended audience, and the desired outcomes. It is important to consider the potential impact of different approaches on the conflict itself, as well as on the communities affected by it. Journalists should also be aware of the potential risks and challenges of each approach.





Section 5

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CONFLICT-SENSITIVE REPORTING

Ethics are a crucial component of any form of journalism, and even more so when it comes to conflict-sensitive reporting. Reporting on conflicts can be particularly challenging, as journalists must navigate the complex web of relationships and interests involved while also taking steps to minimize harm and protect their sources. In this section, we will explore some of the ethical considerations that are particularly relevant to conflict-sensitive reporting, and provide guidance on how to address them in practice.

A. Informed Consent

One of the most fundamental ethical principles in journalism is the requirement to obtain informed consent from sources. In the context of conflict-sensitive reporting, this can be particularly challenging, as sources may be hesitant to speak out for fear of retaliation or other forms of harm. However, obtaining informed consent is essential in order to ensure that sources understand the potential risks involved in speaking out and are able to make an informed decision about whether to participate in the reporting process.

In Fiji, where conflicts are often closely linked to political and social divisions, obtaining informed consent can be particularly challenging. For example, during the political crisis of 2000, journalists reported being harassed and threatened, making it difficult to obtain reliable information from sources on the ground. In such situations, it may be necessary to take additional steps to ensure that sources are able to speak out safely, such as using anonymous sources or ensuring that interviews take place in a secure location.

B. Minimizing Harm

Another key ethical principle in conflict-sensitive reporting is the requirement to minimize harm. Journalists must be mindful of the potential consequences of their reporting, both for their sources and for society more broadly. In the context of conflict-sensitive reporting, this means taking steps to avoid exacerbating existing conflicts or causing new ones to emerge.

In Fiji, where conflicts are often rooted in deeply held political and social beliefs, journalists must be particularly cautious about the language and framing used in their reporting. For example, referring to one side of a conflict as “terrorists” or “rebels” can be seen as taking sides and may inflame tensions. Similarly, sensationalizing or exaggerating the conflict can lead to an escalation of violence or other negative consequences.

C. Avoiding Bias

Conflict-sensitive reporting requires a commitment to impartiality and the avoidance of bias. Journalists must be mindful of their own beliefs and assumptions, and work to ensure that their reporting is balanced and fair. This can be particularly challenging in the context of conflict reporting, where emotions are often high and it can be difficult to remain neutral.

In Fiji, where conflicts are often closely linked to political and social divisions, journalists must work to avoid being seen as taking sides. This requires not only avoiding explicit expressions of bias, but also being mindful of the language and framing used in reporting. For example, using neutral language to describe both sides of a conflict, and seeking out perspectives from a range of sources, can help to ensure that reporting is fair and balanced.

D. Protecting Sources

Protecting sources is another key ethical consideration in conflict-sensitive reporting. Journalists must take steps to ensure that their sources are not exposed to harm as a result of their reporting, and must respect the wishes of sources who wish to remain anonymous. This can be particularly challenging in situations where sources may be at risk of retaliation or other forms of harm.

In Fiji, where conflicts are often closely linked to political and social divisions, protecting sources can be particularly challenging. Journalists must work to ensure that their sources are able to speak out safely, even in situations where the risk of harm is high. This may require taking additional steps, such as using encrypted communication channels or ensuring that interviews take place in a secure location.

REPORTING TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS

A. Effective Interviewing Techniques

- Establish a rapport with your interviewee to build trust and facilitate communication.

- Ask open-ended questions to encourage your interviewee to speak freely and provide detailed answers.

- Be aware of power dynamics and aim to create a safe space for your interviewee to share their perspective.

- Respect cultural norms and customs when conducting interviews.

B. Fact-Checking and Verification

- Verify the accuracy of information provided by sources through cross-checking with other sources.

- Check the background of sources and assess their reliability and credibility.

- Avoid using unverified information, especially in situations of conflict where inaccurate information can escalate tensions.

C. Use of Multiple Sources and Perspectives

- Seek out a range of sources with differing viewpoints to provide a balanced and nuanced view of the conflict.

- Use caution when relying on only one source or a narrow range of sources, as this can lead to bias or inaccuracies in reporting.

- Be mindful of the potential consequences of using certain sources and take steps to protect them from harm.
-

D. Responsible Use of Images and Videos

- Be sensitive to the cultural and social norms when taking photos or videos, especially of sensitive or violent situations.
-
- Respect the privacy and dignity of individuals who may be affected by the conflict.
-
- Avoid using images or videos that may incite violence or create prejudice.
-

E. Use of Language

- Use language that is neutral and avoids stereotypes or inflammatory terms.
-
- Avoid using language that may contribute to further tensions or escalate the conflict.
-
- Be aware of the cultural and social implications of certain words or phrases and use them with caution.
-

F. Safety Considerations

- Ensure that you have the necessary equipment and training to stay safe when reporting on conflict situations.
-
- Take precautions to protect yourself, your sources, and your team members.
-
- Avoid putting yourself or others at risk unnecessarily.
-



Section 7

CONCLUSION

In this manual, we have explored the concept of conflict-sensitive reporting and the principles, approaches, and ethical considerations associated with it. We have also discussed reporting techniques and tools that can help journalists report on conflicts in a sensitive and responsible way.

It is important to remember that conflict-sensitive reporting is not a one-time event but an ongoing process that requires ongoing attention and effort. Journalists need to continually update their knowledge and skills to keep up with the changing dynamics of conflicts and their impact on society. Here are some final thoughts to keep in mind:

1. Remember the power of words

Words can have a powerful impact on how people perceive a conflict and the individuals involved. It is important to use language that is neutral and accurate, and to avoid stereotypes and inflammatory language. Journalists should strive to give a voice to all parties involved in a conflict, including marginalized groups, and ensure that their reporting is fair and balanced.

2. Be aware of your biases

Journalists need to be aware of their own biases and prejudices and take steps to minimize their impact on their reporting. This means being honest about your own beliefs and values and acknowledging how they may affect your reporting. It also means seeking out diverse perspectives and challenging your own assumptions.

3. Be transparent

Journalists should be transparent about their sources and methods, and provide context for their reporting. This includes acknowledging when information is incomplete or uncertain, and being clear about the limitations of your reporting. Transparency builds trust with audiences and helps to prevent misinterpretation of information.

4. Stay safe

Reporting on conflicts can be dangerous, and journalists should take steps to protect their safety and the safety of their sources. This may include avoiding certain areas or situations, working with a fixer or translator, and ensuring that your equipment and communication channels are secure.

5. Seek ongoing professional development

Finally, conflict-sensitive reporting is a skill that requires ongoing development and refinement. Journalists should seek out opportunities for training and professional development, both to enhance their reporting skills and to stay up-to-date with developments in the field.

In Fiji, conflict-sensitive reporting can play a vital role in promoting peace and understanding between different groups in society. By following the principles and approaches outlined in this manual, journalists can help to prevent the escalation of conflicts, and ensure that their reporting is accurate, balanced, and respectful of all parties involved.

Examples of conflict-sensitive reporting in Fiji include coverage of the aftermath of Cyclone Winston in 2016, which highlighted the resilience and resourcefulness of affected communities, and the coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has focused on the challenges faced by the people and the authorities responding to the crisis. However, there have also been instances of insensitive reporting, such as indiscriminate reporting of divisive political ideologies, and the perpetuation of stereotypes and biases.

It is essential that journalists in Fiji and around the world take their responsibility to report on conflicts in a sensitive and ethical way seriously. By doing so, they can help to promote peace and understanding, and contribute to building a more just and equitable society for all.



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