



TV production: Factors to consider when working in countries with challenging human rights contexts

Background

A substantial amount of TV is made in countries with tax incentives and low-cost labour where it is cheap to produce. Sporting events are increasingly being hosted in countries with well documented human rights and environmental issues.

Some of these countries use **state surveillance**, actively **discriminate** against individuals with certain characteristics, have high levels of **gender-based violence**, poor protection for **labour rights** and limits to **media freedom**. Some may have a track record of **poor behaviour by public security forces** or a likelihood of **security issues** such as demonstrations, riots or violent crime. Countries where content is made may also have issues around **access to water**, high levels of **carbon emissions** and failures to protect **biodiversity and nature**.

These issues pose legal, reputational, safety and welfare risks for TV productions, for their workforces and for their suppliers.

In any country, TV producers need to consider the contextual human rights issues, how they might intersect with TV production and what should be put in place to address them.

Example contextual challenges and steps to consider

Safety or security issues

Some countries have a track record of poor behaviour by public security forces, such as French police tear-gassing fans at the UEFA Champions League Final in May 2022, or a high likelihood of violent crime and corresponding violent responses, such as in South Africa. Sometimes, TV producers may find themselves under pressure to use armed security for their teams, even though in most cases this is likely to increase the safety risks. When making content in places with higher safety or security risks, producers can consider the following steps:

- Briefings for crew to allay fears whilst ensuring sensible behaviour
- Have a clear policy on use of armed security and avoid it unless impossible to do so
- Go through 'what if' scenarios with key stakeholders (including venue security teams) in advance of production to agree protocols and responsibilities
- Review training and expectations of security providers and consider worst case scenarios
- Ensure strong communications plan is in place
- Review which members of production are most at risk and minimise those risks (e.g. runners or individuals with particular characteristics)

Discrimination, including LGBTQI+, sexism, racism, antisemitism, xenophobia

Discriminatory attitudes and practices can impact the mental health, welfare and safety of those working on TV productions. For example, there are 69 countries in the world that criminalise homosexuality, including several that have the death penalty as punishment. In countries where it is not criminalised, state-sponsored homophobia can increase the risks of hate speech and violence directed towards LGBTQI+ individuals and groups. When making content in a country with known discriminatory attitudes, there are steps producers can consider taking to protect the welfare of their team:

1. Build discrimination risks into the production risk assessment
2. Set the right culture on set
 - Clear, consistent and continual messaging on tolerance and respect in the workplace
 - Support crew and ancillary workers to raise concerns through a variety of channels
 - Treat ancillary workers as part of crew, regardless of who employs them, but recognise their relative lack of power and likely fear to raise issues
 - Provide training and invest in local crew who share values and commitment to the culture
 - Provide support to victims of harassment or discriminatory behaviour, e.g. mental health support
3. Monitor the culture and people's willingness to raise concerns
 - Never assume through observation alone but seek people's lived experiences
 - Use tools such as the Call it! app to provide anonymous reporting channels

Potential for poor working conditions

Many countries have good labour laws in place, although some where TV is made do not have strong protections. Regardless of the strength of the laws, informal working still exists and it is particularly prevalent in low paid roles such as those providing cleaning, catering, security, maintenance and driving. TV productions will often outsource such services but, from a human rights perspective, they cannot outsource the risks to the people providing those services. In any country, and particularly those where there is a higher potential for poor working conditions, TV producers should consider taking the following steps:

- Bring human rights into earliest stages of discussion, whether in terms of rights acquisition or commissioning
- Conduct due diligence on main suppliers and their subcontractors
- Identify key staff who can check on working conditions of those at risk during a production
- Collaborate with main supplier(s) and make the monitoring process supportive
- Plan and prepare how to respond to possible scenarios in advance of a production and be aware of unintended consequences.

Environmental issues

For countries where environmental issues pose particular risks, TV producers should ensure that managing those risks is part of early planning. For example, if content is made somewhere that is water-stressed¹, it is important to identify water sources early on and identify other users of those water sources in order to understand possible impacts on them. It would not be appropriate to reduce local communities' access to water in order to make a TV show. A strong plan would then seek to minimise water use and recycle or re-use the water wherever possible.

¹ Explore data on water availability: <https://sdg6data.org/snapshots?region=#demo-wrapper>

Checklist for any context

| Steps to take... | Resources to help... |
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| 1. Research contextual human rights issues and consider how they might intersect with TV production, especially in relation to crew, ancillary workers and impacts on local communities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSHR Guiding Questions for Broadcasters • Human Rights Watch – Countries • Amnesty International |
| 2. Do the due diligence in advance – on venues, suppliers, production companies, their subcontractors and on any further subcontracting that is due to take place, ensuring everyone in the chain is aware of expectations and responsibilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools for production procurement (TVIHRF) • Vetting suppliers appropriately (TVIHRF) |
| 3. Identify local partners who understand the human rights issues and can help to navigate the context, support with briefings and build cultural awareness in teams preparing to travel. | |
| 4. Plan ‘what if’ scenarios with all stakeholders involved, e.g. a crowd issue at a sports event or an allegation of discrimination on a TV production | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting the culture right (TVIHRF) |
| 5. Put mental health support in place if crew could experience safety or security risks and provide thoroughly researched briefings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film and TV Charity |
| 6. Set the right culture upfront and throughout a production | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting the culture right (TVIHRF) |
| 7. Seek out people’s actual experiences, with confidential or anonymous channels available, and via production managers asking questions, engaging ancillary workers and knowing what to look out for | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call It! • Supporting ancillary workers directly (TVIHRF) |
| 8. Consider using TV industry leverage, perhaps in partnership with others in the industry, to push for wider change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For sports, use rights discussions and relationships with Federations • For countries with a thriving TV industry, work with government affairs teams from large studios and broadcasters to engage on improvements |