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Children's Rights and Journalism Practice: a Rights-based Perspective

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CONTENTS

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND JOURNALISM PRACTICE - A RIGHTS-BASED PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

WELCOME to this module on children's rights for journalists.

The objective of the module is to provide you, the trainee journalist, with the concepts and the information that will help you to develop responsible news reporting skills that appreciate and respect children's rights.

Approach of the Module

The Human Rights Education Associates (HREA) recognises a learning pyramid comprising of three key models of human rights education. At the base, there is the "values and awareness model", in the middle the "accountability model" and at the top the "transformational model".

Model 1 – Values and Awareness

In the values and awareness model the main focus of human rights education is to provide basic education on human rights issues. The goal of the model is "to pave the way for a world that respects human rights through an awareness of and commitment to the normative goals laid out in the Universal Declaration and other key documents." (Emerging Models for Human Rights Education, Felisa Tibbitts, International Review of Education – Special Human Rights Education edition, 2002) Examples of the values and awareness model include public awareness campaigns, youth programmes and school and university educational programmes.

Model 2 – Accountability

Participants in this model are expected to already have an understanding of human rights issues. They are also expected to be either directly or indirectly involved in the protection of human rights. This model focuses on building human rights protection and advocacy skills as well as deepening understanding of human rights law. Examples of the accountability model include training sessions

for human rights activists or for those responsible for documenting human rights abuses.

Model 3 – Transformational

This model strives to empower those that have been witnesses or victims of human rights abuses. This form of human rights education can focus on either individuals or entire communities. The aim of the transformational model is to enable participants to protect themselves and their communities from human rights abuses. Examples of this model include programmes in refugee camps and support group programmes for victims of domestic abuse.

As the objective of this module is to provide trainee journalists with the information they need to develop responsible news reporting skills in relation to children's rights, the values and awareness model – with a particular focus on children's rights - will be used. The purpose of the module is not to create human rights activists, but to provide the foundation for responsible reporting on issues dealing with children and their rights.

On completing this module, you will be able to understand children's rights, particularly in the context of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. You will also be able to critically evaluate news reporting of issues affecting children from a human rights or "rights-based" perspective. You will become aware of the guidelines and codes of practice for news reporting on matters relating to children and be able to make professional judgements about your own practice from a rights-based perspective. Most of all, you should be able to apply what you learn in your future career as journalists and news reporters and be able to report fairly, accurately and in keeping with the principles of children's rights.

Organisation of the Module

The module is organised into two main units.

Unit 1, *Introducing Children's Rights*, provides the background to why understanding rights is so important and will look at good practice as well as the problems and challenges that arise in reporting news concerning children.

Unit 2, *Children's Rights and Professional Journalism Practice*, deals with professional journalism practice from a children's rights perspective and looks at

the policies and the contexts in which we need to think about how to improve our work as journalists.

The material presented here should be read alongside the many supporting references and recommendations for further reading. We hope that what you learn in the module will provide a foundation and a reference point for all forms of news reporting but particularly so when children are central to the story.

UNIT 1: INTRODUCING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

1. INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

KEY LEARNING POINTS

• *What are human rights?*

• *What is the difference between natural rights and human rights?*

• *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

• *Defending human rights*

Human rights and natural rights

HUMAN rights refer to inherent, universal rights of human beings regardless of location or other factors, such as ethnicity, religion, nationality or gender.

Human rights are those basic standards without which people cannot live in dignity.

Human rights are **universal** and **inalienable:** all people everywhere in the world are entitled to them. You cannot lose these rights any more than you can cease being a human being.

Human rights are **indivisible:** you cannot be denied a right because it is 'less important' or 'non-essential'.

Human rights are **interdependent** and **interrelated:** all human rights are part of a complementary framework. For example, your ability to participate in your government is directly affected by your right to express yourself, to get an education, and even to obtain the necessities of life.

Human rights are **participative** and **inclusive**: every person is entitled to active,

free and meaningful participation in, contribution to, and enjoyment of civil, economic, social, cultural and political development in which human rights can be realised.

Human rights embody *equality* and *non-discrimination*: all people are equal as human beings and by virtue of the inherent dignity of each person. All individuals are entitled to their human rights without discrimination of any kind.

Human rights embody *accountability* and respect for the *rule of law*: nation states and other duty-bearers have to comply with the legal norms and standards enshrined in human rights legislation. Where they fail to do so, people are entitled to seek redress in a court or other adjudicator.

The idea of human rights derived from the philosophical idea of natural rights; some people recognise no difference between the two and regard both as labels for the same thing, while others keep the terms separate so that some features traditionally associated with natural rights are not associated with human rights.

WHAT ARE NATURAL RIGHTS?

Natural rights are universal rights that are seen as inherent in the nature of people, and not contingent on human actions or beliefs. An individual enters into society with certain basic rights and no government can deny these rights.

Some of the earliest expressions of natural rights can be found in the Hindu Vedas, Agamas and Upanishads texts written more than three thousand years ago. Natural rights have since been an important concept in the texts that underpin all of the world's major religions. The Bible, Torah and Qur'an all preach the importance of human equality, dignity and responsibility.

One theory of natural rights was developed from the theory of natural law during the Enlightenment in opposition to the divine right of kings, and provided a moral justification for liberalism.

With the growth of the idea of individualism, especially in the 17th century, natural-law doctrines were modified to stress the fact that individuals, because they are natural beings, have rights that should not be violated by anyone or by any society.

Perhaps the most famous formulation of this doctrine is found in the writings of

John Locke (1632-1704). He assumed that humans are by nature rational and good, and that they carry into political society the same rights enjoyed in earlier stages of society. Foremost among these are freedom of worship, the right to a voice in their own government, and the right to property.

The concept of a natural right can be contrasted with that of a legal right: a natural right is one that is claimed to exist even when it is not enforced by government or society as a whole, while a legal right is a right specifically created by government or society, for the benefit of its members.

Suggested further reading

Peter Jones: *Rights,* Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994.

Jeremy Waldron, ed: *Theories of Rights, (Oxford Readings in Philosophy)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

The existence, validity and content of human rights continue to be the subject of debate in philosophy and political science. The concept of human rights itself continues to be a contested notion. For example, international human rights standards and legislation have come into criticism for being too Western and for focusing too much on civil and political rights and not enough on economic and social rights.

Although human rights are now legally defined in international law and in the domestic laws of many states, human rights are not the same as legal entitlements. What may be a legal right in one country may have no legal basis in another. However, for many people the doctrine of human rights goes beyond law and forms a fundamental moral basis for regulating the contemporary social order. For them, they are democratic ideals.

We all need and are entitled to rights. They ensure that we survive and develop, and they help protect us from physical or psychological abuse. Rights are also about having the opportunity to be involved in matters that affect us. Rights ensure that everybody is treated equally and fairly. To advocate human rights is to demand that the human dignity of *all* people be respected and protected. But

with rights come responsibilities, and we must all respect the human rights of other people, and not just demand that they respect ours.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In 1945, the world had just emerged from its second global war in less than 30 years. The immense cruelty perpetrated on minority groups and prisoners of war during World War Two impelled world leaders to establish the United Nations with the aim of promoting peace, prosperity and the protection of human rights.

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It recognised "the inherent dignity" and "equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family". It acknowledged that "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts" and proclaimed that "a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people".

The declaration consists of 30 articles which outline the view of the United Nations on the human rights guaranteed to all people. Eleanor Roosevelt, a member of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) which drafted the declaration, said: "It is not a treaty ... [In the future, it] may well become the international Magna Carta... " In a speech on 5 October 1995, Pope John Paul II called the UDHR "one of the highest expressions of the human conscience of our time".

However, Jeane Kirkpatrick, US ambassador to the United Nations, called the declaration "a letter to Santa Claus", saying: "Neither nature, experience, nor probability informs these lists of 'entitlements', which are subject to no constraints except those of the mind and appetite of their authors." (Conference paper: 'Establishing a Viable Human Rights Policy', 1981)

Among the most important articles are:

- Article 1: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

- Article 3: The right to life, liberty and security of person.

- Article 5: Freedom from torture or cruel, inhumane treatment or punishment.

- Article 18: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

- Article 19: Freedom of expression and opinion.

- Article 26: The right to an education.

Following the adoption of the UDHR, the UN Assembly called upon all member countries to publicise the text of the declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories".

The Guinness Book of Records describes the UDHR as the "Most Translated Document" in the world. It has been translated into 321 languages and dialects (as of 2004).

The adoption of the UDHR has been followed by a number of significant treaties that have sought to promote and protect human rights. In 1966, the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR) and the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR) were adopted by the United Nations. These treaties made the rights outlined in the UDHR binding on all states that had signed the agreement. Other important steps in the development of human rights include the [Geneva Conventions](#) on the rules of war and the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#) (CERD).

It is important to remember that human rights are still evolving. In recent years, for example, environmental campaigners have been calling for the expansion of human rights to include the universal right to water and other environmental rights.

Defending rights

Many groups and movements have managed to achieve profound social changes over the course of the 20th century in the name of human rights. In Western Europe and North America, labour unions brought about laws granting workers

the right to strike, establishing minimum work conditions and forbidding or regulating child labour. The women's rights movement gained for many women the right to vote. National liberation movements drove out colonial powers in many countries. One of the most influential of these was Mahatma Gandhi's movement to free his native India from British rule. Movements by long-oppressed racial and religious minorities succeeded in many parts of the world. Among these were the civil-rights movement and the more recent identity-politics movements that fought for the rights of women and minorities in the United States.

According to the UDHR, fundamental human rights are violated when, among other things:

- a race, creed or group is denied recognition as a 'person' (Articles 2 & 6)

- men and women are not treated as equal (Article 2)

- different racial or religious groups are not treated as equal (Article 2)

- life, liberty or security of person are threatened (Article 3)

- a person is sold as or used as a slave (Article 4)

- victims of abuse are denied an effective judicial remedy (Article 8)

- punishments are meted out arbitrarily or unilaterally, without a proper and fair trial (Article 11)

- there is arbitrary interference in personal or private lives by agents of the state (Article 12)

- citizens are forbidden to leave or return to their country (Article 13)

- freedom of speech or religion is denied (Articles 18 & 19)

- the right to join a trade union is denied (Article 23)

- education is denied (Article 26)

The Declaration of Human Rights, and the vision of the world its describes, forms the basis for organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch which promote all human rights and campaign against abuses of these.

They produce annual reports on each country's human rights performance.

Very few countries do not commit significant human rights violations, according to Amnesty International. In its 2007 human rights report, 57 countries were documented as holding prisoners of conscience and 102 countries had cases of torture or ill-treatment by police, military or security personnel.

Some people believe that human rights abuses are more common in dictatorships than in democracies because freedom of speech and freedom of the press tend to uncover state-orchestrated abuse. However, abuses do occur in democracies. For example, the Macpherson report found that the British police had been institutionally racist in handling the death of a black youth, Stephen Lawrence. Also, Amnesty International, in a series of reports, called the running of Guantanamo Bay detainment camp by the United States "a human rights scandal".

In over 90 countries, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) have been set up to protect, promote or monitor human rights in those countries.

ASSESSMENT PROMPT

Discuss the concept of human rights in the context of a selected, contemporary topic of relevance.

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

Human Rights Resource Centre:
http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/background.shtm

National Human Rights Institutions Forum: http://www.nhri.net/

Amnesty International: http://www.amnesty.org/

Amnesty International Country Report 2006:
http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/index-eng

Human Rights Watch: http://www.hrw.org/

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:
http://www.ohchr.org

The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation - Towards a Common Understanding Among the UN Agencies:
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/conference/engaging_communities/un_common_understanding_rba.pdf

2. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

> **KEY LEARNING POINTS**
>
> •   Why children's rights?
>
> •   UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
>
> •   Committee on the Rights of the Child

'CHILDREN'S rights' are human rights for children and people under the age of 18. A separate set of rights has been established for children and young people in recognition of the fact that childhood is a special time in our lives. It's a time when we do a lot of growing and learning; when we need others to look after us and help keep us safe; when we should be enjoying ourselves.

In 1989, the United Nations agreed that children need a special convention of their own. This set of rights for children and young people is called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It states that people under 18 have all the rights it contains, whatever their race, religion or abilities, whatever they think or say, and whatever type of family they come from.

> **Why single out children's rights in a separate human rights convention?**
>
> **Children are individuals:** They are neither the possessions of parents nor of the state, nor are they mere people-in-the-making; they have equal status as members of the human family.
>
> **Children start life as totally dependent beings:** They must rely on adults for the nurture and guidance they need to grow towards independence. Such nurture is ideally found among the adults of children's families but, when primary caregivers cannot meet children's needs, it is up to society to fill the gap.
>
> **Children are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation:** Children are physically more vulnerable than adults. They are also emotionally sensitive to negative experiences. Physical or mental abuse can scar children for life. In many parts of the world, children are being exploited as labourers or child soldiers.

The actions, or inactions, of government affect children more strongly than any other group in society: Almost every area of government policy (for example, education or public health) affects children to some degree. Short-sighted policymaking that fails to take children into account damages the future of all members of society.

Children's views are rarely heard and considered in the political process: Children generally do not vote or take part in political processes. Without special attention to their opinions – as expressed at home and in schools, in local communities and even in governments – children's views on the many important issues that affect them now or will affect them in the future go unheard.

Many changes in society have a disproportionate, and often negative, impact on children: Transformation of the family structure, globalisation, shifting employment patterns and a shrinking social welfare net in many countries all have serious impacts on children. The effect of these changes can be particularly devastating in situations of armed conflict and other emergencies.

The healthy development of children is crucial to the future well-being of any society: Because they are still developing, children are especially vulnerable — more so than adults — to poor living conditions such as poverty, inadequate health care, poor nutrition, lack of safe water, poor housing and environmental pollution. The effects of disease, malnutrition and poverty threaten the future of children and therefore the future of the societies in which they live.

The costs to society of failing its children are huge: Social research findings show that children's earliest experiences significantly influence their future development. The course of their development determines their contribution, or cost, to society over the course of their lives.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

On 20th November 1989, the United Nations approved the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It is now an international agreement that countries sign up to and, once they ratify it, are legally required to fulfil. It is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human

rights. All the countries of the world have ratified it except Somalia and the United States of America. Somalia has been unable to proceed to ratification as it has no recognised government. By signing the convention, the United States has signalled its intention to ratify — but has yet to do so.

Under the convention, children have the right to have their basic needs met: survival, protection, health care, food and water. They also have the right to opportunities to help them reach their full potential: education, play, sports, freedom to express opinions and involvement in decisions that affect them.

The convention emphasises that all children have the same rights and that all rights are interconnected and of equal importance. It also refers to the responsibility of children to respect the rights of others, especially their parents.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has 54 articles; each outlines a different right. These rights are divided into four groups; survival, protection, development and participation.

Survival rights recognise the child's right to life and the needs basic to existence. These include nutrition, shelter, an adequate standard of living and access to health care.

Development rights outline what children need to reach their full potential; for example, education, leisure, cultural activities, access to information, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Protection rights require that children be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation. They cover issues such as special protection for refugee children, safeguards for children in employment, and protection and rehabilitation for children who have suffered any form of abuse or exploitation.

Participation rights recognise that all children should be enabled to play an active role in their communities and societies. These rights include freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their lives. As their abilities evolve, children should also have increasing opportunities to participate in their societies, in preparation for responsible adulthood.

Four of the convention's 41 substantive articles have been given special emphasis because they are basic to the implementation of all rights contained in it. Known as the convention's 'general principles', these articles are:

- Article 2: All rights guaranteed by the convention must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind.
- Article 3: The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.
- Article 6: Every child has the right to life, survival and development.
- Article 12: The child's view must be considered and taken into account in all matters affecting him or her.

Two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child have been created in recent years:

- The [Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](), adopted 25th May 2000

- The [Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict](), adopted 25th May 2000

The convention reflects a new vision of the child and childhood. Children are neither the property of their parents nor the helpless objects of charity. They are human beings and the subject of their own rights. The convention offers a vision of the child as a strong, competent individual *and* as a member of a family and community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age and stage of development. By recognising children's rights in this way, the convention firmly sets the focus on the whole child.

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Governments that ratify the convention must report regularly to the [Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)](), the body of experts charged with monitoring how states implement the convention. These reports outline the situation of children in the country and explain the measures taken by the state to realise their rights. In its reviews of states' reports, the CRC urges all levels of government to use the convention as a guide in policymaking and

implementation. Since protecting human rights is by nature an endless process, there is always room for improvement.

The creation of a body of rights for children and the question of what children's rights really mean and how they can best be realised continues to be contested. Promotion of children's rights is based in part on a recognition that awareness of children's vulnerability and thus need for special protection has not prevented them from suffering as a consequence of decisions made in the adult world around them. Compassion for the plight of children has often led to their being viewed collectively and treated as objects of charity rather than as individual human beings with their own strengths and abilities, their own needs and rights.

As a consequence, the issues surrounding children have often been deemed non-political and have failed to be addressed. The basic principle of the rights of the child is that society has an obligation to satisfy the fundamental needs of children and to provide assistance for the development of children's personalities, talents and abilities.

The creation of a convention on the rights of the child reflects a generally accepted rule that the greater the awareness of rights, the more chance there is of securing them. Through the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the human rights of the child are clear, coherent and comprehensive. The defining of children's rights in this way is a pre-condition for their being respected and adhered to.

ASSESSMENT PROMPT

Drawing on your country's national reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and its review of those reports, discuss the monitoring mechanism for the UNCRC and its impact locally.

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

UNICEF: Convention on the Rights of the Child:
http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_index.html

Committee on the Rights of the Child:
http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm

Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) - Convention on the Rights of the Child:
http://www.crin.com/resources/treaties/CRC.asp?catName=International+Treaties&flag=legal&ID=6

Children's Rights Alliance - Convention on the Rights of the Child:
http://www.childrensrights.ie/convention.php

3. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS & THE MEDIA

KEY LEARNING POINTS

• The effects of media on young people

• Portrayal of children in the media

• Media exploitation of children

• Participation of children in the media

The Oslo Challenge

IN November 1999, young people involved in media projects, media professionals and child-rights experts gathered in the Norwegian capital Oslo to discuss the role the media can play in developing children's rights throughout the world, under five headings:

• Children's right of access to the media, including new media
• Children's right to media education and literacy
• Children's right to participate in the media
• Children's right to protection from harm in the media and violence on the screen
• The media's role in protecting and promoting children's rights

From their deliberations emerged the 'Oslo Challenge'. It acknowledged that "the child/media relationship is an entry point into the wide and multifaceted world of children and their rights – to education, freedom of expression, play, identity, health, dignity and self-respect, protection – and that in every aspect of child rights, in every element of the life of a child, the relationship between children and the media plays a role".

The Oslo Challenge was a call to action. It went out to everyone engaged in exploring, developing, monitoring and participating in the complex relationship between children and the media. This included governments and organisations and individuals working for children, media professionals at all levels and in all media, and the private sector, including media owners, children and young people, parents, teachers and researchers. (UNICEF's Magic website is a response

to that call and showcases media projects by, with and for children around the world, along with other links and information.)

Several of the UNCRC's key articles deal with the media and children. The Committee on the Rights of the Child identified three main areas for consideration:

- ways to improve the image of the child through media reporting
- encouraging children to participate actively in the media
- protecting children from harmful influences in the media

Article 17 of the Convention spells out the important role of the media in disseminating information that promotes the child's well-being in the broadest sense, giving member states specific tasks. It stipulates that a state should "recognise the important function performed by the mass media" and "ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health".

Article 12 on the Rights of the Child recognises the right of children to express their views in matters affecting them. Article 13 enshrines the right to freedom of expression: "This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice."

These articles should contribute not only to developing well-informed citizens, but to young people's voices being heard more through the mass media. It sends a clear message that children should be both participants in and beneficiaries of the information revolution.

In the last two decades, and in particular with the rise of new media and the emergence of the internet, media for children and youth has risen up on the global agenda. Some stakeholders have begun to realise children's rights through the media — for example, by ensuring that young audiences have access to high-quality media content, by creating opportunities for young people's voices to be heard and by pressing for ethical coverage of children.

The effects of media on young people

Many studies have been carried out on the effects of media — violence in the media, in particular — on children. Some experts, like University of Michigan professor L Rowell Huesmann (2000), argue that 50 years of evidence show that "exposure to media violence causes children to behave more aggressively and affects them as adults years later". Others, however, like Jonathan Freedman of the University of Toronto, maintain that "the scientific evidence simply does not show that watching violence either produces violence in people, or desensitizes them to it".

The proliferation and globalisation of media are among the defining features of contemporary youth culture. In many countries, young people have access to a greater number of multi-media choices than ever before — conventional, satellite and cable TV channels; radio stations; newspapers and magazines; the internet, and computer and video games.   Today there is greater availability of foreign programming and media, and less official censorship and control in many parts of the world. Information, email and images flow around the world faster and more freely than ever. Issues of protection as well as participation need to be considered.

Portrayal of children in the media

Media portrayal of children has a profound impact on attitudes to children and childhood, and is an important influence on adults' behaviour towards children. Media depictions provide role models for young people, influencing their attitudes and expectations. The way in which the media represent, or even ignore, children can influence decisions taken on their behalf, and how the rest of society regards them. The media often depict children merely as passive, silent 'victims'.

By providing children and young people with opportunities to speak for themselves – about their hopes and fears, their achievements, and the impact of adult behaviour on their lives – media professionals can remind the public that children deserve to be respected as individual human beings.

According to the International Federation of Journalists, the media's portrayal of children perpetuates a collection of myths:

• Families in developing countries, children living in poverty and victims of war and disaster lose their individuality and humanity. They are often portrayed as helpless sufferers, unable to act, think or speak for themselves.

• Coverage of children's issues tends to focus on the sensational while ignoring the broad array of issues confronting children, as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

• Media reports about children are often one-off stories, with little or no analysis or follow-up.

• Children's confidentiality is not always respected.

• When children do feature in the news, they are often portrayed as stereotypes such as 'starving children in Africa' and 'irresponsible teenagers'.

Stories of child abuse, children involved in crime and street children tend to dominate, while the broader issues of children's rights, such as the right to play, recreation and sport, are often not regarded as newsworthy. The result is an unbalanced impression of 'children as victims' or as threatening 'trouble-makers'.

Children's Express, a British organisation that involves children and young people in media production, and in writing and editing news stories themselves, monitored national newspaper output for one week in 1998. The researchers discerned "seven deadly stereotypes". In order of frequency, these were:

- 'Kids as victims': 31.5%
- 'Cute kids' (gratuitous images): 26.7%
- 'Little devils' (children being 'demonised'): 10.8%
- 'Kids are brilliant' (exceptional children): 9.7%
- 'Kids as accessories' (i.e. the property of parents): 8.4%
- 'Kids these days!' (adults' nostalgia for the past): 7.5%
- 'Little angels' (who can do no wrong): 5.4%

Evidence of stereotyping is provided in a study conducted by MORI (Market and Opinion Research International) for the British magazine *Young People Now* in 2004. The study noted: "These groups [of young people] perceive negative stereotyping in the press and feel that it affects their everyday lives in terms of how adults view them when they are out in public places with their friends. They also believe that journalists are quick to take a moral high ground in terms of

assessing young people's behaviour." They saw this as a hypocritical stance, given that they believed journalists were prone to exaggerate in order to sell papers and make money: '*They'll get anything to put in there if they're short of something to write. They don't care if it hurts someone's reputation.*' This is in line with earlier MORI research (2003) which found that, of a sample of 914 people aged 11-18, two-thirds (64%) said they would not trust a journalist to tell them the truth.

So, while media play an important role in raising public awareness of children's rights, they can be ambiguous partners.

Media exploitation of children

Another crucial question is whether media encourage children to become, or seem to become, prematurely sexually active, especially though coverage of pop music and fashion.

On the one hand, news media tell the stories of abused and abuser, through news reports, photographs, documentaries and drama. On the other hand, they can themselves become the exploiter, by creating sexually provocative images of children in news or advertising.

Media professionals are well-placed to keep children's rights on the news agenda, by scrutinising efforts to protect those rights, and challenging those who fail to meet their commitments to children. But commercial pressures can force media to avoid this responsibility. An uncomfortable balance of interests prevails where ethical standards can be sacrificed to commercial imperatives.

Participation of children in the media

Examples of young people's participation in the media attest to their interest in the world around them, especially if given the chance to express themselves meaningfully on issues affecting them. A growing number of interest groups and media organisations are creating numerous opportunities for young people to participate in media.

MEDIA PROJECT EXAMPLES

Examples of the growing number of successful media projects and programmes for and with children and young people:

ANDI – The Brazilian News Agency for Children's Rights monitors media coverage of children and youth, and trains and works closely with journalists in their reporting on children and youth-related issues. ANDI's efforts have led to greatly increased and improved coverage of children and youth issues in the Brazilian media. The model is now being applied in eight other Latin American countries.

TROC – The Young Reporters of Albania. Dozens of young people, aged 13 to 18, from all over the country receive training on this weekly TV news magazine programme. Students learn all aspects of video news production and are responsible for planning and producing the programme, with limited adult guidance. The programme is very popular in Albania and in neighbouring countries among young viewers who value TROC as the first socially responsive TV show that provides perspectives from all over the country.

Mukto Khobor (Free News) **–** This widely viewed, weekly, 25-minute news and current affairs programme in Bangladesh, is produced by people aged 11 to 17. It focuses on children and children's rights issues. It provides a forum for young people to express their views, empowers young journalists with specialised skills, inspires young viewers who see the success of their peers' work in the media, and shows that young people can contribute valuable input to tackling current problems.

Children and Broadcasting Foundation for Africa (CBFA). The CBFA was created in 1995 to ensure the implementation of the Africa Charter on Children and Broadcasting, and to sensitise broadcasters and producers to the need for good-quality children's television. CBFA targets young people aged nine to 16, media professionals and broadcasters. It conducts workshops, production seminars, screenings and meetings, with a focus on the needs and rights of children in Africa.

Egypt's Video and the Community Dreams project expands the knowledge and experience of the Centre for Development and Population Activities' 'New Horizons' programme and strengthens the voices of young women and girls in Egyptian society. Teams of women from four Egyptian communities gain confidence in their video-production skills and in their ability to address challenging or sensitive topics. Team members gain visibility as spokespeople and leaders and have helped to break down stereotypes. The teams' videos have been used to provoke discussion and promote the search for local solutions in each community.

Participation in media generates excellent outcomes for young people, as summarised by the UNESCO Clearinghouse's 2001 Yearbook *Outlooks on Children and Media*:

• A strengthened sense of pride, power and self-esteem as a result of feeling their voices are worth listening to, that they are part of their community, and that they have achieved an understanding of others and of their own culture.
• Seeing their own everyday dreams and their own local, social and ethnic culture and reality portrayed in the media.
• Strengthened ability and curiosity and increased media competence (i.e., critical understanding of the media).
• Greater social justice engendered by allowing young people who do not manage well in traditional, print-based schools to take part in audio-visual media production.
• Greater interest and involvement in society on their own terms, which in turn inspires action to improve coverage of youth issues in the media and their own communities.

ASSESSMENT PROMPT

Select a current media item involving children and reflect on it in the context of children's rights.

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

Children, Youth and Media Around the World: An Overview of Trends & Issues, produced by Susan Gigli of the InterMedia Survey Institute for UNICEF, April 2004: http://www.intermedia.org/

Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media: http://www.childrenyouthandmediacentre.co.uk/

Children's Rights and the Media – A Resource for Journalists: http://www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF_publications_soulbuddiez.pdf

UNICEF – Magic website: http://www.unicef.org/magic/briefing/about.html

UNICEF – Voices of Youth: http://www.unicef.org/voy. The Voices of Youth pages feature young people's thoughts about media in their own countries, in their own words.

The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media: http://www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse.php. A good source for information on specific projects and issues involving children, youth and media around the world. The Clearinghouse aims to increase awareness and knowledge about children, youth and media, providing a basis for relevant policy-making, contributing to a constructive public debate, and enhancing children's and young people's media literacy and media competence.

Children's Rights Information Network: Media http://www.crin.com/themes/ViewTheme.asp?id=12

'The Influence of Media Violence on Youth' (*Psychological Science*, March 2004): http://www.psychologicalscience.org/pdf/pspi/pspi43.pdf

'A Public Health Approach on Research Findings on Influence of Violent Media Content': *The Lancet*, Vol. 356, Issue 9460 (February 2005, p. 702-710)

L. Rowell Huesmann (2000) 'The Columbia County Longitudinal Study', University of Michigan: http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/aggr/Projects/CCLS/description.html

4. BARRIERS TO REALISATION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

KEY LEARNING POINTS

• Protecting human rights

• Upholding children's rights

• Problems in realising children's rights

• Responding to the challenges of children's rights

Protecting human rights

THERE are mechanisms for enforcing human rights at international, regional and national level. At the national level, politicians and policy-makers can promote children's rights through their constitutions. In general, constitutions dictate the rules that "establish the duties, powers, and functions of various institutions of government". They are most effective at upholding human rights when they define these in concrete terms and where there is a separation of power within the government.

The near-universal ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child reflects a global commitment to the principles of children's rights. By ratifying the convention, governments state their intention to put this commitment into practice. State parties are obliged to amend and create laws and policies to fully implement the convention; they must consider all actions taken with regard to the best interests of the child.

Article 4 of the convention requires states to "undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures, for the implementation of the rights recognised in this Convention". And under Article 42, states must "make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike".

A country's constitution will not always provide absolute protection against abuses of children's rights. In such cases, citizens can collectively call upon their government to explain and account for its actions. Civil society emerges when citizens organise to challenge the government. It includes non-governmental organisations (NGOs), non-profit organisations (NPOs), charities and community bodies.

In most countries, these organisations play a key role as independent advocates for children, or for particular groups of children. Their role is recognised in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Ratification and promotion of the convention has led to a rapid growth in the numbers and influence of NGOs promoting children's rights; in many European countries, coalitions of NGOs working for children's rights have been formed.

The United Nations views civil society as a necessary element in maintaining peace and promoting rights around the world. Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated:

"The United Nations once dealt only with governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partnerships involving governments, international organisations, the business community and civil society. In today's world, we depend on each other."

The development of institutions to promote the human rights of children fits into the broader United Nations aim: to encourage the establishment of national institutions to promote and protect human rights generally. In some states, independent offices for children operate as part of national human rights institutions. In others, separate institutions have been established to promote and protect the human rights of children.

In countries seeking to develop a human rights culture overall, establishing an office focused on the human rights of children can be a sensible starting point, given the central importance of children and children's developing attitudes to creating that culture for the future.

These independent offices for children are distinguished from NGOs by having powers and duties set out in legislation. NGOs play a crucial role in promoting human rights, generally with a high degree of independence. But they may not have the power, alone or together, to really shift government priorities.

Upholding children's rights

When a state ratifies a human rights instrument such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it either incorporates its provisions directly into domestic legislation, or undertakes to comply in other ways with the obligations to respect human rights. "Often, however, the fact that a law exists to protect certain rights is not enough if that law does not also provide for all the legal powers and institutions necessary to ensure the effective realisation of those rights ..." (Training handbook from the Centre for Human Rights)

Adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child is monitored by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. It receives national reports from governments and shadow reports from NGOs.

The committee urges all levels of government to use the convention as a guide in policy-making and implementation, in order to:

- develop a comprehensive national agenda for children
- develop permanent bodies or mechanisms to promote coordination, monitoring and evaluation of activities throughout all sectors of government
- ensure that all legislation is fully compatible with the convention
- make children visible in policy development processes throughout government by introducing child impact assessments
- carry out adequate budget analysis to determine the portion of public funds spent on children and to ensure that these resources are used effectively
- ensure that sufficient data is collected and used to improve the plight of all children in each jurisdiction
- raise awareness and disseminate information on the convention by providing training to all those involved in government policy-making and working with or for children

- involve civil society – including children themselves – in the process of implementing and raising awareness of children's rights
- set up independent statutory offices – ombudspersons, commissions and other institutions – to promote children's rights

However, there is no easy way to ensure respect for children throughout the world. Although the United Nations, national constitutions and civil society play a role in preventing violations of children's rights, abuses still occur.

In addition, the economic well-being of a country is no guarantee that children's rights will be protected. The prosperity and developments in services in Western countries have not always led to a good experience of childhood for all children. Many live in poverty, or in overcrowded or unsuitable accommodation. Many experience abuse and neglect and support services are slow to respond to their needs. The potential of many children is stunted by educational disadvantage and by poor play and recreational facilities.

Problems in realising children's rights

In every society, there are traditions and groups that oppose advocacy of children's rights. Sometimes, broad changes in society can threaten their rights. How are governments failing children or failing to implement effectively the Convention on the Rights of the Child? Often it is a failure to give children a high priority. Political leaders, politicians and government officials may not demonstrate understanding of the state of children's lives or show commitment to realising children's rights. For example, children are often not considered in government policy-making.

An important area is promoting children's responsible participation. Governments should seek children's views on policy, and take these seriously. But there are not always formal channels for consulting children. Legislation needs to reflect the convention's requirement that children have a right to express views and to have them given due consideration in all matters concerning them.

Often there is inadequate co-ordination between government departments concerning policies affecting children. Good policies for children should be implemented effectively at a local level, and all legislation should be continually reviewed to ensure it is compatible with the convention and promotes children's rights.

Sometimes the failure can be that the limited resources directed to activities supporting children's rights are not used effectively. There needs to be careful management at both local and national level, in relation to budgets targeted for children's services. Impact assessments and evaluations within government also need to be implemented.

There can be problems in disseminating information on the human rights of children. Each country should have a comprehensive plan to disseminate information on children's rights to both children and adults. Research should be undertaken to evaluate the extent of knowledge of the UNCRC among children, those working with children and the public in general.

However, the task of protecting children's rights must engage not just governments but all members of society. The standards and principles articulated in the convention can only become a reality when they are respected by everyone – within the family, in schools and other institutions that provide services for children, in communities and at all levels of administration.

Children need to be accepted as people now, and not merely as 'people-in-the-making'. They are complete human beings with rights of their own. They will change and develop over the years, but a society needs to value childhood in its own right and not just as a step towards adulthood. This principle has implications for social programmes and services; it shifts the emphasis of work with children to the here-and-now of their experience.

However, policy responses to children's issues often convey little sense of urgency or awareness of how short and influential childhood is. Childhood does not stand still while another strategy is being developed. In the nearly two decades since the UNCRC was approved, at least one generation of children have lived out their childhood.

Response to the challenges of children's rights

Following ratification of the UNCRC, states are required to ensure that all legislation, policy and practice conform to its principles and standards. Where necessary, law reform should take place; for example, to protect children from violence in the home and in educational settings. The Committee on the Rights of the Child also recommends that governments establish independent mechanisms to ensure that the convention is monitored and reviewed, through the establishment of children's rights commissioners or ombudsmen.

An increasing number of independent offices are being established as countries implement the convention. While these offices are in almost all cases established by government or parliament, the essential characteristic is their independence: their ability to advocate independently for children. Establishing these institutions is a demonstration by governments of good will towards children, that they take seriously their commitments under the convention and are willing to be held accountable for their treatment of children by an independent office.

Governments are required to analyse the proportion of budgets allocated to children to ensure that investment in young citizens is proportionate to their numbers and needs. Often governments merge social expenditure, thereby masking the relatively low allocation of resources to the promotion of children's welfare and human rights.

Countries are required to promote the principles and standards of the convention among all members of the public, including children. Governments are obliged to increase social awareness of children as rights-holders. They must ensure also that all professionals working with children, including those in health and penal settings, are trained in how to apply the convention in everyday practice.

Ratification and promotion of the convention has led to a rapid growth in the numbers and influence of NGOs promoting children's rights; in many European countries coalitions of NGOs working for children's rights have been formed, such as the Children's Rights Information Network (CRIN). They play a key role as independent advocates for children. The Centre for Human Rights stated that "additional support for implementation of international human rights standards comes from concerned community and non-governmental organisations, which

have a special role to play in the development of a universal culture of human rights". It added: "Non-governmental organisations, by their very nature, have a freedom of expression, a flexibility of action and a liberty of movement which, in certain circumstances, allow them to perform tasks which governments and intergovernmental organisations are unable or even unwilling to perform."

As part of civil society, media professionals also have responsibility. While journalists can uncover cases of abuse and raise awareness of children's rights, they greatly influence how children are viewed and portrayed. Journalists need to be aware of the consequences of their work; media professionals shape public opinion and influence behaviour.

This powerful position of the media means that it, in particular, needs internal regulation to ensure that it represents correctly and respects children's rights.

ASSESSMENT PROMPT

Identify those groups within your country that advocate on behalf of children. Are they rights-based? Do they facilitate the voice of the child in their work?

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

ENOC Training Pack: An information and training pack developed by the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children for all those engaged in developing independent statutory offices to promote the human rights of children – children's ombudspersons and commissioners for children's rights: http://www.ombudsnet.org/docs/informationandtrainingpack.pdf

Social Work and the Rights of the Child: A Professional Training Manual on the UN Convention, International Federation of Social Workers, 2002.

The State of the World's Children 2006, UNICEF: http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/

National Human Rights Institutions, Centre for Human Rights, Professional Training Series No.4, Centre for Human Rights, Geneva, 1995, para. 15

Putting Children in the Right, International Federation of Journalists, 2002: www.unicef.org/magic/resources/childrights_and_media_coverage.pdf

From Rhetoric to Rights: Second Shadow Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, Children's Rights Alliance, 2006:
http://www.childrensrights.ie/pubs/CRARepUNCRC.pdf

5. MEDIA REPRESENTATION, CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

KEY LEARNING POINTS

• Media representation of children

• Media stereotyping

• Violation of children's rights

• Protecting children

MEDIA professionals are recognised as having an important role to play in mobilising society around the rights of children. They may be involved mainly as reporters of the misdeeds and omissions of others, but they are catalysts nonetheless. As watchdogs in the public interest and promoters of democratic exchange, they also have an important role in the process of improving the image, rights and prospects of children.

Media representation of children

Although the media hold a powerful position, they are not always an ally of children's rights. We have already discussed how young people are unhappy with the way they are portrayed in the media, and research projects have shown similarities in how children are represented in media across the globe.

In November 2003, MediaWise took a snap-shot of three British broadsheet and tabloid Sunday papers. The results presented a grim picture of the portrayal of children. In a total of 32 items about children, only two were positive. In three articles, parents' rights were championed over those of their children.

Stereotyping has been identified by a number of studies in the UK. The 2004 survey conducted by MORI for *Young People Now* magazine demonstrated that

young people were increasingly represented as 'problems'. Of all the stories about them in UK national and local papers during one week in 2004, 71% were negative, 14% positive and only 15% neutral. In 48% of the stories about crime and violence, young people were depicted as the perpetrators. A total of 70% had boys as the offender and only 32% had boys as the victim. Girls were the offenders in only 10% of the stories and the victim in 91%. Contrary to the impression given by media coverage, official crime statistics show that boys are more likely to be victims of violent crime than girls.

Other research projects have shown that this stereotyping of children is an international phenomenon. Research by Glocal Youth, which accuses the media of failing to focus on young people's civic engagement, has detected similar trends among mainstream media across Europe: "*Young people are usually seen as synonyms of problems, delinquency, violent suburbs, drugs and rave-parties, especially if we are talking about young immigrants. These images appear especially in some documentaries and magazines (both printed and audio-visual) that portray urban culture.*"

In 2003, the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) investigated the representation of children and children's rights in the South African news media. The Empowering Children & Media (ECM) project had various stages, including participatory workshops with the children, a three-month monitoring period and specialised training with journalists and media practitioners. Both adults and children monitored the news media. Every item containing a reference to children was noted, and relevant information was recorded about the topic, sources, representation and other issues relating to children's rights. The children engaged in a parallel project in which they monitored a news medium of their choice over a two-week period.

The key research findings were:

1. Children are under-represented in the news media
Children feature in only 6% of news items according to adult monitors, while the child monitors found that only 26% of their monitored stories contained children.

2. Children are predominantly represented as victims
In the adult monitoring, more than 25% of the items portrayed children as victims. On the whole, children are portrayed most often in negative terms and in

limited roles. The children's monitoring confirmed these trends. The children commented that the media should make an effort to represent children in more positive roles.

3. Children are represented mostly in negative stories
Both the adults' and children's monitoring revealed that news stories in which children appeared were predominantly negative. According to the adult monitoring, one in two stories featuring children related to negative topics such as crime, violence, abuse or disasters.

4. Male and female children are equitably represented, but are still stereotyped
Despite this apparent equality, further analysis showed a perpetuation of gender stereotypes in how children were represented. Girls were more likely to appear in stories about child abuse, while boys appeared mostly in sports-related stories. This reinforces the stereotypical portrayal in the media of women as victims and men as empowered.

The table below summarises the issues identified by the children as most important during their monitoring of the media.

Top Ten Children's Issues	%
Children notice/don't like death and killing	15
Children should be included in the news	13
Children are victims	12
Children are not represented in the media	10
Children have a right to protection, education, provision and healthcare	9
Children enjoy sports and entertainment	9
Child abuse is horrible	4
Children notice crime	3
Helping needy children/people is good	2
Criminals should not go unpunished	2

The results of the ECM project mirror the research conducted in 1998 by the charitable organisation Save the Children into children's attitudes to their representation in the print and broadcast media. It found that children were very clear about what they dislike most about their treatment by the media:

- the use of children's serious comments to make adults laugh

- the use of 'cute' children to add charm appeal
- the use of photos and descriptions of children in miserable situations to evoke emotion, even though this does nothing for children's self-respect or for the audience's respect for them
- children being patronised and spoken down to
- adults speaking for children, when the children know more about the subject
- children being made to perform like circus animals
- adults showing off children's ignorance
- adults putting words in children's mouths, or interrupting them
- children being made to look passive when they are not
- young people being lumped together as a problem group called 'youth/s'

Media stereotyping

Conventionally children are regarded as a sub-group of society to be protected. Threats to children generate strong emotional responses which can be harnessed to capture readers and audiences. Stories and images of children may thus be valued as much for their marketing potential as for the social significance of the stories themselves. As a result, children are often represented in the media as victims, or as 'cute' attachments to adults.

This view of children may reflect a universal perception of childhood as a time of innocence. Their charm brings out in adults a sense of protectiveness, nostalgia and superiority. If they are hurt or suffer misfortune, adults feel the need to express both sympathy and moral outrage. As a result, however, children are accorded a status somewhere below that of citizenship.

Portraying children as victims or as 'cute' appendages of adults gives a limited and false impression of them. The media would argue that this bias stems from the fact that news, by definition, focuses on the unusual. But that ignores the equally important role of the media to present a mirror of society so that people are better able to understand what is going on around them. Media practitioners are more aware than many that perceptions are often more powerful than facts. By distorting perceptions of young people, the media do a disservice to both children and the wider society. They may also be violating their rights.

Violation of children's rights

There are a number of ways in which the rights of children may be violated by inappropriate exposure and media stereotyping. Article 8 of the [European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#) (ECHR) promotes the right to respect for the family and private life; Article 14 of the ECHR promotes the prohibition of discrimination.

Children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) include:

- Article 12: the child's right to express views freely in all matters affecting them
- Article 13: the child's right to freedom of expression, which is restricted by law when necessary for the protection "of national security, or of public order … or of public health or morals"
- Article 16: protection against interference or attack on "privacy, family, home or correspondence … honour or reputation"
- Article 17: recognition of the importance of the media, and encouragement of the dissemination of material "of social and cultural benefit to the child" and "'the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being"

These articles clearly establish rights for children that could be violated by irresponsible media practices. In particular, UNCRC Article 17 states that the media are responsible for promoting the welfare of the child.

Violation of children's rights includes insensitive reporting and misrepresentation, or denial of space for their opinions on various issues.

Protecting children

Although few people would approve of state interference with independent media, the need to protect children has provoked intervention in some areas. For example, under section 39 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, UK law prevents the identification of young people involved in court cases. This law recognises that young offenders deserve an opportunity to reform themselves out

of the glare of the media and public stigmatisation. However, in some circumstances even these safeguards have not been enough; the media have substituted direct identification of children with stereotypical labelling of offenders.

Despite efforts by organisations such as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), which launched in 1998 its own initiative to encourage responsible coverage of children, this pattern of stereotyping children remains evident on every continent.

However, coverage of children rarely features in journalism training because, by and large, journalists deal with adult themes in an adult world for an adult audience. It is unusual to see stories about how new social or fiscal policies might affect children, unless they are about child benefits or schooling, for instance. It is rarer still to find newspapers soliciting comments from young people themselves about the issues of the moment. After all, they are not the primary market for most magazines and newspapers.

Children, therefore, may not be taken seriously by media professionals because their main target is the adult market. The predicament is that children are consumers of mainstream media products which are not created specifically for them. News is regarded as something primarily for and about adults.

An additional danger is that, in this adult market, children have access to potentially harmful material, including the depiction of violence, sex and 'sexualised' images of children. The development of new forms of communication such as the internet has raised concern, particularly because there is little or no control of material on the internet.

While debate continues about the extent to which such material directly influences the behaviour of children, it should be a priority among media producers to ensure that children are not brutalised or put at risk by easy access to certain material, including imagery that appears to condone or encourage violence or inappropriate sexual activity.

Attention must also be given to the issue of media literacy among children. It is as important that children should appreciate the role of the media in civil society

and be able to view it critically as that journalists should be aware of the needs, concerns and rights of children.

According to UNICEF, the failure to teach modern media criticism is "the biggest missed opportunity in education". British MP Tessa Jowell has suggested that media literacy, combined with effective media regulation, is the best way to empower children in their dealings with the world as represented by the media.

Media for a new generation

Despite the proliferation in media in recent years, when UNICEF's executive director conducted an internet chat with some 70 young media activists from 17 countries at the start of the new millennium, the unanimous message she received was that the media are not responding to the needs of the young.

The media need to rethink their approach to coverage of children and young people – avoiding stereotyping, with all its consequences – and promote media literacy. A new generation is growing up, disenchanted with depressing news and misrepresentation of them; with new technology at their fingertips, they are creating their own media online and bypassing traditional methods of media production.

We have already seen the creation of online communities and broadcasting channels in Bebo, Youtube and MySpace. And, in 2007, former US vice-president Al Gore launched a new cable channel for young people, Current TV, for which the content is entirely produced by young viewers. Mr Gore said it would let viewers "engage in the dialogue of democracy" and encourage its audience to make their own TV packages. The concept might, he said, "transform the television medium itself" by making it easier for viewers to get their voices heard.

Dissatisfied with what the mass media produce for them, young people are outflanking conventional media and setting their own agenda. This could have a significant impact on future mass media and on conventional (commercial) popular culture.

Professional responsibility

Journalists are understandably reluctant to allow anyone to dictate the terms under which they operate. They resent external pressure and are sceptical about the intentions of powerful elites. Journalists have lost their lives and their personal liberty in seeking to expose wrongdoing that might otherwise have remained hidden because of restrictions on press freedom.

Media professionals see it as their duty to call to account those who hold sway over civil society. They guard their independence. Their most important role in civil society is to act as a watchdog for the public interest and to promote debate, awareness and public recognition of issues crucial to the exercise of democracy and respect of human rights. The ability of journalists to fulfil this role is weakened by the extent to which they become subservient to vested interests.

Internal regulation

Journalists subscribe to a code of conduct, published by their media union, professional association or employer. However, in practice most journalists have a hazy idea of the detail in the codes and rely on a general understanding of their principles. Children, on the other hand, require precise protocols if their human rights are to be protected.

Journalistic activity which touches on the lives and welfare of children should always be carried out with appreciation of the perspective of children. Journalists and media organisations should strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in reporting children's affairs.

In the UK, the guidelines of the Office of Communications (Ofcom) and the BBC lay great stress on protecting the rights of children, as does the British newspaper industry code of practice policed by the Press Complaints Commission. They acknowledge that media professionals have a duty of care to ensure that media practices do not impinge on children's rights.

IFJ guidelines

The International Federation of Journalists has integrated child rights in the professional code of ethics and runs programmes in awareness-raising. It supports an international exchange of best practices between unions, countering the commercial pressures on journalists and media for "sensational news" and enabling children to be seen and heard.

The IFJ guidelines, *Children's Rights and Media: Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues Involving Children,* were adopted by journalist organisations from 70 countries at the world's first international consultative conference on journalism and child rights, held in Recife, Brazil, on May 2nd 1998. These guidelines will help children to see that journalists do take their issues and views seriously. They say that:

> "All journalists and media professionals have a duty to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards and should promote within the industry the widest possible dissemination of information about the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implications for the exercise of independent journalism."

The IFJ guidelines lay down that:

Media organisations should regard violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for investigations and public debate.

Children have an absolute right to privacy, the only exceptions being those explicitly set out in these guidelines.

Journalistic activity which touches on the lives and welfare of children should always be carried out with appreciation of the vulnerable situation of children.

Journalists and media organisations should strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in reporting children's affairs. In particular, they should:

1. strive for standards of excellence in terms of accuracy and sensitivity when reporting on issues involving children;

2. avoid programming and publication of images which intrude on the media space of children with information which is damaging to them;

3. avoid the use of stereotypes and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children;

4. consider carefully the consequences of publication of any material concerning children and minimise harm to children;

5. guard against visually or otherwise identifying children unless it is demonstrably in the public interest;

6. give children, where possible, the right of access to media to express their own opinions without inducement of any kind;

7. ensure independent verification of information provided by children and take special care to ensure that verification takes place without putting child informants at risk;

8. avoid the use of sexualised images of children;

9. use fair, open and straightforward methods for obtaining pictures of children and, where possible, obtain them with the knowledge and consent of the child or a responsible adult, guardian or carer;

10. verify the credentials of any organisation purporting to speak for or to represent the interests of children;

11.   not make payment to children for material involving the welfare of children or to parents or guardians of children unless it is demonstrably in the interest of the child.

Journalists should also critically examine the reports submitted and the claims made by their governments on implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Media should not consider and report the conditions of children only as events but should "continuously report the process likely to lead or leading to the occurrence of these events".

Guidebook for journalists

MediaWise and UNICEF have produced a guidebook for journalists representing children in the media, *The Media and Children's Rights* (2005). This guidebook was written to assist media professionals and others to consider how the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child might affect the way children are

represented in and by the media. Based on the practical experience of working journalists, it aims to generate responsible coverage of children and the impact of adult behaviour and decisions on their lives, as well as to encourage media professionals to consider how best to protect the rights of children and help them play a role in the mass media.

Reporting on children and young people has its special challenges. The Children's Rights Information Network (CRIN) has produced *Ethical guidelines for interviewing children*, while UNICEF has developed its own *Principles for Ethical Reporting on Children*.

But media must not just report fairly, honestly and accurately on the experience of childhood; they must also provide space for the diverse, colourful and creative opinions of children themselves. Whether in news and current affairs or the complex world of creative and performing arts, all media professionals, and the organisations for which they work, have a responsibility to recognise children's rights and reflect them in their work.

This raises an important issue about the nature of training for media professionals. At present the emphasis is on equipping trainees with adaptable skills so they can survive in a constantly changing work environment where flexibility is the key.

Photographing and filming children should attract as much attention in training as technical proficiency, as it can be especially problematic – in the methods used to obtain visual images, in the construction of the images and in the forms used to display the images.

If media professionals are to become more actively engaged in protecting the human rights of children, there is a need to develop guidance about training, information materials and international co-operation within media industries to ensure that coverage of childhood and child rights issues receives the attention and care it deserves.

Developing greater understanding 'at the top' about the needs and rights of children is as important as ensuring that journalists and programme-makers develop relationships of trust with other professionals who work with children (teachers, social workers, etc.).

ASSESSMENT PROMPT

Review the CRIN ethical guidelines and identify some key implications for your own practice. How, if at all, do these guidelines inform current practice?

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

Slander, sentimentality or silence? What young people have to put up with from the media, Mike Jempson, MediaWise Trust, 2003.

Children and Media: A global concern, Mike Jempson, MediaWise Trust, 2003.

Inequality and the Stereotyping of Young People, Dr Maurice Devlin, NUI Maynooth, 2006.

Putting Children in the Right, IFJ Guidelines for Journalists, 2002: www.unicef.org/magic/resources/childrights_and_media_coverage.pdf

Children's Rights and Media: Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues Involving Children, International Federation of Journalists, 1998: http://www.ifj.org/default.asp?index=192&Language=EN

Compilation of guidelines for interviewing children, CRIN, 2005: http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=5572

Glocal Youth: www.glocalyouth.net

Save the Children: http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/scuk/jsp/newhome.jsp?flash=true

Current TV: http://uk.current.com/

The Media Monitoring Project: http://www.mediamonitoring.org.za

UNICEF: Principles for Ethical Reporting on Children: http://www.unicef.org/media/media_tools_guidelines.html

Interviewing Children: A guide for journalists and others, Save the Children, 1998.

The Media and Children's Rights, MediaWise, 2005:
http://www.mediawise.org.uk/files/uploaded/The%20Media%20and%20Children%20Rights%202005.pdf

Ethical Guidelines for Interviewing Children, The Children's Rights Information Network (CRIN):
http://www.crin.com/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=5572&flag=report

6. GOOD PRACTICE IN PRESENTING INFORMATION FROM CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- 'A World Fit for Children'
- National plans of action for children
- Children's participation
- Principles of best practice
- Getting children's perspectives: examples

THE United Nations Special Session on Children in May 2002 was a landmark for children and human development. It was the first Special Session of the General Assembly devoted exclusively to children and the first to include them as official delegates. It brought together 69 world leaders; 190 national delegations; more than 1,700 representatives from NGOs; five Nobel Peace Prize laureates; an array of leaders from business, religion, the arts, academia and civil society; and, for the first time in the history of UN meetings, more than 600 children as delegates and active participants.

A World Fit for Children

At the special session in 2002, for the first time ever, young people addressed the General Assembly on their own behalf, offering ideas and creative solutions. Their presence generated excitement, determination and commitment. World leaders learned first-hand that to change the world *for* children they must change the world *with* children.

Inspired by the passion and vision of these young people, the General Assembly reached agreement on 'A World Fit for Children', a rigorous plan for promoting healthy lives, providing good basic education, combating HIV/AIDS and protecting children from abuse, exploitation and violence.

Carol Bellamy, former executive director of UNICEF, commented: "Never has a major UN meeting invited so many children and young people to participate as official delegates … their participation is what makes the Special Session special."

'A World Fit for Children' set targets to measure progress towards reaching the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015. It also set targets specifically for children:

"Children, including adolescents, must be enabled to exercise their right to express their views freely, according to their evolving capacity, and build self-esteem, acquire knowledge and skills, such as those for conflict resolution, decision-making and communication, to meet the challenges of life. The right of children, including adolescents, to express themselves freely must be respected and promoted and their views taken into account in all matters affecting them, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. The energy and creativity of children and young people must be nurtured so that they can actively take part in shaping their environment, their societies and the world they will inherit."

These words and the active involvement of children in the General Assembly, reflect the ideals written in article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – the right of the child to express his or her views. Every child who is able to form his or her own opinions has the right to express those opinions in all matters that affect him or her.

National plans of action for children

At a side event of the UN Special Session on Children, the issue of involving children in national strategies was discussed. Four key issues facing children were identified for priority action: health, education, protection from violence, abuse and exploitation, and HIV/AIDS.

To help them achieve the global action plan, governments of the world agreed to prepare national plans of action for children by the end of 2003. These plans of action explain how each government will work towards the goals and targets of the global action plan within their country.

The Special Session showed the important contribution children and young people can make in decisions that affect them and how important it is for decision-makers to consult with children and listen to them. Much excitement about

involvement in follow-up processes was generated among children all around the world. Children and young people made it clear that they wanted to be meaningfully involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of their country's national plans of action.

Save the Children asked over 4,500 young people from 14 countries why they wanted to be involved in this process. The main reasons they gave were:

- They are the people directly targeted by the plans and the most important stakeholders.
- They are the people with the most direct experience of the situation of children and they can help governments understand their problems better.
- Children are not all the same and governments need to hear the views of different groups of children.
- They have a right (contained in article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) to be consulted on all decisions which affect them.
- Children and young people can – and want to – play a part in supporting the implementation of the plan.
- They will improve the effectiveness and impact of the plan, making it more successful.
- The plan helps to build democracy and encourages responsibility among children for their lives, communities and societies.
- Children and young people feel they have valuable resources to bring to the processes – new ideas and a future-oriented perspective.

In the global plan of action, governments agreed: "We must respect [children's and adolescents'] right to express themselves and to participate in all matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity." Because the national plans of action are being developed to make children's lives better and to make a reality of their rights, it is vital that children and young people themselves are able to contribute to the design and development of these plans. Children are the key stakeholders whose views need to be heard about the right goals to choose and the best ways to achieve them.

Children's participation

The UN General Assembly in 2002 and the process of developing the national plans of action at national level have shown how enthusiastic children are about being involved in issues that relate to them. Their participation increases their sense of belonging and of being valued by organisations whose policies affect their lives. The involvement of children and young people in decision-making "improves the relevance and quality of policies and services, gives young people a sense of civic responsibility, makes them more interested in national and local politics and increases the likelihood that they will vote in elections". (Children and Young People's Unit, UK, 2002)

Participation does not simply happen: it requires champions at national, local and organisational level. In particular, strong leadership is needed within organisations to initiate and extend opportunities for real and active participation by children and young people.

The readiness and willingness of organisations to engage meaningfully with children and young people will be influenced by many factors, including cultural values, resource issues, adult perceptions about the value of children's opinions, skills within the organisation, and the readiness of children and young people themselves to engage.

Children and young people need information, understanding, skills and confidence if they are to participate well. The development of this capacity for participation begins in the family. Families can help to empower children in the course of everyday life, by offering them choices and helping them to understand the consequences of their decisions and actions, and by fostering a culture of respect for their opinions.

Next to the family, the school curriculum and the culture of the school provide the most significant means by which children can learn the skills, capacities and responsibilities of active participation and citizenship. Since most children spend a significant amount of their time in educational settings, these structures and systems need to have an approach of partnership with children.

In schools, training can be given to teachers and staff with regard to facilitating and supporting school councils and children's participation. Schools carry a particularly important responsibility for developing education into a two-way process of communication in which children become active participants.

In the community, local authorities can organise child and youth consultation events, from which the children can elect their own local youth councils, which can then feed into and participate in conjunction with adult local authorities.

With the increasing role that technology plays in society, developing mechanisms which include the use of the internet and mobile phones may help to foster more meaningful participation. The World-Wide Web is emerging as a new cross-border forum within which children and young people can articulate their views and experiences and contribute to public policy development at national and local level.

"Citizenship practice is learned through the lived experience of belonging and participating, of listening and speaking, of being valued and included." (in Report from the Comhairle na nÓg Implementation Group, Ireland, 2007)

Benefits of participation

Involvement in decision-making brings direct benefits to children and young people themselves. They gain by learning skills such as teamwork, negotiating, problem-solving and influencing. They obtain knowledge of how policy is made and how organisations work. They learn to engage with adults as partners, and their confidence and self-esteem may be enhanced through participation. Having opportunities to participate can bring particular benefits to children and young people who are marginalised or excluded from the social, cultural, economic and political life of their communities.

Children and young people have unique perspectives and experiences to offer on issues that affect their lives. Giving them a say in how policies and services are developed, provided, evaluated, monitored and improved will ensure that those policies and services meet their needs and that unmet needs are recognised.

When children and young people are involved in public policy-making, they move from being passive recipients of adult decisions to 'rights holders' who are able to help shape their lives and their society. "Apart from the information gained and the representative viewpoints accessed, the actual process itself enables members to discuss and prepare as well as anticipate their involvement in change etc. and to discover and reassert their value as citizens." (*Hearing Young Voices,* McAuley and Brattman, Children's Rights Alliance, 2002)

PARTICIPATION SURVEY

In the UK, the National Youth Agency and the British Youth Council carried out a survey in 2004 of statutory and voluntary sector organisations in England, to establish a systematic picture of the levels and ways in which they involve children and young people in public decision-making. Among those organisations which had structures for participation, about 80% of both statutory and voluntary sector respondents agreed that their services had improved as a result of involving children and young people in decision-making.

Oldfield, Carolyn with Clare Fowler (2004). *Mapping Children and Young People's Participation in England.* London: Department for Education and Skills.

Principles of best practice

Guidelines have been drawn up by national youth councils and children's offices for involving children in all matters that affect them.

In 2005, the Irish Ombudsman for Children, in cooperation with the [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) and the [Children's Rights Alliance](#), produced *Young Voices: Guidelines on how to involve children and young people in your work.* Suggestions:

Visibility
There should be visible commitment at the highest organisational level to the principle and practice of involving children and young people. This commitment is a core value and should be matched by detailed planning, provision of resources and capacity building.

Recognising diversity

Children and young people are not a homogenous group. Their involvement in decision-making is more likely to succeed when the diversity of their circumstances, ethnicity, background, interests, skills and needs is recognised and respected.

Equality

All children and young people should have the opportunity to be involved in policy development and planning. It may be hard to reach some of them because of their personal circumstances, or because of lack of easy access to public consultation. An inclusive approach pays particular attention to ensuring the involvement of children and young people who might be at risk of being left out – for example, children with learning disabilities, or very young children.

Honesty, transparency, accountability

Children and young people must be treated honestly. They should be made aware of the purpose of the work and why they are being involved. They should be involved in ways that are appropriate to their age and stage of development; They should know what level of influence they will have. There should be a real possibility of influencing what is planned. Their contributions should be taken seriously. They should get feedback that lets them know the impact of their views.

Building capacity

The commitment to participation means being prepared to invest in building the capacity and readiness of both children and adults to engage together. It is important to provide resources for participation and to support its implementation.

Empowerment

The ways in which children and young people are involved should be empowering and should increase their sense of self-esteem and confidence. The methods of participation should promote skills such as decision-making, problem-solving and negotiation.

Choice

Children and young people should 'opt in' to being involved, and should know they have the right to choose when, how and whether to be involved.

Safe practice

The safety and well-being of children and young people is a top priority. It is essential to have a clear code of practice for protecting their safety and welfare and for ensuring that child protection requirements are met.

High quality

Arrangements for involving children and young people must be of a high quality, otherwise they may, at best, be tokenistic or, at worst, make for a bad experience for adults and children/young people.

Respect and partnership

In participatory work, children/young people and adults should work in partnership with each other, in a way that is respectful to both partners.

(Taken from *Young Voices: Guidelines on how to involve young people in your work*, National Youth Council of Ireland, 2005)

Getting children's perspectives: examples

Ombudsmen for children

A number of European countries have established ombudsmen for children, including Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Spain.

Case study: Ireland

In Ireland, the National Children's Office (NCO) undertook to manage the involvement of children and young people in the appointment process for the Ombudsman for Children (OCO). Lessons had been learned and recommendations made in other jurisdictions which made similar appointments. These recommendations were adopted in the Irish process. A total of 64 young people aged nine to 17 were involved in the selection process and interviewing of the ombudsman. They were also involved in the creation of a Youth Advisory Panel whose work is to advise the OCO about issues affecting young people in Ireland

today. In their regular meetings with the office, they tell the ombudsman what issues are important to them and how they would like to see them tackled.

The Office of the Ombudsman is involved in ensuring that structures to enable participation by children and young people, such as Dáil na nÓg (Youth Parliament) and Comhairle na nÓg (Young People's Council), are developed and improved. It also undertakes participation projects in partnership with statutory bodies, government departments and NGOs.

The participation projects undertaken over the last three years have been quite extensive and involved cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders. Examples of the work include:

- consulting with young people on the issues that should be considered when examining the age of sexual activity;
- working with the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland on including children and young people in the public consultation process on the children's code of advertising;
- producing *Young Voices: Guidelines on how to involve children and young people in your work*, in cooperation with the National Youth Council of Ireland and the Children's Rights Alliance;
- involving children and young people in health-service planning.

Children's parliaments

Youth parliaments exist in many areas of the world as a way of making sure that young people have their say in shaping the future.

The Oxfam International Youth Parliament (Oxfam IYP) is an initiative of Oxfam International. IYP mobilises a global network of young leaders and activists to bring about positive and sustainable change. It does this through supporting youth-led initiatives, facilitating skills-building programmes and supporting young people to advocate for their rights and freedoms and those of their communities. Oxfam IYP encourages and supports young people as leaders in developing positive, sustainable, innovative and community-oriented initiatives to bring about change.

CASE STUDY: Youth councils, France

Youth councils have been in operation in France since the 1970s and now total several hundred. Their role is to articulate the concerns of children and young people about their local communities. In 1991, the National Association for Children and Youth Town Councils was founded. Its first annual meeting was attended by 700 young people and 400 adults; subsequent meetings have been attended by government ministers.

The achievements of the youth councils have been significant, including the creation of skateboard slopes, spaces for children with disabilities, a cartoon library, improved transport facilities, social events, creation of town maps in Braille, and videos depicting children and young people's concerns about their towns.

Both the numbers of youth councils and their continuation point to the seriousness with which such bodies are viewed in France. An important element in their scope and effectiveness has been the political commitment to them both at national and local level. They are widely seen as an effective means of ensuring that young people play a role in their local communities.

The European Youth Forum is an international organisation established by national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations to represent the interests of young people from all over Europe. The forum works to empower young people to participate in the shaping of Europe and the societies in which they live. It represents youth organisations in international institutions – mainly the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. It serves to channel the flow of information and opinions between young people and decision-makers.

The forum has 93 members made up of national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations. It brings together tens of millions of young people from all European countries.

The Young People's Parliament (YPP) is a UK-based initiative, set up to help young people have a voice on everything that matters to them. The organisation

started in Birmingham as a forum where young people could meet to talk about issues and develop policies for making the city a better place for young people. Now the YPP provides a base for young people from all over the region, and will also be organising national and international events, bringing young people together.

CASE STUDY: Children's Parliament in Slovenia

In Slovenia, when parliamentary democracy was introduced in 1990, a Children's Parliament was also established. Each year, children in schools are introduced to a chosen topic and provided with the opportunity to learn about it in depth. Over 100 young people aged between 13 and 15 are elected through their schools to meet at the Slovenian Parliament to discuss this issue. At the end of the session, they choose the topic for the following year. In the first year, the issue was 'A Safe and Healthy Environment'.

By the time of the second children's parliament, the picture had dramatically changed. War had broken out in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia. The young people used the parliament to express their concerns about the future and complaints at the failure of politicians to develop effective government. They articulated their anger, fear and sense of betrayal – over the war, a sense of not being protected, and the failure of schools to provide an appropriate education. The politicians were willing to listen and brought to the parliament a progress report on the recommendations from the previous parliament.

Although the report included only a few concrete accomplishments, it did demonstrate to the children that their concerns were being taken seriously. The third parliament focused on creating child-friendly schools. Unlike the previous year, the focus was on concrete suggestions for improvement rather than criticism.

The critical factor in ensuring that the parliament was not merely a token gesture was that the politicians demonstrated they were willing to listen, to consider the proposals and issues raised by the children, and to act where possible. In addition, the process demonstrated that the children could develop their sense of democratic responsibility.

Barriers to participation

Notwithstanding many good developments, understanding and practice with regard to hearing young voices remains in its infancy. Consultation with children and young people on matters of public policy remains a novel and challenging concept. Much needs to be done if children's and young people's voices are to become structurally embedded in civil society's deliberations.

Facilitating young people's participation in decision-making is a challenging and demanding undertaking for adults, yet few receive relevant training. The negative attitudes of adults (including parents) have acted as barriers to young people's involvement.

While young people are increasingly being involved in participatory projects, the evidence from evaluations is that they still have little impact on public decision-making, although this varies across contexts and between different types of organisations. (*Measuring the Magic?* Perpetua Kirby, Carnegie YPI)

It will take time to create a culture in which hearing children's voices becomes part and parcel of how issues affecting them are addressed and decisions made. In upholding children's right to be heard, people must attune their ears to children's voices.

FURTHER EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPATION FROM AROUND THE WORLD

At international level

• The annual UN World Youth Forum

• The International Young People's Participation Programme, 2000 sponsored by End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking (ECPAT)

• The International Conference on War-Affected Children in September 2000, held in Winnipeg, Canada and organised by the Canadian International Development Agency

• The International Forum for Child Welfare (IFCW) World Forum, 2001 held in Limerick, Ireland and organised by Barnardos

• The Youth Millennium Project

In Europe

• The 1996 *European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights*, which posits the right of children and young people under 18 to participate directly or indirectly in judicial proceedings affecting them

• The 1992 *European Charter on the Participation of Children and Young People in Municipal and Regional Life*, which advocates that local authorities and regions in Europe should implement policies to facilitate children's and young people's participation in community life

• The consultation with young people (aged 15-25) about the preparation of the *European White Paper on Youth*, an initiative that enabled thousands of young people from EU member states to submit their opinions and recommendations to the European Commission and national governments

In the UK

• In Northern Ireland, Save the Children and the Children's Law Centre assisted the Human Rights Office of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister with their consultation with children and young people on future roles for the proposed Commissioner for Children for Northern Ireland.

• NGOs, including Save the Children and the Children's Law Centre, supported the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in its efforts to elicit views from children and young people on the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

• *Bread is Free*, a consultation on poverty, undertaken by the Children's Rights Alliance for England and Save the Children during 2001, with 106 children and young people aged 5-16 and living in communities with high levels of poverty and social deprivation across England

ASSESSMENT PROMPT

Review the status of your National Plan of Action for Children and discuss the participation of children and young people in its development.

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

Statement on Communication with Children: European Network of Ombudsmen for Children (ENOC) 17/11/2003:
http://www.ombudsnet.org/Organisations/vieworg.asp?id=2872&fromEnoc=y

12 Lessons Learned from Children's Participation in the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children, Save the Children, 2004:
http://www.savethechildren.ca/whatwedo/rights/12lessons_stc.pdf

Office for Ombudsman in Ireland, Annual Report 2005-2006:
http://www.oco.ie/whatsNew/annual_reports.aspx

Global Movement for Children:
http://www.gmfc.org/index.php/gmc6/homepage

NGO Report: Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, *The Right of the Child to be Heard,* 2006.

A World Fit for Children, UNICEF, 2006.

Hearing Voices: Consulting Children and Young People in relation to Public Policy Development in Ireland; executive summary, 2002, K McCauley & M Brattman.

Young Voices: Guidelines on how to involve children and young people in your work, National Children's Office in Ireland, 2005.

'Involving Children and Young People in the Development of National Plans of Action Development: A summary guide for governments', 2002, Save the Children: www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=3145

'Measuring the Magic: Evaluating and researching young people's participation in public decision-making', Perpetua Kirby, Carnegie Young People Initiative: http://cypi.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/files/2643_MeasuretheMagic_001.pdf

UNIT 2: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM PRACTICE

1. CODES OF CONDUCT AND EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Why codes of conduct?
- Should codes be detailed and prescriptive or contain broad principles?
- Codes of conduct and duty
- Codes of conduct and press freedom
- Responsibility v freedom

CODES of conduct are sets of rules to guide behaviour and editorial decision-making. Journalistic codes of conduct have been established in countries around the world to address the specific challenges faced by professional journalists. These principles are most widely known to journalists as their professional *code of ethics*, *code of conduct* or the *canons of journalism*. The basic codes are commonly drafted by professional journalism associations as well as individual print, broadcast, and online news organisations.

While the codes have some differences, most share common elements, including: the principles of truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness and public accountability, and the protection of anonymous sources of information used in acquiring newsworthy information and reporting it to the public.

Like many other ethical systems, journalism ethics include the principle of 'limitation of harm'. This often involves withholding certain details from reports such as the names of children, crime victims' names in crimes such as rape, or information not materially related to particular news reports (release of which might, for example, harm someone's reputation), as well as revealing methods used by those who have died by suicide.

Evolution of codes of journalism

The principles of good journalism aim to bring the highest quality of news reporting to the public, fulfilling the mission of distribution of information in service of the public interest. What 'the public interest' means is the subject of ongoing debate, but it can refer to the 'common well-being' or 'general welfare'.

The National Union of Journalists for the UK and Ireland (NUJ) has outlined its understanding of what 'public interest' includes:

- detecting or exposing crime or a serious misdemeanour
- protecting public health and safety
- preventing the public from being misled by some statement or action of an individual or organisation
- exposing misuse of public funds or other forms of corruption by public bodies
- revealing potential conflicts of interest by those in positions of power and influence
- exposing corporate greed
- exposing hypocritical behaviour by people holding high office

To a large degree, journalistic codes evolved via observation of and response to past ethical lapses by journalists. Today, some terms of employment mandate adherence to such codes for both staff and freelance journalists; journalists may face dismissal for ethical failures. However, too often journalists find they are forced to act contrary to their own ethical judgement if they wish to hold their job.

The world's first code of conduct was produced by the NUJ in 1936, rather than an employer body. Formulating codes was often the response of journalists to issues to do with media ownership and the concentration of ownership.

Journalistic codes of ethics are designed as guides through numerous difficulties, such as conflicts of interest, to assist journalists in dealing with ethical dilemmas. The codes provide journalists with a framework for self-monitoring and self-correction. Upholding professional standards also enhances the reputation of and trust in a news organisation, which boosts the size of its readership or audience. Among the leading news organisations that adopt and attempt to uphold the

common standards of journalism ethics, the quality of performance and adherence can vary. However, the professionalism, reliability and public accountability of a news organisation are three of its most valuable assets. An organisation earns and maintains a strong reputation, in part, through consistently following ethical standards, which influence its position with the public and within the industry.

Among the most respected western English-language publications and broadcast networks are: the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the *Guardian* newspaper (which has a readers representative); in the USA, the *Washington Post* , *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, the Cable News Network (CNN) , National Public Radio (NPR) and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Most of these organisations have their own editorial guidelines.

Press freedom

Codes can be found in news reporting organisations in most countries with freedom of the press. In some countries there is more than one code. There are often different codes for newspapers and broadcasting, reflecting the different legal environment. Broadcast journalists tend to operate in a more regulated environment.

In developed countries, freedom of the press implies that all people should have the right to express themselves in writing or in any other expression of personal opinion or creativity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) says:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers."

Non-governmental organisations have assessed levels of press freedom around the world. Reporters Without Borders, which takes its inspiration from the above article in the UDHR, has created a World Press Freedom Index, in which it reports on the number of journalists murdered, expelled or harassed in any one country, and the existence of a state monopoly in television and radio, and of censorship and self-censorship in the media. It also assesses the overall independence of

media as well as the difficulties that foreign reporters may face. According to Reporters Without Borders, more than a third of the world's people live in countries where there is no press freedom. (The ranking of countries may be found at: http://www.rsf.org/) Other organisations that monitor press freedom include the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

The concept of independence of the press is closely linked with the concept of press freedom. For media to function well in a democracy, they must be free of both political and economic muzzling.

One of the leading voices in the US on the subject of journalistic standards and ethics is the Society of Professional Journalists. The preamble to its code of ethics states:

"... public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility."

This is in line with the American constitution – where freedom of speech is protected in law - and the famous First Amendment that states flatly that "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press ..."

No doctrine announced by the New Republic has been more widely cheered around the world than the declaration of free expression. But states around the world may have their own reasons for wishing to impose restrictions on the conduct of journalists – in effect, licensing them to operate only if they comply with the wishes of the government. Such an imposition should be unacceptable to journalists who value their independence and regard themselves as the eyes and ears of the general public rather than the puppets of a power elite.

Governments often use the excuse of 'media misbehaviour' to justify the imposition of controls on press freedom. This is perhaps one of the strongest reasons why it is vital that the practice of journalism should be self-regulated under a system that is both transparent and generally accepted and understood

within the media.

Regulation of the media has become increasingly important, although it is still often seen as highly controversial. With some exceptions, the controversy centres not on the standards to which the media in democracies should aim, but on the rival merits of *self-regulation* and *statutory regulation*.

For example, the UK Press Council's Code of Practice defines a range of standards for journalists and editors, including accuracy, some forms of respect for privacy and some protections for children and vulnerable people, but not fairness or impartiality. But this code is not statutory. The Press Council instituted it in an effort to forestall statutory regulation by instituting a degree of self-regulation. The code of practice is backed by a complaints procedure, but not by routine disciplines on the conduct of journalists and editors. Its sole mode of enforcement is selective and retrospective: a [Press Complaints Commission](), composed of newspaper editors and 'lay' members, investigates and 'resolves' complaints about breaches of the code.

Codes formulated by journalist organisations and trade unions and those of press councils or organisations such as the BBC, which provide guidelines and guidance, can be contrasted with those that are prescriptive and act as regulations such as the codes of press councils in the Scandinavian countries.

There is tension between those who suspect codes of all types as a form of infringement of press freedom and those who see codes as an aid to responsible journalism. The latter view is generally part of the European tradition while the former is more common among US journalists, who come from a tradition protected by the First Amendment of the US Constitution, quoted above.

What should a code include?

Too comprehensive or prescriptive a code may inhibit freedom of expression, as well as journalistic investigation. But too skeletal or exhortative a code could allow so much room for interpretation that it would be almost unenforceable.

To be effective, a code needs to lay down basic principles against which journalists are willing for their behaviour and output to be judged. For instance, while journalists have a right to their own opinions, it is an abuse of their position to promote their personal views by ignoring information with which they do not agree. Comment and analysis of news is a legitimate and desirable means by which varieties of opinion are both shared and encouraged, but a distinction should be made between news and information and comment or analysis.

Any form of regulation provides a system of accountability. Central to this notion is that the 'rules' have an impact on practice – either by guaranteeing compliance, or by ensuring that breaches are swiftly remedied.

Media self-regulation is a special form of accountability since it aims to reassure the public that media professionals can be trusted to put matters right when things go wrong – without recourse to law being necessary – in order to defend the public's right to a free and independent media.

The starting point has to be practitioners themselves. Most people would agree that a code should incorporate reference to:

- upholding the principles of media freedom, the right of the public to access to information, and the right of journalists to exercise their personal conscience
- accuracy and correction of inaccuracies
- distinguishing between facts and comment
- respect for personal privacy, especially at times of ill-health or bereavement
- protection of children, victims of crime and other vulnerable groups
- protection of sources
- avoidance of prejudice and discrimination
- avoidance of inducements and conflicts of interest

There will always be exceptions to the rule. While accuracy should remain sacrosanct for all media professionals, it is helpful to have guidelines about occasions where the greater good (the public's right to know) – sometimes called 'an overriding public interest' – might justify deviations from a code.

In the UK, for example, freedom of expression itself is regarded as in 'the public interest'. Both the newspaper industry (Press Complaints Commission) and the NUJ insist that there must be 'exceptional' circumstances to justify breaches of the code where children are involved, but acknowledge that deviations from their (similar but different) codes may be justified if the motive is to:

- detect or expose crime or serious misdemeanours
- protect public heath and safety
- prevent the public from being misled by a statement or action of an individual or organisation

To be effective, there has to be some means by which the code is supervised – whether by journalistic organisations or by a non-state body which has the confidence of both media and the public – and through which some form of redress can be obtained when breaches occur.

Jean Claude Bertrand (see reference below) suggests that quality control can be carried out by the three groups of stakeholders, owners, professionals and users, either separately or together in various combinations, – using what he calls 'media accountability systems' or MAS.

Media accountability systems

A media accountability system (MAS) is any kind of means used to ensure that media are socially responsible, a way of inducing media and journalists to respect the ethical rules set by the profession. All MAS aim at improving news media, but they are extremely diverse:

- individuals (e.g. ombudsmen or in-house readers' representatives)
- groups of people (e.g. contents evaluation commissions)
- regular meetings (e.g. local press councils)
- single documents (e.g. codes of ethics)

- small media (e.g. journalism reviews)
- a particular operation (e.g. an ethical audit)
- a long process (e.g. a university education or in-depth research)

Media accountability systems have several purposes:

- *criticism*, the easiest and most common method to improve the media

- *monitoring*, needed now because media products are so numerous and short-lived

- *access* to the media, both in the sense that everyone should be able to use a wide range of media and in the sense that every group in the population must be able to broadcast information

- *training*, the long-term solution to most media problems: both the education of professionals and the sensitisation of citizens

Some MAS are born within the media (like a correction box); others develop outside (like a journalism review); while some involve the cooperation of media and public (like a press council).

Admitting to mistakes is always difficult, especially in an industry whose function includes furnishing the public with reliable information about events and issues that affect their lives. But publicly acknowledging failure, setting the record straight, and seeking to ensure that such errors will not recur is one of the most effective ways of strengthening trust between the public and the media.

International codes

As the ratification of the Universal Declaration of Rights for the Child by almost all states across the globe indicates, human rights and children's rights are considered universal and inalienable. However, are there universal standards to which a journalist should adhere? To date, there has not yet been a Universal Code of Conduct for Journalists. There are many regional and national codes, and international corporations have created their own guidelines and statements (while the European Court of Human Rights produced a ruling favouring freedom of the press).

The written codes and practical standards vary from country to country and organisation to organisation, but there is a substantial overlap among mainstream publications and societies.

A code of ethics increases ethical sensitivity and judgement, strengthens support for individuals' moral courage, and helps to hone an organisation's sense of identity.

The International Federation for Journalists (IFJ) believes that freedom of speech and freedom of information are the foundation of journalistic work. It calls for editorial independence and self-regulation of media, and encourages debate about ethics in journalism. It also promotes professional standards, such as the Declaration of the Principles of Conduct of Journalists, and has drafted specific guidelines for reporting on issues involving children. Journalistic activity which touches on the lives and welfare of children should always be carried out with appreciation of the vulnerable situation of children. The IFJ's code is very important as it has become the basis of many national codes.

Codes of conduct in respect of children

The IFJ says all journalists and media professionals have a duty not only to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards but also to promote within the industry the widest possible dissemination of information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implications for the exercise of independent journalism.

Media organisations, according to the IFJ, should regard violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for investigations and public debate.

Furthermore, media should not consider and report the conditions of children only as events but should continuously report the process likely to lead or leading to the occurrence of these events.

IFJ Guidelines for Reporting on Children

Journalists and media organisations shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in reporting children's affairs and, in particular, they shall:

1. Strive for standards of excellence in terms of accuracy and sensitivity when reporting on issues involving children.

2. Avoid programming and publication of images which intrude upon the media space of children with information which is damaging to them.

3. Avoid the use of stereotypes and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children.

4. Consider carefully the consequences of publication of any material concerning children and shall minimise harm to children.

5. Guard against visually or otherwise identifying children unless it is demonstrably in the public interest.

6. Give children, where possible, the right of access to media to express their own opinions without inducement of any kind.

7. Ensure independent verification of information provided by children and take special care to ensure that verification takes place without putting child informants at risk.

8. Avoid the use of sexualised images of children.

9. Use fair, open and straightforward methods for obtaining pictures and, where possible, obtain them with the knowledge and consent of children or a responsible adult, guardian or carer.

10. Verify the credentials of any organisation purporting to speak for or to represent the interests of children.

11. Not make payment to children for material involving the welfare of children or to parents or guardians of children unless it is demonstrably in the interest of the child.

Media organisations themselves create guidelines to cover their work with children. The **BBC Editorial Guidelines**, formerly known as the Producer Guidelines, outline the standards the BBC expects of all its content on TV, radio and online. They are designed for everyone who makes content for the BBC, to help them deal with difficult editorial decisions. They include specific sections on children.

The BBC guidelines say the corporation seeks to safeguard the welfare of children

and young people who contribute to and feature in their content, including their right to be heard, wherever in the world the BBC operates.

The BBC Editorial Guidelines are important not alone because of the BBC's standing as a provider of high-quality news and current affairs, but also because the BBC has been involved in journalism training around the world. Its guidelines have been translated into a number of languages and have become an unofficial ethical yardstick for broadcast journalists.

For the purposes of the BBC Editorial Guidelines, a child is someone aged under 15, while young people are aged 15, 16 and 17. However, these are not legal definitions and differ from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that a child is someone under 18. This age difference might point to a possible tension between child rights advocates and some journalists, and is an issue worth discussing in the context of news coverage.

The BBC guidelines say:

"Children and young people are very important to the BBC. We aim to provide them with challenging, educative, enjoyable and interesting content to help them make sense of the world in which they live. They also interact with us in many different ways – as contributors, actors, presenters and via our online and interactive services.

"It is not always easy to strike a balance between the competing interests of the children who participate in our output, and the views and ambitions of their parents or our audiences. But we must always safeguard the welfare of the children and young people who contribute to our content, wherever in the world we operate, which includes their right to speak out and to participate."

Some organisations whose work focuses on children have created guidelines for media on dealing with children. UNICEF, for example, offers guidelines that it believes will help media to cover children in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner. They are meant to support the best intentions of ethical reporters: serving the public interest without compromising the rights of children. Their principles include:

    1. The dignity and rights of every child are to be respected in every

circumstance.

2. In interviewing and reporting on children, special attention is to be paid to each child's right to privacy and confidentiality, to have their opinions heard, to participate in decisions affecting them and to be protected from harm and retribution, including the potential of harm and retribution.

3. The best interests of each child are to be protected over any other consideration, including over advocacy for children's issues and the promotion of child rights.

4. When trying to determine the best interests of a child, the child's right to have their views taken into account is to be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

5. Those closest to the child's situation and best able to assess it are to be consulted about the political, social and cultural ramifications of any reportage.

6. Do not publish a story or an image which might put the child, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used.

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) has also created a set of guidelines for journalists for use when interviewing children.

Child Rights Information Network (CRIN): Ethical guidelines for reporting on children

- Do not publish a story or an image which might put the child, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used.
- Do no harm to any child; avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are judgmental, insensitive to cultural values, that place a child in danger or expose a child to humiliation, or that reactivate a child's pain and grief from traumatic events.
- Do not discriminate in choosing children to interview because of sex, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities.

- Avoid the use of stereotypes and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children.
- No staging: do not ask children to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own history.
- Ensure that the child or guardian knows they are talking with a reporter. Explain the purpose of the interview and its intended use.
- Obtain permission from the child and his or her guardian for all interviews, videotaping and, when possible, for documentary photographs. When possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing. Permission must be obtained in circumstances that ensure that the child and guardian are not coerced in any way and that they understand that they are part of a story that might be disseminated locally and globally. This is usually only ensured if the permission is obtained in the child's language and if the decision is made in consultation with an adult the child trusts.
- Limit the number of interviewers and photographers. Try to make certain that children are comfortable and able to tell their story without pressure.
- Always provide an accurate context for the child's story or image.
- Always change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as:

a. a victim of sexual abuse or exploitation,

b. a perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse,

c. HIV-positive, or living with AIDS, unless the child, a parent or a guardian gives fully informed consent,

d. charged or convicted of a crime.

- Confirm the accuracy of what the child has to say, either with other children or an adult, preferably with both.
- When in doubt about whether a child is at risk, report on the general situation for children rather than on an individual child, no matter how newsworthy the story.

ASSESSMENT PROMPT

At the start of this unit, some Key Learning Points are listed. Can you answer some of the questions posed? Codes of conduct, like laws, are attempts to codify moral norms. Sometimes moral norms clash and ethical imperatives compete. The same happens with rights. Can you come up with an example where the right to free speech or free press might clash with the rights of the child? Which should take precedence?

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

*Codes of Conduct***,** Mike Jempson, The PressWise Trust:
http://www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=792

UNICEF: Principles for ethical reporting on children:
http://www.presswise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=594

Society of Professional Journalists; Code of Ethics:
http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp

Who is in Control? A primer for the roundtable discussion on global media threats
   to free expression, IFJ, 2005.

Children's Rights and Media: IFJ Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues
Involving Children: http://www.ifj.org/default.asp?index=192&Language=EN

The International Federation of Journalists: http://www.ifj.org/

Ethics for Journalists, Richard Keeble. London: Routledge, 2001.

Media Ethics and Accountability Systems, Claude-Jean Bertrand, Transaction
Publishers, 2000.

Global Journalism: Topical issues and Media Systems. Arnold de Beer and John C
Merrill, Allyn & Bacon, 2003.

APPENDICES

BBC editorial principles on children

We must ensure that the physical and emotional welfare and the dignity of people under the age of eighteen, and in particular children under fifteen, are protected during the making and broadcast of programmes and online content, irrespective of any consent given by them or by a parent, guardian or other person in loco parentis*.*

We must ensure that children and young people are not caused unnecessary anxiety or distress by their involvement in programmes or by their broadcast. Their involvement must be clearly editorially justified and support should be given to them where necessary.

We must balance our responsibility to protect children and young people from unsuitable content with their rights to freedom of expression and freedom to receive information.

Children & consent

We should normally seek the consent of parents or legal guardians, or other persons of eighteen or over in loco parentis *before interviewing children or young people, or otherwise involving them in our output, and the younger and more vulnerable the child, and the more sensitive the subject matter, the more likely it is that consent is essential. In particular children should not be asked for views on matters likely to be beyond their capacity to answer properly without consent.*

Content producers who are featuring children and young people in their output must:

o *ensure that the child and, when necessary, the parent/guardian, or other person of eighteen or over* in loco parentis *understand the nature of the programme and are able to give informed consent*

o *obtain the consent of the child or young person and respect any refusal to take part. In deciding whether a child can give consent, the stage of development and degree of understanding as well as their age should be taken into account.*

o *normally obtain the consent of the parents/guardians/other person* in loco parentis *to the child's participation or contribution, an exception may be when recording vox pops with children on non-controversial subjects such as pocket money or favourite singers.*

o *refer any refusal of parental consent to a senior editorial figure or, for Independents, to the commissioning editor, who should also consult Editorial Policy. Any decision to proceed without parental consent is normally only editorially justified on the basis of a clear public interest or the freedom of the child or young person to express themselves; this includes their right to speak out.*

o *ensure that any reasonably foreseeable consequences of the child's participation are made clear, for example, the possibility of bullying.*

o *not give any financial inducement to the child or parent/guardian to secure consent. The payment of expenses is acceptable as long as they are reasonable and legitimate.*

o *obtain permission from the head teacher for filming or interviewing on school premises or during school hours. In law, Local Education Authorities license all child performances during school hours.*

When we ask children for personal information online we need to consider what degree of parental consent is appropriate.

Any proposal to reveal a child's personal information to a third party without consent, for example if we suspect child abuse, must be referred to a senior editorial figure or, for Independents, to the commissioning editor who may consult Controller Editorial Policy and Programme Legal Advice.

When we invite children to interact with us via the telephone we must tell them on air to obtain the consent of a parent or bill payer before making the call. If, in exceptional circumstances, calls last more than a minute, the message needs to begin by telling children that consent should be obtained. Call cut-offs must be used for all children's services and the cost of calls for children's services should not normally be more than the cost of writing in.

Contributions from children & young people

We must consider carefully the impact and possible consequences of any material which involves a child, both during the production process and once the material has been broadcast. This applies whether or not we have secured parental consent.

Children are often eager to contribute to our output but many lack the judgement

necessary to assess the longer-term impact it may have on their lives. We should consider consulting experts, when featuring anti-social, harmful or illegal activity amongst children, such as illegal drug use, abuse, eating disorders, and bullying, about the best way of approaching interviews and minimising distress.

It is also often advisable to have a third party present, such as a relative, family friend, or teacher, when sensitive issues are being discussed with a child. This ensures there is someone there who is familiar to them and who can help safeguard their interests.

We should ensure children and young people are given a voice but we must also be alert to occasions when children exaggerate, try to please or report gossip or hearsay as fact. Criminal or anti-social behaviour should not go unchallenged.

Anonymity

Difficult ethical issues arise when we consider whether identification or anonymity of children involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour is in their best long-term interest. We should not normally identify children when featuring such behaviour to illustrate a practice, unless there is a clear editorial justification. Always seek advice from a senior editorial figure or, for Independents, the commissioning editor if you are unsure how to proceed.

Any queries about whether it is possible to identify a child with an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) should be referred to Programme Legal Advice.

The decision to involve, feature or identify children whose parents are engaged in anti-social or criminal activity should only be made if the welfare of the child will not be harmed and if it is clearly editorially justified. This is particularly important when children may be at risk because, for example, they are living with an alcoholic parent, or being forced to work as couriers of illegal drugs.

Online child protection

We aim to ensure that children and young people taking advantage of our changing technologies understand the possible risks they face and how to minimise them. The online protection of children is a shared responsibility between the BBC, parent/guardian and the child.

Private online space where strangers can routinely meet and exchange personal information is not suitable for children until a reliable method of digital identification is available. This is because it cannot be monitored to safeguard child users.

Any proposal to the contrary must be referred to Director, New Media and Technology.

We should be careful about how much personal information we collect, reveal and retain about children anywhere on the BBC website. Publication of too much information may put a child at risk.

Children, online content and links

We should ensure that websites which are likely to appeal to a high proportion of children and young people carry appropriate content. In particular:

o *any material on the BBC home page must be suitable for a general audience including children and the first click from the BBC home page should not normally lead straight to a page which includes material which is unsuitable for a general audience*

o *we should not link from a site whose associated radio or television programme is designed to attract a child audience to one whose associated radio or television programme contains material which is clearly unsuitable for children*

o *any live streaming of TV pictures on the web which is trailed on the home page should normally be suitable for a family audience*

o *we should check the content on third-party websites and take care about where it might lead*

o *we should not link to unmoderated chat rooms for an audience of children*

o *we pre-moderate sites designed to appeal to children and where user-generated content is published as well as areas which invite users to email pictures for publication*

Status of journalists and journalism ethics: IFJ principles

1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1.1 The International Federation of Journalists, representing more than 450,000 journalists in over 100 countries, believes that professional journalists, organised in free and independent trade unions, play a key role in the creation and maintenance of a democratic media culture.

1.2 The IFJ believes that democracy depends upon the extension of freedom of expression and social justice worldwide. The IFJ insists that democracy depends upon an understanding of the special and particular role of the media in democratic society.

1.3 The IFJ believes that media must respect the professional and ethical principles of press freedom upon which the freedom of expression and opinion relies.

The IFJ defines press freedom as:

"that freedom from restraint which is essential to enable journalists, editors, publishers and broadcasters to advance the public interest by publishing, broadcasting or circulating facts and opinions without which a democratic electorate cannot make responsible judgments".

The IFJ believes this freedom can only be expressed when there exists:

a) a free, independent and pluralistic media reflecting diversity of opinion;

b) a free flow of information enabling full democratic exchange in all communities, whether they be based on geography, ethnic origins, shared values or common language;

c) statutory defence and protection of citizens' rights to freedom of information and the right to know;

d) respect for the professional status and independent role of journalists.

1.4 The IFJ considers that the treatment of news and information as a commodity must not override or interfere with the duty of journalists to inform their audience and that media must be administered according to the highest standards of transparency and openness.

1.5 The IFJ believes in the coexistence of public service and private broadcasting in order to protect independence, pluralism and variety in programming to the enrichment of all sections of society.

1.6 The IFJ affirms that responsibility for ethical conduct and maintenance of the

highest standards in journalism rests with media professionals.

1.7 The IFJ strongly believes that the law should not interfere in matters which are the proper responsibility of working journalists: namely, the preparation, selection and transmission of information.

2. ACCESS TO THE PROFESSION

2.1 Access to the profession should be free. The professional level of future journalists should be as high as possible.

2.2 Trainee journalists must undergo proper training under conditions agreed by publishers and journalists' unions.

2.3 Appointments are restricted to qualified journalists, that is, persons who have minimum professional qualifications agreed by journalists' unions and media organisations. Such qualified journalists should be recognised as such in collective agreements. Employers accept that is the duty of the media in general and the employer in particular to reflect the society it serves.

3. CLAUSE OF CONSCIENCE

3.1 Journalists must have the right to act according to their conscience in the exercise of journalism. In case of fundamental change in the political, philosophical or religious line of the employer, a journalist may put an end to his or her contract, without notice, and be paid compensation equivalent to what he or she would have received in case of termination of his or her contract by the employer.

3.2 No journalist should be directed by an employer or any person acting on behalf of the employer to commit any act or thing that the journalist believes would breach his or her professional ethics, whether defined by a code of ethics adopted by journalists collected at national level or that would infringe the international Code of Principles for the Conduct of Journalism as adopted by the IFJ. No journalist can be disciplined in any way for asserting his or her rights to act according to their conscience.

4. EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE

4. 1 Common minimum standards of editorial independence should apply in all media.

4.2 These minimum standards must include:

- the editorial staff represents the moral and intellectual capital of publishing houses and broadcasting stations;
- the right of the editorial council to be consulted on decisions which affect:
  - o appointment and dismissal of the editor-in-chief;

- o definition of editorial policy and content of the paper/broadcasting station;
  - o personnel policies;
  - o transfer/change of tasks of the journalists in the editorial department;
- the right of the editorial council to be heard on matters of grievances concerning editorial policy;
- the right of the journalist to refuse an assignment if the assignment proves to breach journalists' professional ethics as laid down in the union's code of conduct;
- the right of the editorial staff to prevent interference of management of third parties on the editorial content;
- the right of journalists in Europe to equal pay and equality in career development.
- In case of grievances the editorial council, the editor in-chief and management hold *bona fide* negotiations. Representatives of the journalists' associations and unions can be involved in the negotiations in line with existing labour/press legislation.

5. SELF-REGULATION AND ETHICS OF JOURNALISM

5.1 The IFJ believes that codes of ethics or codes of conduct must be drawn up by the professionals themselves.

5.2 The IFJ Code of Conduct, first adopted in 1954, provides a code of ethics adopted by all national representative journalists' organisations in Europe. Therefore, the IFJ Code of Conduct provides the basis for a common understanding on ethical issues through voluntary adoption of journalists and publishers. In this area IFJ sees no active role for national governments.

IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists

This international Declaration is proclaimed as a standard of professional conduct for journalists engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news and information in describing events.

1. Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist.

2. In pursuance of this duty, the journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right of fair comment and criticism.

3. The journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which he/she knows the origin. The journalist shall not suppress essential information or falsify documents.

4. The journalist shall use only fair methods to obtain news, photographs and documents.

5. The journalist shall do the utmost to rectify any published information which is found to be harmfully inaccurate.

6. The journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.

7. The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins.

8. The journalist shall regard as grave professional offences the following:

• plagiarism

• malicious misrepresentation

• calumny, slander, libel, unfounded accusations

• acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression

9. Journalists worthy of the name shall deem it their duty to observe faithfully the principles stated above. Within the general law of each country the journalist shall recognise in professional matters the jurisdiction of colleagues only, to the exclusion of every kind of interference by governments or others.

Adopted by 1954 World Congress of the IFJ. Amended by the 1986 World Congress.

2. CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Child protection polices. What are they and what have they to do with journalists?

- Policing child protection policies

- Adhering to child protection policies

- Child protection policies and press freedom

JOURNALISTS who cover this area should be familiar with child protection policies, offer a critique of them, ensure critical voices are heard, and monitor organisations and government to see that such policies are adhered to.

As we have already learnt under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the most important articles in relation to child protection are:

- Article 19 provides that children have the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse by those looking after them.

- Article 12 provides that a child who is capable of forming his/her own views should be assured the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, these views being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

- Finally, Article 3 provides that, when organisations make decisions which affect children, the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration.

Protecting children

CHILD protection means protecting children from harm, both *intentional* and *unintentional*. It applies particularly to the duty of organisations – and individuals associated with those organisations – towards children in their care. It is every organisation's responsibility to do their best to protect the children whom they are

in contact with, whether harm takes place either inside or outside the organisation.

In its simplest form, child protection addresses every child's right not to be subjected to harm. It complements other rights that ensure children get what they need in order to survive, develop and thrive.

Child protection covers a wide range of important and diverse issues. Many, such as child prostitution, are closely linked to economic factors. Others, such as violence in the home or in schools, may relate more closely to poverty, social values, norms and traditions. Often criminality is involved, for example, in child trafficking. Even technological advance raises protection aspects, as has been seen with the growth in child pornography.

ChildHope UK outlines four types of violence/abuse experienced by children:

Self harm: e.g. deliberately cutting or harming oneself; attempted and actual suicide.

Peer abuse: e.g. bullying; physical and sexual abuse; gang violence.

Abuse by adults: e.g. domestic violence (physical, psychological, sexual); corporal punishment in schools and organisations; sexual abuse and exploitation.

Social abuse: a social, political, economic and cultural environment which actively encourages or tacitly condones violence against children, e.g. political campaigns which encourage 'clearances' of street children; religions and cultures which encourage physical and humiliating punishment of children as acceptable child-rearing practices; high prevalence of violence in the media; cultural attitudes which promote ideas of women and children as being the 'property' of men/parents rather than as human beings with equal rights.

Abuse and violence against children may be perpetrated by people both within an organisation (e.g. teachers, social workers, house parents, peers, sponsors, volunteers) and outside an organisation (e.g. in the community/in society by parents, police, external teachers, shopkeepers, gangs).

Violations of the child's right to protection, in addition to being human rights violations, are also massive, under recognised and underreported barriers to child survival and development. Conversely, successful protection increases a child's chances to grow up physically and mentally healthy, confident and self-respecting, and less likely to abuse or exploit others, including his or her own children.

Child protection is an issue in every country of the world:

• At any given time, more than 300,000 child soldiers, some as young as eight, are exploited in armed conflicts in over 30 countries. More than two million children are estimated to have died as a direct result of armed conflict since 1990. (This issue is dealt with in greater detail in a later class.)

• More than one million children worldwide are living in detention as a result of being in conflict with the law. In Central and Eastern Europe alone, almost 1.5 million children live in public care.

• Over 13 million children worldwide are estimated to be orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS.

• Around 250 million children are involved in child labour, while more than 180 million work in hazardous situations or conditions.

• An estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked every year.

• A 1995 estimate of the number of children in the commercial sex trade indicated that one million children (mainly girls but also a significant number of boys) entered the multibillion-dollar industry every year. The figures may now be higher.

• 40 million children below the age of 15 suffer from abuse and neglect, and require health and social care.

Failure to protect children undermines national development and has costs and negative effects that continue beyond childhood into the individual's adult life. While children continue to suffer violence, abuse and exploitation, the world will fail in its obligations to children; it will also fail to meet its development aspirations as laid out in such documents as the Millennium Agenda with its Millennium Development Goals and government commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children should enjoy all human rights, and thus all human rights mechanisms at international and regional levels should afford them protection. This can apply to UN bodies or regional human rights bodies (such as the African Commission on Human and People's Rights). The same holds true at the national level, where mechanisms to protect human rights, such as constitutional courts, must also ensure that they uphold children's right to protection.

Governments can ensure that basic rules are enshrined in legislation, and that more comprehensive and detailed guidelines are adopted, applied and monitored, in particular by the relevant professional associations and bodies.

A key international mechanism for child protection is the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the main function of which is to review the reports that all the state parties to the convention are required to submit periodically. The reports are expected to contain information on the laws and other measures the state has adopted which give effect to the rights recognised in the convention, including protection, and the progress made on the enjoyment of those rights.

Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, governments are obliged to protect all children and are accountable for any failure to do so. But a huge gap remains between the legal standard and its implementation or enforcement. This is an area where journalists can intervene, asking questions about enforcement and implementation.

The fundamental objective of child protection is to ensure that all those with a duty to safeguard children recognise that duty, and are able to fulfil it. Again, journalists should ask questions about the people charged with safeguarding children. Are they adequately trained? Have they been security-checked?

Given the ethical and legal imperatives, child protection is the business of everyone at every level of society in every function. It creates duties for government, judges, police, teachers, doctors, social workers, health workers, parents and the media. These duties may be reflected in the legal standards that a country puts in place. They may also be reflected in the choices a government makes, including its allocation of resources. They are increasingly reflected in the regulatory codes and guidelines of media organisations.

Child protection in organisations

Child protection is an issue of concern to all those working with young people today. It aims to ensure the well-being and safety of all children and young people. Child protection policies help create child-safe organisations, but also help provide a framework for dealing with difficult situations. They can also create a more child-aware culture so that organisations see their work from the perspective of children's rights.

"A strong policy will guide you in dealing with difficult situations. When there is a crisis it may be harder to think clearly. If you have a reliable policy you can react in an informed way and avoid accusations of a biased response in any participant's favour or disadvantage." (ECPAT Australia).

Many organisations have their own child protection policy that outlines their work and procedures in this area. National children's offices in several countries have issued guidelines and encourage all organisations which have contact with children and young people to introduce a child protection policy.

Child Hope UK has developed a toolkit to help organisations develop child protection policies and procedures. It outlines both the key principles of child protection and the stages needed to develop, implement and evaluate child protection policies. It lists six steps for making a 'child-safe organisation':

1. learning the concepts of child protection and child abuse
2. exploring why an organisation might need child protection policies and procedures
3. examining the organisational principles needed to ensure the effective development and implementation of child protection policies and procedures
4. how to develop the policy and procedures within an organisation
5. including guidelines on implementation
6. how to cover the obstacles and challenges which may be encountered by organisations and exploring possible solutions

Media child protection policies

The media can play an important role in the protection of children. In the first place, media organisations can implement child protection policies to safeguard any behaviour of its staff that may threaten the rights of the child. For example, the BBC requires that staff apply the principles of its Child Protection Policy in their dealings with children and young people:

"The welfare of someone under the age of eighteen is our paramount consideration. This means their interests and safety must take priority over any editorial requirement. All children and young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief and sexual identity have a right to protection from harm or abuse.

"In the course of our work if we suspect a child may be at risk, or we are alerted by a young person to a child welfare issue (including allegations against BBC staff) the situation must be referred immediately to the divisional manager with responsibility for the Child Protection Policy."

Most child protection policies in news organisations will have guidelines about identifying children, respecting the privacy of young people and restricting the use of the names of children in care. They ensure that procedures are put in place to safeguard the welfare of children and young people. Some NGOs working with children have issued guidelines for journalists working with children and have their own policies, for example, for using children in photos.

Importantly, the media can help mobilise public opinion to participate in the protection of children and expose those who threaten children in any way, whether through abuse or simply lack of appropriate systems. Media should hold government to account if it fails to protect its own children.

ASSESSMENT PROMPT

Is knowledge of child protection policies important for the working journalist? Find examples of news stories in which child protection is the main topic. How informed is the journalist about child protection policies? How would you improve the article in question?

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

ChildHope UK Child Protection Policy Toolkit:
http://www.childhope.org.uk/toolkit.php

Child Protection, a Handbook for Parliamentarians, UNICEF CEE CIS, 2004.

3. CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

KEY LEARNING POINTS

• Covering children before the courts

• Access to children in custody

• What is the law covering the trial and detention of children?

• Being aware of children's rights when they are held in detention

THE term 'children in conflict with the law' refers to anyone under 18. Most children in conflict with the law have committed petty crimes or such minor offences as vagrancy, truancy, begging or alcohol use. Some of these are known as 'status offences' and are not considered criminal when committed by adults. In reality, such crimes are of little interest to journalists, unless there is an extraneous interest; for example, the child is related to a celebrity or well-known person. In such cases, the more sensationalist outlets tend to cover minor infringements of the law.

Often children in conflict with the law effectively cease to be regarded as children. Instead, their perceived transgression is considered to remove them from childhood protection, exposing them either to being treated in exactly the same way as adult offenders or, worse, having their vulnerability as children abused.

Data on children in detention are scarce, but UNICEF estimates indicate that more than one million children are living in detention as a result of being in conflict with the law. In many countries, children caught up in the criminal justice system have been processed and are available to official scrutiny, so there is no excuse for the lack of information.

Violent abuse of children in detention is a widespread and serious problem. In its 37th session, the Committee on the Rights of the Child raised a number of concerns about the procedures and protection of children caught up in the justice system in Brazil, among other countries, including reports of torture and extrajudicial killings in detainment facilities.

Children are at risk of violence while in detention both before and after any trial they may undergo. This can include physical and sexual violence by adult detainees, guards, police or other juvenile inmates, often condoned or even encouraged by staff within the system. The correctional regime is itself at times excessively violent, involving indefinite detention, long periods of isolation or co-mingling with adult prisoners in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. In a small number of countries, the death penalty is still applied to juvenile offenders. International law prohibits the use of the death penalty for crimes committed by people younger than 18, yet some countries continue to execute child offenders or sentence them to death.

According to a group of international experts convened in April 2005 as part of the consultations for the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children, the key factors that facilitate violence against children in the justice system are:

- impunity and lack of accountability by law enforcement agents, institutions and staff who are responsible for violence against children

- the over-use of detention, particularly pre-trial detention, including that of non-offenders

- the lack of community-based alternatives to the formal justice system and alternatives to detention, including care and protection systems

- the lack of appropriate juvenile justice systems, including appropriate facilities and separation from adults

- the lack of external controls on institutions, including effective independent complaints and investigation procedures, independent monitoring and access by non-governmental organisations

- the 'acceptability' of violence in society, leading to tolerance of violence at all levels: family, school and community

- the lack of training of law-enforcement and juvenile justice personnel

- 'Tough on crime' policies, negative media and discriminatory images of street children and other socio-economically disadvantaged children

Case study: Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention is a UN-mandated body of independent human rights experts that investigates cases of arbitrary detention that may violate international human rights law. It was established in 1991 by the former Commission on Human Rights (CRC), and is currently under the control of the UN Human Rights Council.

After verifying information from a variety of sources, including non-governmental organisations, inter-governmental agencies and victims' families, the Working Group sends urgent appeals to governments to ascertain the whereabouts and condition of those allegedly detained. It can also conduct fact-finding visits to countries that have extended an invitation to the Working Group. The Working Group is made up of human rights experts who are chosen for their expertise in legal matters and for their independence.

The group believes that many children are detained because they are alone: "Sometimes children are not in detention because they committed a crime, but because they don't have any family that wants them. They are orphans put in 'protected detention' which is just like prison."

Canada, Turkey and Norway are countries that, according to the CRC, have demonstrated good practice. In Canada, the researcher did not find any children in detention. In Turkey, there is a new programme in place, though not fully implemented, that provides for specially trained police and prosecutors to deal with children. Also, there were separate detention centres for children, and children were never found among adults.

Governments have a clear responsibility to protect children in detention from abuse and harm. However, a question that should be asked by society and journalists is whether or not a child should be in detention at all? Detention should be a last resort but, in many cases, it is too readily adopted as an immediate response to antisocial or disruptive behaviour by children and adolescents, as if removing them out of sight and out of mind is a goal in itself.

Human Rights Watch has issued 17 reports on juvenile justice since 1995 and carried out considerable advocacy. It has documented systemic failures to guarantee children legal representation and otherwise provide them with fair

hearings in Brazil, Bulgaria, Guatemala, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Pakistan, Russia and the United States. Of particular concern are sentences that violate the international principle that deprivation of liberty should be a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, or that constitute torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Since the adoption and near-universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a growing number of countries have modified their juvenile justice laws to guarantee children the rights set forth in the convention and in other international instruments. In other countries, reforms are under consideration but have not yet been enacted in law. And a large number of countries must still take action to bring their legislation into compliance with the convention.

Where they have taken place, legislative reforms are positive first steps toward greater recognition of the human rights of children. Even so, the gaps between law and practice are often vast. Many children are denied due process, detained in appalling conditions, subjected to violence at the hands of guards and police, and some are even put to death.

Close to Home

Juveniles in Adult Jails

(Newspaper article re-published by Human Rights Watch on its website, November 11, 1999)

By Michael Bochenek, Counsel to the Children's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch, published in *The Washington Post*

ON any given day, between 200 and 300 young people are held in Maryland's adult jails, a consequence of state measures making it easier for children to be tried as adults. Since 1992, 40 states have adopted such legislation, driven by inaccurate assumptions that juvenile crime is on the rise and that trying children as adults will reduce crime.

Neither premise is correct.

Juvenile crime has declined steadily since 1993, and several studies have

concluded that juveniles tried as adults are more likely to commit crimes in the future than youth prosecuted in juvenile courts.

While trying children as adults neither reduces crime nor rehabilitates the children, it often leads to abuses. Adult jails lack the infrastructure, staffing and programs to handle youth. Locking up these children in adult jails is a violation of their basic human rights.

During a 12-month period, Human Rights Watch visited five jails in Maryland and interviewed more than 60 juvenile detainees. We found staff not trained to handle juveniles, children not getting enough education or recreation, and jails that lack appropriate medical and mental health care. The children we spoke with complained that they were not getting enough to eat.

Children held in the Baltimore City Detention Center endure particularly appalling conditions and face daily threats to their physical safety. They are confined to grim, poorly lit cells crawling with cockroaches and rodents. Violence is rampant. Frequent fights lead to lengthy "lock downs," during which entire sections are restricted to their cells, sometimes for weeks at a time.

Children held in adult jails are as much as eight times more likely to commit suicide than those held in juvenile detention centres. Yet the Baltimore jail offers almost no counselling to juvenile detainees, either in groups or individually. Detainees in crisis may be placed under suicide watch, but they then are kept naked, with nothing but paper sheets to cover their bodies.

Although the best preparation for re-entering society may be access to education, some of the Maryland jails we visited offer no education to youth; others provided schooling that fell far short of the number of hours required by state law.

Clearly, the state is failing its children. While some children, particularly those accused of committing violent offences, may need to be detained in juvenile institutions pending trial, they do not belong in jail with adult inmates.

This kind of treatment violates international law and the Constitution. Maryland can and must do better.

Children have the right, under international law, not to be tortured, treated cruelly, arbitrarily arrested or unlawfully jailed, and to get a fair hearing. If they are jailed, it must be as a last resort and for the shortest time possible. They have the right to be kept separate from adults, see their families and get legal help. But for thousands of children, this isn't the case. In some countries, vulnerable groups such as street children are criminalised and put in custody rather than cared for.

In Britain in 2006, Save the Children UK expressed concern at a Public Accounts Committee report which recommended the increasing use of detention for the purposes of immigration control. Save the Children UK director Colette Marshall said: "Our research has found that detention is damaging to children – they often become depressed, have trouble sleeping, suffer from ill health and don't eat enough. Around 2,000 children are detained with their families every year. They are often removed from their homes in dawn raids with no prior warning. [Home Secretary] Charles Clarke must look at proven alternatives to detention which take into account the welfare of children."

Contrary to government statements that separated children are never detained, increasing numbers are detained on the assumption that they are adults, yet they are subsequently found to be under 18. Many of the children are detained for more than a month and in some cases for as long as nine months.

Often denied legal representation or contact with parents, they are forced to share cells with adult criminals, lacking adequate food and sanitary facilities, and sometimes kept in solitary confinement. Once inside, they become invisible, which makes them easy prey for the very people charged with their safety: police and prison wardens. In many places, violence, sexual abuse and even torture of juveniles is commonplace. [see BBC *World Agenda,* 'Call that Justice' http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1156_wag_gen_next/page4.shtml]

In Pakistan, legislation has been introduced in the past few years to try to improve matters for children who find themselves in conflict with the law. But, in practice, for many children, not much has changed. Children as young as seven in Pakistan can be charged with committing a crime. "The more vulnerable you are, the less likely you are to get access to justice. Children have no voice, so nobody cares."

In Kenya, a growing number of children from poor and dysfunctional families end up drifting into the city, sleeping rough, sniffing glue and stealing to survive. These street children get picked up by police and city authorities and then swallowed up by the justice system.

In the USA – one of only two countries that have not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – the juvenile justice system has taken significant steps backwards over the past few decades. A public outcry against teenage violence during the 1980s and 1990s put pressure on politicians across the country to be increasingly tough on crime. Forty states have adopted legislation that allows juveniles to be tried as adults, and encourages ever harsher regimes.

Punishment rather than rehabilitation is becoming the norm, and increasingly, juveniles are being sentenced to life without parole.

NEWS STORY

BBC NEWS: UK imprisons more children than "most other industrialised countries". See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4051079.stm

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Most children who end up in the criminal justice system are from particularly deprived communities and families, often from minorities who are discriminated against.

Putting children in prison instead of seeking alternatives stigmatises them as delinquents, robs them of opportunities for jobs and scholarships and exposes them to others who have committed more serious crimes. It also increases the likelihood of children breaking the law once again.

Are there alternatives to detention? Yes, says UNICEF, recommending a number of responses, including:

- don't imprison children simply trying to survive
- divert children who have committed minor crimes away from the criminal justice system

- use detention only as a last resort
- when children are imprisoned they should be kept separate from adults
- governments should monitor the situation closely, at a minimum having records of how many children are in jail and how long they have been there

Human Rights Watch recommendations

Human Rights Watch recommends that all countries take the following minimum steps to safeguard the human rights of children in conflict with the law. (These recommendations are interesting story lines for discussion.)

1) All governments should ensure that children in conflict with the law are detained only as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. Children should never be incarcerated for acts that would not be crimes if committed by adults.

2) Conditions of detention and incarceration should meet international standards. Children should never be detained with adults. They should be permitted regular, frequent contact with their family members, legal representatives, and others from the outside world, and should be given access to education, health and mental-health care, adequate food, and sanitary facilities.

3) Countries that retain the use of the death penalty or life without parole for children should end these practices immediately and amend their legislation accordingly.

Questions for journalists

- What is the policy on detention of children who have been before the judicial system?
- Are children held in detention who have not been found guilty of a crime?
- Are child refugees or asylum seekers held in detention?

Two articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child relate to the situation of children in conflict with the law: Article 37 on Torture and Deprivation of Liberty and Article 40 on the Administration of Juvenile Justice.

Article 37 states that no child shall be subjected to torture, cruel treatment or punishment, unlawful arrest or deprivation of liberty. Both capital punishment and life imprisonment without the possibility of release are prohibited for offences committed by people under 18. Any child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interests not to do so. A child who is detained shall have legal and other assistance as well as contact with the family.

Article 40 states that a child in conflict with the law has the right to treatment that promotes the child's sense of dignity and worth, takes the child's age into account and aims at his or her reintegration into society. The child is entitled to basic guarantees as well as legal or other assistance for his or her defence. Judicial proceedings and institutional placements shall be avoided wherever possible.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child held a General Day of Discussion at its ninth session in May 1995 on the Administration of Juvenile Justice. It recommended that states adopt "a child-oriented system, that recognises the child as a subject of fundamental rights and freedoms and stresses the need for all actions concerning children to be guided by the best interests of the child as a primary consideration".

Despite the recent focus of child-rights organisations on the importance of children's own views about decisions that affect them, children who are in conflict with the law are rarely listened to. This contravenes article 12 of the UNCRC, which is the right to be heard. The CRC has interpreted article 12 of the convention as requiring the provision of complaints procedures for children and

has highlighted the particular need for complaints procedures for children whose liberty is restricted.

The report on the committee's General Discussion on Administration of Juvenile Justice notes that children involved with the juvenile justice system "were ... often denied the right to lodge complaints when they were victims of violation of their fundamental rights, including in cases of ill-treatment and sexual abuse ..."

Juvenile justice

The administration of juvenile justice has been a concern for UN human rights organisations. The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) has created a sub-group on juvenile justice. Resources and mechanisms can be found at:
http://www.crin.org/resources/infodetail.asp?id=9711

Age of criminal responsibility

The Convention on the Rights of the Child calls for nations to establish a minimum age "below which children shall be presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the penal law." But the convention does not set a specific age, and it varies greatly.

International standards, such as the Beijing Rules for Juvenile Justice, recommend that the age of criminal responsibility be based on emotional, mental and intellectual maturity and that it not be fixed too low.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors countries' implementation of the convention, has recommended that the age be guided by the best interests of the child.

In the US, the age of criminal responsibility is established by state law. Only 13 states have set minimum ages, which range from six to 12. Most states rely on

common law, which holds that from age seven to age 14 children cannot be presumed to bear responsibility but can be held responsible.

In Japan, offenders below age 20 are tried in a family court, rather than in the criminal court system. In all Scandinavian countries, the age of criminal responsibility is 15, and adolescents under 18 are subject to a system of justice that is geared mostly towards social services, with incarceration as the last resort. As of April 1997, only 15 juveniles were serving a prison sentence in Sweden.

In China, children from 14 to 18 are dealt with by the juvenile justice system and may be sentenced to life imprisonment for particularly serious crimes.

In most countries of Latin America, the reform of juvenile justice legislation is under way. As a result, the age of adult criminal responsibility has been raised to 18 in Brazil, Colombia and Peru. Children from 12 to 18 are held responsible under a system of juvenile justice.

In most European countries, the age of adult criminal responsibility is between 13 and 16. In Ireland it is 12.

The wide variation in the age of criminal responsibility reflects a lack of international consensus. The number of countries with low ages indicates that many juvenile justice systems do not adequately consider the child's best interests.

NEWS STORY

Daily Mail (London), September 22, 2006

Bulger mother's fury at call to lift crime age to 14

THE MOTHER of murdered toddler James Bulger voiced outrage last night over proposals to raise the age of criminal responsibility from ten to 14. A senior government adviser on youth crime has claimed thousands of young teenage offenders should be spared jail and offered counselling instead.

But Jamie Bulger's mother Denise Fergus, whose two-year-old son was abducted

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and murdered by two 10-year-olds, called the plan a "disaster".

The softly-softly approach to youth crime is set out in a study published today by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. It is written by Rob Allen, a member of the Youth Justice Board who has provided expert advice to four Home Secretaries.

Mr Allen argues that Britain has a far younger age of criminal responsibility than most other Western countries, and that children aged 10 to 14 accused of crimes should be dealt with by family courts instead of magistrates and crown courts.

The scheme would mean some of Britain's most notorious offenders would have escaped public trial and long custodial sentences. Jon Venables and Robert Thompson both served eight years in custody for killing James on Merseyside in 1993.

Currently children must be 10 in England and Wales or eight in Scotland to face criminal charges, compared with 14 in Germany, Japan and Russia and 15 in Italy.

Mr Allen's report, entitled 'From Punishment to Problem Solving', calls for a move away from the world of 'cops, courts and corrections' towards an emphasis on meeting the health, educational and family difficulties which lie behind offending.

Mrs Fergus said, however: "That evil pair who killed James knew exactly what they were doing and they deserved to be punished for it. Lifting the age of criminal responsibility could mean more evil children getting away with murder." The Home Office said last night that while custody should always be a "last resort" for young offenders, there were currently no plans to review the age of criminal responsibility.

Age of criminal responsibility is just one variable influencing how juveniles are treated by justice systems. Other variables include whether there is a separate juvenile law based on child rights; whether a young person is subject to punitive sanctions or only to socio-educational measures; and whether the country has separate court systems and jails for young people. A juvenile justice system should provide legal protections and an objective standard for treatment.

In its absence, young people may be handled by the adult criminal justice system or be held in 'protective' custody, where they have no legal protections and may face arbitrary or harsh treatment.

Media and children in conflict with the law: protection of identity

In Britain, the Youth Justice and Criminal Act of 1999 made it an offence once police have begun an investigation to publish anything leading to identification of anyone under 18 who has allegedly committed an offence. This can be lifted if a journalist can persuade the court that reporting these details is in the public interest. These restrictions are lifted when the defendant reaches 18.

BBC Editorial Guidelines on identification of children

Difficult ethical issues arise when we consider whether identification or anonymity of children involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour is in their best long-term interest.

We should not normally identify children when featuring such behaviour to illustrate a practice, unless there is a clear editorial justification.

The decision to involve, feature or identify children whose parents are engaged in anti-social or criminal activity should only be made if the welfare of the child will not be harmed and if it is clearly editorially justified. This is particularly important when children may be at risk because, for example, they are living with an alcoholic parent, or being forced to work as couriers of illegal drugs.

Case study 1: UK: Mary Bell

Mary Bell was convicted in December 1968 of the murders of two boys, Martin Brown (aged four) and Brian Howe (three). Mary Bell is said to have strangled the boys "solely for the pleasure and excitement of killing".

Bell was 10 at the time of the murders. From the time of her conviction onward, she was the focus of a great deal of attention from the British press and also from the German *Stern* magazine. Her mother repeatedly sold stories about her to the press and often gave reporters writings she claimed to be Mary's. Bell herself made headlines when, in September 1979, she briefly escaped from the custody of Moore Court open prison.

Bell was released from custody in 1980 and was granted anonymity to start a new life (under an assumed name) with her daughter who was born in 1984. This daughter did not know of her mother's past until Bell's location was discovered by reporters and she and her mother had to leave their house with bed sheets over their heads. The daughter's anonymity was originally protected until she reached 18. However, on May 21, 2003, Bell won a High Court battle to have her own anonymity and that of her daughter extended for life.

Case study 2: UK: James Bulger killers

James 'Jamie' Bulger was a two-year old toddler who was abducted and murdered by two 10-year-old boys, Jon Venables and Robert Thompson, in Merseyside, England. The murder of a child by two children caused an immense public outpouring of shock, outrage and grief, particularly in Liverpool. The trial judge ordered that the two boys should be detained for *"very, very many years to come"*.

Shortly after the trial, Lord Taylor of Gosforth, the Lord Chief Justice, ordered that the two boys should serve a minimum of 10 years behind bars, which would have made them eligible for release in 2003. But the popular press and some sections of the public felt that the sentence was too lenient, and the editors of *The Sun* newspaper handed a petition bearing 300,000 signatures to then Home Secretary Michael Howard, in a bid to increase the time spent by both boys in custody. In 1995, the two boys' minimum period to be served was increased to 15 years, a ruling which meant they would not be considered for release until 2008, by which time they would both be 26 years old.

In 1999, lawyers acting for Venables and Thompson appealed to the European Court of Human Rights on the grounds that the boys' trial had not been impartial, since they were too young to be able to follow the proceedings and understand the workings of an adult court. They also claimed that Howard's intervention led to a *charged atmosphere*, making a fair trial impossible. The court found in the boys' favour.

The *Manchester Evening News* provoked controversy by naming the secure institutions in which the pair were housed, in possible breach of the injunction against press publicity which had been renewed early in 2001. In December of that year, the paper was found guilty of contempt of court, fined £30,000, and ordered to pay costs of £120,000.

The injunction against the press reporting on the boys' whereabouts applies only in England and Wales, and newspapers in Scotland or other countries can legally publish such information. With easy cross-border communications due to the internet, many expected their identities and whereabouts to quickly become public knowledge.

In April 2007, it was reported that the Home Office had spent £13,000 on an injunction preventing a non-UK magazine from revealing the new identities of the James Bulger killers.

It has been speculated that creating and preserving the killers' new identities from any vigilante threat and the prying eyes of the international media could cost about £1.5m.

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

CRIN - Guide to International Norms and Standards for Juvenile Justice 10/08/2006 (Report on the tenth session, October/ November 1995, CRC/C/46, para. 220): http://www.crin.org/resources/infodetail.asp?id=9711

Save The Children UK, 'Juvenile Justice: Modern Concepts of Working with Children in Conflict with the Law':
http://www.crin.org/resources/infodetail.asp?id=11042

UN: *An untold story of children in conflict with the law:*

http://www.un.org/events/tenstories_2006/story.asp?storyID=2800

CRIN – Theme: Children in Conflict with the Law:

http://www.crin.org/themes/ViewTheme.asp?id=16

BBC Justice for Children around the World: Radio Segments and Podcasts which could be used in class:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/documentary_archive/6090608.stm

BBC News - Court Rights for Killers of Jamie Bulger:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/295752.stm

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/567578.stm

'Kids and Crime: A Comparative Study of Youth Coverage in Japan and the United States', Tom Brislin and Yasuhiro Inoue. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics,* 2007 22(1), pp3-17

Most media law books will contain a section dealing with reporting, children and the law.

4. GETTING STORIES & SOURCES

Framing Stories in the Context of the CRC

KEY LEARNING POINTS

• What is the role of the journalist?

• What are sources?

• Can children be sources?

• The importance of sources to journalists

• Anonymous sources

• Where do stories come from?

The role of the journalist

THE journalist is not necessarily an advocate for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. While most people would favour protecting children and ensuring the best for them, the journalist has a public-interest duty and adheres to his or her professional ethics. The journalist retains the right to offer a critique where appropriate and ensures that all voices are heard.

Within the spectrum of human rights, the concept of children's rights is a highly contested notion. For example, some commentators have argued that a child's welfare is the sole responsibility of a parent or guardian and that enforcing children's rights means a weakening of parent and family rights. As journalists, it is important to question and, where necessary, challenge preconceived notions of children's rights.

In the 1920s, as modern journalism was just taking form, writer Walter Lippmann and American philosopher John Dewey debated the role of journalism in a democracy. Their differing philosophies still characterise a debate about the role of journalism in society and the nation state.

Lippmann believed that journalism's role at the time was to act as a mediator or translator between the public and policymaking elites. The journalist became the middleman. When elites spoke, journalists listened and recorded the information,

distilled it, and passed it on to the public for their consumption. His reasoning behind this was that the public was not in a position to deconstruct the growing and complex flurry of information produced in modern society, and so an intermediary was needed to filter news for the masses.

Dewey, on the other hand, believed that the public was not only capable of understanding the issues created or responded to by the elite, but that it was in the public forum that decisions should be made, after discussion and debate. When issues were thoroughly vetted, then the best ideas would bubble to the surface. Dewey believed journalists not only had to inform the public, but should report on issues other than by simply passing on information. Dewey believed that journalists should take in the information and then weigh the consequences for the public of the policies being enacted by the elites.

While Lippman's journalistic philosophy might be more acceptable to government leaders, Dewey's approach is a better descriptor of how many journalists see their role in society, and, in turn, how many people expect journalists to function. Americans, for example, may criticise some of the excesses committed by journalists, but they tend to expect journalists to serve as watchdogs on government, businesses and other actors, enabling people to make informed decisions on the issues of the time.

As we have discussed, the media must act in the public interest. It is widely accepted that journalism's role is to hold to account public personalities and institutions whose functions affect social and political life. This is the source of much of the material for stories. In the context of children's rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, this can give us a new perspective on news.

For example, in a story about child abuse, the storyline should not just be about the abuse itself but governmental responsibility for children and their rights, and the protections children should have under the UN convention. Almost all countries in the world have ratified the convention, and it is the job of the journalist to hold these governments to account in light of the commitment they have made by signing up to the treaty.

In addition, journalists should be aware that it is possible to write about the concept of children's rights in and of itself as well as writing about children within

a children's rights framework. For example, an incident involving a child could be an opportunity to pose a question regarding the rights of the child involved. The incident could also be used as an opportunity to initiate a debate on children's rights in a wider context.

Questions for journalists

- How is your government implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child?
- Has it complied with the requirement to publicise the convention's principles and provisions?
- Is it behind schedule on submitting its reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child? Has there been any public consultation?

Is it the responsibility of editors and senior journalists to put children on the agenda? Journalists and senior editors used to be regarded as 'gatekeepers' – they would determine what news items would be selected for publication or broadcast, and what was on the news agenda for the time. But, with the advent of online journalism and the fact that many bloggers can be regarded as journalists of a kind, that traditional role has been challenged. Bill Kovach, author of the *Elements of Journalism*, has said: "Our old notion of journalist as gatekeeper is obsolete. The internet has torn down all the fences." An editor will increasingly now focus more on weeding out inaccurate information and putting news in context and perspective.

However, the reader has no idea whether the information he or she is accessing directly on the internet is factual or flawed. If journalism is the rightful guardian of disclosure of news and information, and what should be disclosed and what shouldn't, it has therefore a duty and a right to maintain that position. This duty includes keeping children's rights issues on the news agenda.

Skills needed to report on children's rights

Human rights will always be an essential component of journalism, but most media practitioners are uninformed or even ignorant of issues surrounding human

rights. Education on human rights and child rights is the first step to helping journalists report these rights.

Journalists who are familiar with child rights issues have the right tools to play the 'watchdog' role. They can be the eyes and ears of the public and help to ensure that people, particularly those in public life, are acting properly and honestly.

The power of language and its misuse may also affect the reporting of human rights abuses. The language used by the media while reporting crime, domestic violence, mob violence and other forms of political violence have perpetuated violations of human rights. By merely reusing sources' words (such as *terrorist)* the media have continued, perhaps unintentionally, to demonise certain people and communities.

Have children been *trafficked* or *smuggled*?
Do people have *disagreements* or *rows*?
Are children described as 'tots', 'kids', 'kiddies'? Is that demeaning?

These are just some examples of the problems journalists can have with language. Reporting stories which relate to children also requires particular journalistic skills; for example, a story about trafficking in children requires good investigative skills. Investigative reporting is a detailed in-depth examination, extending over a period. The essence of this type of writing is close attention to detail and systematic interviewing of people involved so that a dossier is built up from which general deductions can be drawn. It often involves research into the law in search of information where the public interest is of overriding importance.

What is of key importance is how we treat the subject matter, not only when dealing with children directly as sources, but how we approach the issues. UNICEF has issued guidelines on reporting on children which provide useful issues to consider when writing about children, and points for discussion.

As always, journalists bring to all stories, including those concerning child rights, the basic values of **impact, timeliness, proximity, conflict, currency, novelty and relativity.** Without those values, however good a story might appear to either the journalist or the child rights advocates, it will not engage an audience.

UNICEF Guidelines for Reporting on Children

1. Do not further stigmatise any child; avoid categorisations or descriptions that expose a child to negative reprisals – including additional physical or psychological harm – or to lifelong abuse, discrimination or rejection by their local communities.

2. Always provide an accurate context for the child's story or image.

3. Always change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as:

a. a victim of sexual abuse or exploitation,

b. a perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse,

c. HIV-positive, living with AIDS or has died from AIDS, unless the child, a parent or a guardian gives fully informed consent,

d. charged or convicted of a crime.

4. In certain circumstances of risk or potential risk of harm or retribution, change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as:

a. a current or former child combatant,

b. an asylum seeker, a refugee or an internally displaced person.

5. In certain cases, using a child's identity – their name and/or recognisable image – is in the child's best interests. However, when the child's identity is used, they must still be protected against harm and supported through any stigmatisation or reprisals. Some examples of these special cases are:

a. when a child initiates contact with the reporter, wanting to exercise their right to freedom of expression and their right to have their opinion heard;

b. when a child is part of a sustained programme of activism or social mobilisation and wants to be so identified;

c. when a child is engaged in a psychosocial programme and claiming their name and identity is part of their healthy development.

6. Confirm the accuracy of what the child has to say, either with other children or an adult, preferably with both.

7. When in doubt about whether a child is at risk, report on the general situation for children rather than on an individual child, no matter how newsworthy the story.

Questioning the UN convention

Journalists are ideally placed to demand action by the state to honour its international obligations. Are there campaigns you could initiate to improve awareness of the convention among both public and politicians? Do your stories improve public understanding about children's rights, and the role of your government's policies in promoting and protecting them?

It is important that journalists feel free to offer a critique of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and question it. Some journalists might have a problem with the CRC's view that childhood ends at 18, if that means some people aged 16 or 17 who are in the public eye cannot be interviewed or questioned robustly. This is an area that might be the subject of a discussion.

Talk to experts, child rights activists and children themselves to inform yourself about the problems facing children in your country. Have you sought explanations from local and central government about shortcomings in the provision of services for children and the defence of their rights?

Have you made space for the voices of children to be heard by the government and civil society? Have you checked the claims of non-governmental organisations and drawn attention to their successes and any shortcomings?

Is the convention a regulation or a moral guideline? As it isn't a law but something that countries voluntarily agree to ratify, is it a moral benchmark against which a country should be judged?

Sources for stories

Sources of information are the bloodline of the journalist. They provide the essential basic information for further development as news stories, radio features and television packages. They can be categorised into two sources – primary and secondary:

Primary sources

Contacts	Courts/tribunals
Freelances	Local government
Routine calls	Community affairs
Pressure groups	News conferences

Secondary sources

Letters to the editor	Press agencies
Classifieds	News organisations (Reuters, ITN)
News releases	Local government
Other news media	Central government

Journalists obtain information from primary sources often through interview. If children are the primary source, the journalist should be aware of the issues of interviewing children and considerations to take into account. These will be dealt with in another chapter, but it is generally recognised that young people's privacy should be given greater protection than adults'.

Sources are a major issue in journalism. Some scholarly studies show that the range of sources used by journalists is small and tends to favour the establishment. There is also the question of anonymous sources; the journalists' traditional view is that they can never name a source to whom a guarantee of anonymity has been given. So important is this that some countries have passed laws allowing journalists to maintain such anonymity even when information is sought by a court. The traditional response by journalists to a request for the name of a source is that to give a name, however pressing the reason, would undermine journalism itself and mean no-one could ever trust journalists again.

Would this rule apply to someone who admitted child abuse? Many journalists have an absolutist view of this and would say you can never, under any circumstances, reveal an anonymous source. A minority suggest that this issue needs further debate. (See Michael Foley, 'Absolutism and Confidentiality', *Ethical Space,* Vol 1 No 2, 2004.

Where can we look for information specifically on children and their rights? Here are some suggestions:

National sources

- Local health authorities
- Social services
- Schools
- Family law courts
- Teacher organisations
- Parent organisations

Child rights organisations

- Ombudsmen for children
- National child rights coalitions:
  http://www.crin.org/NGOGroupforCRC/ViewOrgsByC.asp?typeID=7
- Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media:
  www.childrenyouthandmediacentre.co.uk
- ChildHope: http://www.childhope.org.uk
- Children's Express: www.childrens-express.org/
- ChildWatch International: www.childwatch.uio.no/

Students should list national and child rights sources for their own countries.

International organisations

- UNICEF: www.unicef.org
- UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre on Children's Rights: www.unicef-icdc.org
- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights:
  http://www.ohchr.org
- Child Rights Information Network: www.crin.org
- Save the Children Alliance: http://www.savethechildren.net
- Plan International: www.plan-international.org
- Human Rights Watch: http://www.hrw.org/
- Amnesty International: http://www.amnesty.org/
- Defence for Children International:
  http://childhouse.uio.no/childrens_rights/dci_what.html
- Media Activities and Good Ideas by, with and for Children (MAGIC):
  http://www.unicef.org/magic/index.html

Committee on Rights of Child

- Committee on the Rights of the Child:
  http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm
- Country reports submitted by each country at their sessions with the UNCRC:
  http://www.ohchr.info/english/bodies/crc/sessions.htm or
  http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf
- Shadow Reports – NGO alternative reports can be searched by a combination of country, session and by organisation:
  http://www.crin.org/NGOGroupforCRC/search.asp

The contact book: journalists should start a contact book at the start of their careers (while still studying journalism). Names, addresses, phone numbers and email address should be kept safely. Reporters who specialise in children's affairs, or a related area such as education or health, should phone good contacts regularly to see what is taking place within the area.

Sources of news can include other news outlets. A news item concerning children might not mention or be aware of child rights, so can be followed up. Academic articles in journals with a small circulation offer recent research that can also be a rich source of stories.

Ask questions: why is a new school being opened? Why is a school being closed? Has a new housing development got adequate facilities for children, such as pre-school, playgrounds, schools? What are the facilities for children in local hospitals? Have any local police been given special training for dealing with young people? What is the nature of that training?

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

Media Wise Trust & UNICEF: *Children's Rights and the Media*, 1999:
http://www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=125

A number of general journalism text books, such as David Randall's *The Universal Journalist* or Richard Keeble's *The Newspaper Handbook*, deals with issues such as sources in a general sense.

Michael Foley, 'Absolutism and Confidentiality', *Ethical Space*, Vol 1 No 2, 2004: www.ethicalspace.org.

Key terms in dealing with sources

Much of the jargon of journalism has passed into the language, via films and novels. However, there is not always agreement as to the exact meaning of words, so it is important that you explain what you mean when talking to a source or interviewing. Also be aware that some people have more media awareness. As with so much else, common sense is often the best guide. Remember that writing about child rights tends to be a very sensitive area.

On and off the record

People involved in child rights might want to blow the whistle on bad practice or abuse. Given the sensitivity of the area, it is imperative that journalists understand how to talk to someone off the record and what is meant. Always explain what you mean by off the record and what it covers when talking to an anonymous source.

Attributed quotes

This is what most journalists want and need, to report exactly what a person said. It lends authority and authenticity to a story. Ideally the quote should be attributed to a named person.

On the record

When a journalist is speaking to a source on the record, remarks made are automatically on the record, in that they can be quoted and the person named.

Off the record

Anything said off the record should not be quoted and is for background information only. It is important that the person you are speaking with understands that any agreement to go off the record is made before anything is said. Do not agree to go off the record too often; your story will look flimsy and the cynical might suspect that some of the information is made up. Information given might appear as "it is understood that …" In some cases, armed with information given off the record you might be able to question someone else and get it on the record.

Non-attribution

Someone may want something reported, but not have their name associated with it (giving rise to: 'industry sources', 'sources close to …', 'senior sources', etc. An individual may be willing to comment on an industry, but does not want to be seen commenting on competitors. A government press officer in some countries always works on a non-

attributable basis. Try to convince people to allow their name to be associated with the information as it makes a better story and has more authority.

No comment

Try to convince people who say 'no comment' that it may lead the public to make up their own minds and reach their own conclusions.

5. INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

CHILDREN AS SOURCES AND GETTING CONSENT

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- How should children be interviewed?

- Should children be interviewed only with a responsible adult present?

- When can a child be interviewed without a parent or guardian present?

- Does interviewing children require different skills from those used in interviewing adults?

CHILDREN are rarely part of the news agenda until something delightful or terrible happens to them. News is regarded as something primarily for and about adults.

The birth of a child to celebrity parents, revelations about the sexual abuse of children or children dying in refugee camps may make headlines, but the focus is likely to be on the adult response rather than the viewpoint of the child.

If there is one grievance that children and young people share, it is that nobody listens to them. Yet they have revealing insights to offer adults. They share adults' physical and social environment and also experience, in their own way, the impact of crime or economic and legislative changes.

When children are represented in the media, they tend to be stereotyped and patronised. Appointing journalists to specialise in gathering stories and opinions from children about significant newsworthy events is one way that media organisations can begin to adjust the balance. Developing networks of young reporters who can provide a fresh view on the world could also make a difference.

Understanding how young people see the world around them and transmitting that vision to the public is one of the most challenging tasks facing journalists, yet they are rarely trained to deal with children. They have a responsibility to portray children fairly, without doing any harm to them in the collection and publication of information.

Balancing the journalistic obligation to tell the truth with the need to protect children is filled with difficulties and ethical questions. Should reporters intervene in the lives of endangered children? Should journalists interview children after they have been involved in a traumatic event? Under what circumstances is it appropriate to fully identify or obscure the identity of children?

It is generally recognised that young people's privacy should be given greater protection than that of adults. In many countries, however, there are no laws prohibiting using the names, words or images of children who have consented to be interviewed in a public space.

When judgements about how to proceed are being made, the best interests of the child should be an overriding consideration. Journalists should aim to minimise harm to the child, both in the circumstances of the interview and with regard to the likely consequences of what is published.

Safeguarding the welfare of children and young people need not run counter to sound journalism practice. All journalists need to do is ask themselves some basic questions:

- Are under-age children being interviewed with the consent of adults? Is there a legal context in which interviews of children may take place?
- Has the interview been conducted in a child-friendly manner, including allowing sufficient time and a comfortable environment?
- Have the potential consequences of the child's comments, both short-term and long-term, been considered and explained to the interviewee?
- Have arrangements been made to ensure that children are protected after publication, and that support systems are in place should other children contact the publisher?
- Are children told what will be done with what they say and are they permitted to see the finished product?

With the advent of 'real time' news coverage, simple rules for working with young people are vital for staff working under tight deadlines. CNN has developed a list of half a dozen factors to consider when deciding whether or not to interview children for breaking news stories. These include:

- o age and maturity

      o   the degree of violence involved

      o   the child's connection to any victims

      o   the presence of parental permission

      o   whether the footage is taped or live

The BBC also has strict guidelines for working with children: see **BBC editorial principles on children.**

Children tend often to provide adults and authority figures with what they think they want, which is not always the same as what they might really want to say. Research shows that children provide more accurate information when they are given the time to tell their stories freely, rather than when they are asked direct questions. Indirect questions may provide a margin of safety for the child.

While it may be wise to ensure that adults known to the children are nearby when interviewing them, the most authentic information will be obtained when children are in an environment with their peers. Nevertheless, it is generally important to obtain the consent of an appropriate adult (parent or carer) if possible.

While the general rule should be to seek permission from an appropriate adult and to ensure that the subject matter of the interview will not be upsetting, there are topics where seeking children's views is not problematic. For example, a story about nutrition and what children eat might be accompanied by a vox pop of children saying what they like to eat, or children saying how much pocket money they get.

Using children in images

Some of the most powerful images of tragedy, conflict, natural disasters and hope presented by the media have featured children. For example, the destructive force of napalm will forever be associated with nine-year old Phan Thi Kim Phuc running naked along a road in Vietnam. The photo won the World Press Photo award in 1972 for Nick Ut. It is worth discussing if this photograph would be published today and if not why not? Did the publication of this photograph have the interest of the child at its centre, or was it a wider consideration, the war in Vietnam, that led to its publication?

The photo may be viewed at:

http://www.worldpressphoto.org/index.php?option=com_photogallery&task=view&id=177&Itemid=115&bandwidth=high

A compelling aspect of images such as these is that the children are identified; they are real people with names and histories. Yet identifying children without giving their names can be fatal. The identification of a child soldier in a Western newspaper resulted in the assassination of that child thousands of miles away in a war-torn African country. Those who abuse children want no witnesses to their cruelty. During the Kosovan crisis, editors in the Balkans declined to use pictures of children driven into exile because they knew the risks of identifying potential witnesses at war crimes trials. There was no such reticence in other Western media, which saw that the power of these images would encourage intervention by the United Nations and NATO.

Using pictures of children caught up in war, crime and natural disasters requires strong judgement. Photojournalists have complained about their pictures being used inappropriately and out of context. Aid workers have complained about camera crews setting up pictures of bereft children in refugee camps, unaware that the children's apparent fear and trauma may be the result of sudden confrontation with foreign journalists. NGOs who are quick to complain about the media's abuse of children's rights may themselves exploit images of children to raise funds. What is more effective to convey their work than pictures of children?

IMAGES OF CHILDREN

Children are often used in photographs of wars or disasters, as they have an emotional appeal.

View the photographs of the winners of the World Press Photo competition at http://www.worldpressphoto.org/ and make up your own mind about using images of children.

Under what circumstances, if ever, do 'news values' override the best interests of the child? What techniques are appropriate when constructing images of children, especially to illustrate stories where the identity of the child may have special risks attached?

UNICEF has created the following guidelines for interviewing children:

UNICEF Guidelines for Interviewing Children

1. Do no harm to any child; avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are judgmental, insensitive to cultural values, that place a child in danger or expose a child to humiliation, or that reactivate a child's pain and grief from traumatic events.

2. Do not discriminate in choosing children to interview because of sex, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities.

3. No staging: Do not ask children to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own history.

4. Ensure that the child or guardian knows they are talking with a reporter. Explain the purpose of the interview and its intended use.

5. Obtain permission from the child and his or her guardian for all interviews, videotaping and, when possible, for documentary photographs. When possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing. Permission must be obtained in circumstances that ensure that the child and guardian are not coerced in any way and that they understand that they are part of a story that might be disseminated locally and globally. This is usually only ensured if the permission is obtained in the child's language and if the decision is made in consultation with an adult the child trusts.

6. Pay attention to where and how the child is interviewed. Limit the number of interviewers and photographers. Try to make certain that children are comfortable and able to tell their story without outside pressure, including from the interviewer. In film, video and radio interviews, consider what the choice of visual or audio background might imply about the child and her or his life and story. Ensure that the child would not be endangered or adversely affected by showing their home, community or general whereabouts.

After the interview …

- Thank them for their time and for talking to you.
- Ask them if they have any questions for you.
- Think about compensating them for the time they've spent with you (especially, for example, working or street children) but remember this is compensation for time rather than a payment. Payment for stories can

lead to distortion as often people give a journalist the sort of information they believe a journalist wants, especially if more sensational information brings more money.

- Explain again what the article will be used for, and arrange to send it to them.
- Ask them if they want to leave anything out, or change their names or any other details.

Save the Children – Guidelines for Interviewing Children

Preparation

Be aware of your own attitudes to children. Don't patronise them or show that you know more than they do. Put yourself in their place, and treat them with respect.

Explain in detail what you're doing, and why you want to talk to them. Show examples of publications with other children's interviews. Explain what you'll use the material for, and seek their permission to use it. Be honest about what you're doing, and don't raise expectations (e.g. of money, a job, medical help).

If you need a translator, choose someone who relates well to children, won't intimidate them, and understands the purpose of the interview. Tell the translator to translate everything, to say the child's words, and not merely give a summary of what they say.

Use a tape recorder (unless your shorthand is excellent). Otherwise the originality of the child's language and expression may get lost.

Find a suitable place (inside or out) that is quiet and where the child feels comfortable and relaxed. Let them choose it.

Ensure that adults are out of the way – except for the translator and perhaps a project worker, teacher or other adult that the child knows and trusts.

It can help to interview a small group of two to five children so that they get support and ideas from each other. But think about how to identify who is saying what.

Try to create a relaxed environment. Have a chat, play a game, let them hear themselves on the tape recorder. Get down to their level – e.g. by sitting on the floor with them.

Bring something personal, such as photos that can put them at ease or start a discussion.

The interview

Let them set the pace and tell their story in their own time.

Beware of using labels (e.g. 'prostitute' rather than 'sex worker'), which they may not use or like.

Ask the easy questions first – e.g. their name, age, where they live. Keep using their name when addressing them.

Ask open questions. Avoid too many closed questions, such as 'do you?' which call for a yes or no answer.

You may have to ask questions in several different ways before you get the information you need. It's worth gently persisting, talking around a subject, and even challenging children to think about the questions you're asking.

Be aware of when the child is uncomfortable, and don't push them on sensitive issues. Be prepared to finish the interview or move on to a less sensitive topic if they become upset.

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

Canada's Media Awareness Network has devised a Media Toolkit for Youth, with a section for young people on 'Knowing Your Rights', with advice when they are being interviewed by the press:
http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm

The Poynter Institute in the United States has posted guideline*s* on its website as a free service to all those interested in how to work responsibly with young people: http://www.poynter.org/

Save the Children UK has published a booklet, *Interviewing Children. A guide for Journalists and Others* offering sensible guidelines on how to interview children. Researched with children from around the world, it is useful for print and broadcast journalists, newsrooms and other media outlets:
www.savethechildren.org.uk

6. CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

KEY LEARNING POINTS

• Child soldiers as a story

• Context, war, civil disruption, collapse of civil society

• Sensationalism of the issue of child soldiers

• Transferring skills to other stories

THE issue of child soldiers has become a major story in the media. Stories involving children as soldiers raise major and complex issues not only from a children's rights perspective, but also major ethical issues to do with reporting in war and civil conflict.

The issues centre on sensationalism. Is it right to show images of children in a conflict zone that would not be shown in a non-conflict area? Does the portrayal of an 11-year-old wearing military fatigues and carrying a Kalashnikov nearly as big as himself raise serious issues or just give a good front-page image? Are journalists duty-bound when showing child soldiers to also cover attempts to re-integrate these children in society?

The child soldier is an ongoing story. As with other long-term stories, media fatigue may allow the story to fade. The journalist, however, should look at different angles, such as how these children are reintegrated and find ways to keep this issue before the public.

In 2000, the United Nations adopted an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. The protocol prohibits the forced recruitment of children under 18 or their use in hostilities. To date, it has been ratified by more than 110 countries.

The recruitment and use of an estimated 300,000 boys and girls in armed conflicts across the world is now widely recognised as a violation of children's rights that demands a tough international response.

Armed conflict causes children to miss out on their childhood in a multitude of ways. Children recruited as soldiers are denied an education and protection, and are often unable to access essential health-care services. Those who are displaced or separated from their families face similar deprivations. Conflict heightens the risk of children being exposed to abuse, violence and exploitation. Sexual violence is often used as a weapon of war.

Even children who are able to remain with their families, in their own homes, may face a greater risk of exclusion from school, health-care facilities and protection because of the destruction of physical infrastructure, strains on health-care and education systems and increasing personal insecurity caused by the conflict or its remnants – such as landmines and unexploded ordnance.

In over 20 countries around the world, children are direct participants in war. Often subjected to horrific violence, an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 children are serving as soldiers for both rebel groups and government forces in current armed conflicts. These young combatants participate in all aspects of contemporary warfare. They wield AK-47s and M-16s on the front lines of combat, serve as human mine-detectors, participate in suicide missions, carry supplies, and act as spies or lookouts.

For example, thousands of children were recruited by the Communist Party of Nepal during Nepal's 10-year civil war. Children served on the front lines, received weapons training, and carried out crucial military and logistical support duties for the Maoists. Even after signing a comprehensive peace agreement with the government in November 2006, the Maoists continued to recruit children and refused to release them from their forces.

During the 13 years of civil war in Burundi, children were recruited and used as combatants and general help by all sides in the conflict. More than 3,000 children were demobilised, but one rebel group, the National Liberation Forces (Forces Nationales pour la Libération, FNL), continues to use children as combatants and for various logistical duties. In addition, dozens of children who served or who are accused of having served in the FNL are in government custody, without assistance.

Children typically make obedient soldiers as they are physically vulnerable and

easily intimidated. Many are abducted or recruited by force, and often compelled to follow orders under threat of death. Others join armed groups out of desperation. As society breaks down during conflict – leaving children no access to school, driving them from their homes, or separating them from family members – many children perceive armed groups as their best chance for survival. Others seek escape from poverty or join military forces to avenge family members who have been killed.

Facts about child soldiers

Although there are no exact figures, hundreds of thousands of children under 18 serve in government forces or armed rebel groups. Some are as young as eight.

Since 2001, the participation of child soldiers has been reported in 21 ongoing or recent armed conflicts in almost every region of the world.

Children are uniquely vulnerable to military recruitment because of their emotional and physical immaturity. They are easily manipulated and can be drawn into violence that they are too young to resist or understand.

Technological advances in weaponry and the proliferation of small arms have contributed to the increased use of child soldiers. Lightweight automatic weapons are simple to operate, often easily accessible, and can be used by children as easily as adults.

Children are most likely to become child soldiers if they are poor, separated from their families, displaced from their homes, living in a combat zone or have limited access to education.

Many children join armed groups because of economic or social pressure, or because children believe that the group will offer food or security. Others are forcibly recruited, press-ganged or abducted by armed groups.

Both girls and boys are used as child soldiers. In some countries, like Nepal, Sri Lanka and Uganda, a third or more of the child soldiers were reported to be girls. In some conflicts, girls may be raped, or given to military commanders as 'wives'.

Children are sometimes forced to commit atrocities against their own family or neighbours. Such practices help ensure that the child is 'stigmatized' and unable to return to his or her home community.

In some countries, former child soldiers have access to rehabilitation programmes to help them locate their families, get back into school, receive vocational training, and re-enter civilian life. However, many children have no access to such programmes. They may have no way to support themselves and risk being re-recruited.

The strengthening of international law and recognition by the UN Security Council of the problem of children's military recruitment are important achievements. However, these initiatives should be complemented by practical measures that give children, their families and communities viable alternatives to recruitment that prioritise the release and demobilisation of children and support their reintegration in society.

An urgent priority is to demobilise everyone under 18 from armed forces. The participation of children should be recognised in all peace agreements so that effective planning can be made for reintegration programmes.

The process of reintegration helps children to establish new foundations in life. Re-establishing contact with the family and the community is important for former child soldiers who have grown up away from their families and who have been deprived of many of the normal opportunities for physical, emotional and intellectual development. Providing educational and vocational opportunities for former child combatants helps to prevent them rejoining military units, and at the same time improves the economic security of their families.

For a former child soldier, an education is more than a route to employment. It can also help to normalise life and to develop an identity separate from that of the soldier. A difficulty to be faced is the likelihood that former combatants may have fallen far behind in their schooling, and may be placed in classes with much younger children. Specific measures may be required, such as establishing special classes for former child soldiers, who can then be reintegrated into regular schools.

Several measures have been identified which can reinforce the local capacity to minimise or prevent the use of children as soldiers. For example, local communities should be made more aware of national and international laws

governing the age of recruitment. NGOs, religious groups and civil society in general can play important roles in establishing ethical frameworks that promote as unacceptable children's participation in armed conflicts. In Peru, forced recruitment drives have declined where parish churches have denounced the activity. In El Salvador, Guatemala and Paraguay, ethnic groups and the mothers of child soldiers have formed organisations to press authorities to release under-age soldiers.

Another important preventive measure is the active and early documentation and tracing of unaccompanied children in refugee or displaced persons camps. Locating refugee camps far from conflict zones can also reduce the chance of children being enticed or recruited into warring groups.

The UNCRC contains several articles that refer to this issue, namely article 38 on armed conflict and article 39 on the rehabilitative care of child victims of armed conflicts. Additionally, on 12 February 2002, the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict entered into force. The protocol requires that ratifying governments ensure that children under 18 are not recruited compulsorily into their armed forces. It also calls on ratifying governments to do everything feasible to ensure that members of their armed forces under 18 do not take part in hostilities.

Case studies of UK contravening the UNCRC with regard to age of soldiers going into conflict:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/478077.stm
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6328771.stm

The Optional Protocol must always be interpreted in light of the original treaty as a whole; in this case, in light of the principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child and child participation.

Two million children have been killed in armed conflict in the last decade. In countless cases, the impact of armed conflict on children's lives remains invisible. The children themselves may be removed from the public, in institutions, on the streets or surviving as victims of prostitution. Those who have lost parents often experience humiliation, rejection and discrimination, suffering in silence as their

self-esteem crumbles.

Child soldiers in Sri Lanka:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4712318.stm

The media and children in armed conflict

The presence of child soldiers in conflicts throughout the world has become not only a humanitarian crisis but a media sensation. Television and magazines supply images of cigar-smoking, gun-toting 11-year-olds while official reports from the United Nations and a host of human rights organisations expose alarming details of what is usually described as a 'growing phenomenon'. Child soldiers now feature in films such as Blood Diamond and a novel by Dave Eggers, while Brad Pitt has produced a documentary on their plight. In 2007 Starbucks launched a book club with a first-person account by an ex-boy killer. But are these stories beneficial?

For example, in northern Uganda, the Lords Resistance Army's (LRA) use of child soldiers has attracted international media attention but little action. One law student working in Uganda for War Child Canada found that: "Many locals take issue with the way that the international media represents what is happening in northern Uganda. Stories tend to focus on the admitted tragedy of child soldiers and night commuters – children who walk miles each night to escape the LRA threat – perhaps at the expense of broader underlying problems, such as the lack of security in the IDP (internally displaced person) camps, and the inability of IDPs to meet their most basic needs." ['War remains a constant in the lives of Northern Ugandans. Riddell (2005). www.law.utoronto.ca/documents/ihrp/report05_Riddell.doc]

The media coverage affects the flow of international donations and, even when motivated by the most altruistic intentions, this can create perverse incentives and have a detrimental effect on an impoverished society.

Funded partially by the World Bank, the Ugandan Amnesty Commission, which

provides legal amnesty for abducted soldiers, has begun distributing resettlement packages to returnees. Yet at a recent conference on the subject of reintegration, stakeholders voiced concern that such monies would cause resentment in the camps, where people have nothing, and actually make being a rebel soldier into a more desirable economic alternative than being simply an 'innocent' IDP.

CASE STUDY: The Observer newspaper: 'Why we have fallen for Africa's lost boys':
http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,2067762,00.html

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The media's role in helping the public understand emergencies is key to mobilising effective responses and saving children's lives. However, the leading news agency Reuters found that children were bearing the brunt of the world's worst "forgotten emergencies", their plight scarcely making a blip on the international news radar.

Reuters AlertNet conducted a poll of humanitarian experts and journalists that highlights the planet's most dangerous places for children. It analysed global media coverage in English of the top 10 child hotspots chosen by respondents and found little correlation between the scale of suffering and relative column inches. Instead, perceived geopolitical importance to Western powers seemed to drive media attention, with Iraq, Palestinian territories and Afghanistan hogging the lion's share of the limelight. Does the journalist not have a responsibility to children in other areas of conflict?

As a journalist, you have a responsibility to those children that you do report on. What you produce will be absorbed by people who may have no experience of the horrendous events endured by the children. Your subject may become the object of strangers' pity, sympathy or even generosity. But what happens to the children with whom the journalist has engaged?

For example, refugee camps can be bewildering and frightening places for adults, let alone children, especially if they are far from familiar surroundings. Aid workers complain that the arrival of foreign media can add to the trauma felt by children. It can also raise false expectations among those who have some idea

about the role of the media.

To counter this, the journalism ethics charity, MediaWise Trust, has created guidelines for reporters interviewing children in times of war and disaster**,** to avoid unwittingly causing harm when the primary intention is to 'get the story out'.

MediaWise Trust: Guidelines for Reporters Interviewing Children in Times of War and Disaster

1. **Put the best interests of the child first**. Your reports can have unexpected consequences, so *think* about your motivation, the way the story is likely to be presented, and what comeback there may be on the child. One key issue is their identity. For example, a (former) 'child soldier' who talks to the media may risk assassination if their controller realises s/he is passing information that might incriminate adults. Similarly child witnesses to atrocities may face retribution, even in refugee camps.

2. **Seek permissions where possible**. If children are in the custody of responsible adults, find out more about their circumstances before talking with them. It is entirely inappropriate to interview severely traumatised children, and the more distressed the child the more important it is to interview them in the presence of an adult known to them. Always check whether it is appropriate to identify them fully (by name or photograph).

3. **Consider the pros and cons of full identification.** Acknowledging the personal identity of a child is an important element of showing respect and gaining confidence, but revealing it fully to the public may not be appropriate. The child may have no objections, but as a responsible adult you have to consider the implications. Even when interviewing children who have lost contact with their families, be circumspect about revealing their full identity. Include sufficient clues to alert a genuine relative, but beware of supplying full identification in case you are putting them at additional risk. All media is now global – so your story may be seen by people elsewhere whose motives for contacting the children may be suspect. If in doubt, seek advice from adults known to the child. Is that picture really necessary?

4. **Always explain.** Try to ensure that the child knows what you are doing. You cannot be sure whether they regard you as friend or foe, so begin by explaining who you are, why you want to talk to them and what you will do with the

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information you gain, and who your audience is likely to be. Show them your identification, and show them how your equipment works.

5. **Give them time.** A pressing deadline may control your agenda, but it means nothing to traumatised children. Where possible allow them to get to know you, even if it is only over a few days. You need to be able to give them time; if you cannot, think twice about engaging with them. They are not there for you; they see you, as an adult, as there for them. Their welfare and livelihood are more important than their 'story', and they are more likely to open up once they have become more familiar with your presence. Above all, really listen to what they are saying, rather than simply seizing on 'quotable quotes'. Even at the best of times individual children dislike being portrayed as representing a group or 'type'. You may be able to generalise after talking with several children, but try to acknowledge their unique experience rather than seeking 'iconic' images and stories about children in crisis.

6. **Double-check wherever possible.** Children can be fascinating and compelling witnesses, but their lack of experience and vocabulary can lead to confusion. They may be anxious to please and tell you what you want to hear rather than what they know. The stories told by traumatised children may describe their feelings and fears as much as if not more than actuality. Do not rely on them as 'hard evidence', until you have been able to check facts with other witnesses, or people who know more about the child's history.

7. **Don't raise false expectations**. A traumatised child may harbour false expectations, or fears, when a stranger takes a particular interest. Never bribe or coax them, and never make false promises however much you want to show sympathy and understanding. Children remain in situations of crisis long after the media has lost interest, and unfulfilled promises further damage their ability to trust adults. Singling out individual children or families for special treatment can cause problems after you have gone. If you want to help, agree with colleagues about some way of sharing your resources with a wider group – perhaps through a trustworthy local agency.

8. **Make links.** If you are telling a child's story, where possible try to ensure that there is some way of getting back in touch with the child, through a named person at an aid agency, for example. This is important not just for follow-up, but in case your story generates responses that may be significant for the child (from relatives outside the country, for example).

9. **Focus on the positive.** Don't be afraid to talk openly about the earthquake/battle/journey the children have endured, but try not to probe too much into the personal. They will know if you are trying to avoid the issue. Look

for stories that encourage hope rather than despair – stories of personal endurance and heroism. Even in the worst circumstances there may be moments of joy and laughter, which help to emphasise our common humanity. Children have an extraordinary capacity for resilience, and merely telling positive stories can be a comfort when all else seems grim.

10. **Give space to talk rather than perform.** Children function best among their peers, so one of the best ways of engaging with them is to work with a group. Ask if you can watch or join their games. Let them tell you what is it is about, and once you have shown interest they may clamour to tell you about each other. Always try to operate literally at their level, rather than standing over or apart from them. If they are sitting on the ground, join them. If they show interest in your recording equipment, let them examine it – touch it, even use it. Most important of all, you have a responsibility not to risk re-traumatising them. When they recount their stories, don't push for details if they show reluctance. However tantalising the account, let it go rather than risking emotional abuse. Bow out when a child becomes withdrawn, distressed or over-excited, and make sure a responsible adult is aware of what has happened.

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

Human Rights Watch: www.hrw.org

War Child: www.warchild.org.uk

Watchlist: http://www.watchlist.org/

Coalition to Stop Use of Child Soldiers: http://www.child-soldiers.org/

UNICEF – Children in Armed conflict:
http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_childsoldiers.html

Office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict: http://www.un.org/children/conflict/english/home6.html

TJ Riddell, 'War has remained a constant in the lives of Northern Ugandans':

www.law.utoronto.ca/documents/ihrp/report05_Riddell.doc

AlertNet: Tipsheet – 'How to Report on Children in Crises'
http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/reliefresources/115254539757.htm

AlertNet: 'Children suffer outside media glare' – research
http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/reliefresources/115254878772.htm

7. GIVING CHILDREN A VOICE AND CHILD-CENTRED MEDIA

KEY LEARNING POINTS

• Giving children access to the media

• How to ensure a child's right to a voice in the media

• Children's media

THROUGH improved technologies and new developments, the use of media has increased significantly in the last decade, providing people with opportunities for better access to information and increased knowledge. These advances enable greater child and youth participation in the media, and therefore in society as a whole, in terms of informing, supporting and influencing their peers, and adults too. Despite these opportunities to improve, parts of the media continue to exploit children and to contain stereotyped descriptions of children and their situations.

By involving children, the media can give a new perspective. There is strong case for increased child participation in the media.

The significance of the relationship between children and the media is recognised in:

- Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which sets out the role of state parties in ensuring children's right to express their views freely in all matters relating to them and for those views to be listened to;
- Article 13 which sets out the right of the child to freedom of expression through the media of their choice;
- Article 17 which declares that it is the responsibility of state parties to make sure that children have access to information from a diversity of national and international sources. For the mass media, this means providing information of social and cultural benefit to the child.

The media have great potential to make the principles and standards of the Convention on the Rights of the Child a reality by realising children's rights to appropriate information and freedom of expression; by creating awareness about

the convention and its content, and by playing a pivotal role in monitoring its implementation.

Yet, despite one-third of the world's population being under the age of 18, children's opinions and circumstances are rarely reflected accurately in the media. Research (the Media Monitoring Project, 2004) shows that children tend to be seriously under-represented in the media. As one child commented in a media-monitoring exercise:

"The news made me feel left out. It's like children don't exist."

When children's stories do make the headlines, it is usually not about issues that are relevant to their lives, but those that are dramatic and extreme. Indeed, a large proportion of media coverage of children is negative.

What do children think when they do get an opportunity to participate in the media? Plan International, a child-rights-based NGO, asked a group of child journalists why their participation in the media is important. They responded that:

- it provides them with the opportunity to learn about their rights and responsibilities and ensures that they are accurately represented;
- it allows them to exercise their right to participate and express themselves freely and ensures that their priorities and concerns are well reflected;
- it allows them a voice through which to educate and claim their rights from parents, communities and government;
- it brings children together and is a vehicle through which they can inform their peers about what is happening in their lives;
- it helps them to address sensitive issues without being afraid or punished, to seek help and learn avoidance strategies (for instance, how to protect themselves against rights abuses such as trafficking).

Experience of facilitating the participation of children in the media has demonstrated that children are capable of creating media, exploring child-rights issues, working out solutions, and becoming advocates for the defence of their own rights. Slowly, adults are starting to change their attitudes about children's participation in media and to value children as agents of change in communities. Examples of successful child media projects around the world illustrate how

participation can be done in a meaningful fashion.

Involving children

A major impediment to involving children and young people in media production is that it means bringing them into a potentially hazardous workplace. If it is a busy place with lots of people, movement and equipment, it will pose particular hazards for them. Natural curiosity and the fact that such venues are not designed for people under average adult height could put them at risk.

The working culture within high-pressure media institutions is not child-friendly; what should be a rewarding experience could be both bewildering and risky for all concerned without careful preparation. Often the fear is that children might damage expensive or sensitive equipment, rather than the other way round.

Some of the safety measures required are costly, but most hazards to children are likely to be hazards to adults too. Making a workplace safe for children should be an added guarantee that it is also safe for adults.

Planning ahead is the key to safe participation of children in any workplace. In many media initiatives, in-house guidelines are drawn up, but often such matters are dealt with *ad hoc*. If examples of best practice are shared, industry standards can be established, promoted and monitored. Some recommendations are:

• Spend time preparing the children, away from the site.
• When the children are on site, make sure they know about the risks and where they can go for help. Make sure they have clean toilet facilities, access to an appropriately sized room where they can relax and opportunities to take refreshments.
• Most important of all, make sure that at least one appropriate adult — whom they know and to whom they go for help or advice — is available at all times.
• Those responsible for the management of children's involvement should check the health and safety regulations as they apply to children. They need to ensure that the children and their carers have been provided with simple, clear explanations of safety arrangements at the work site, and devise simple means of checking that the children understand them — for example, by taking part in an emergency evacuation exercise.

- Those who work at the venue need to be informed that children may be present in certain places and at certain times, and have an opportunity to discuss the implications of this, for them and the children.
- Those working directly with the children should operate according to guidelines that have been thoroughly discussed and agreed.

A start might be to allow children to review or comment on issues that concern them; they could, for example, review films or books for children in adult newspapers and other media.

Benefits of media programmes made with and for children

Evaluations of media projects demonstrate the many benefits resulting from children's participation in the media:

Improved media product: Not only does the involvement of media professionals in child media often result in more media for children, it can also result in better media made for and with children:

A number of the 100 radio stations involved with the 'I'm a child but I have my rights too!' project run in West Africa (which informs parents, children and authorities on their roles and responsibilities with respect to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child), have increased programming for children, often because of strong demand from listeners. Evaluations demonstrate an increase in capacity, both in the production of better programmes and in the involvement of children in the process. There is also an increase in their awareness and knowledge of children's rights and about the situation of children in their country.

Generating change: Children's participation in the media can influence policymakers at governmental level:

In the 'Children have something to say' project in India, young people create films and animations about a range of issues that affect their lives. One film, about addiction to *gutka* (a mixture of tobacco, beetle nut and lime), inspired students to such an extent that they undertook a petition to stop it being sold in shops located near their schools. They took their demands to the district

government who banned *gutka* from all schools in the district and who initiated a massive awareness-raising campaign in collaboration with the students.

Child development: Children's participation in the media contributes to their holistic development. As well as learning technical and vocational skills (such as how to handle equipment and articulate and interpret scripts), they gain essential life skills which allow them to develop and express opinions more efficiently through problem-solving, communication, self-expression and negotiation skills.

Participation in the media helps children to become familiar with the functioning of media and information, production and provides them with broader access to relevant information, allowing them to take informed decisions. By being included in the monitoring and evaluation of media programmes, they develop valuable media literacy skills and are able to become critical consumers of media in all its forms.

There is some commercial interest for the media in involving children, in that it might ensure media consumers of the future. Many newspapers, in particular, have run projects aimed at young people but few involved children other than at a peripheral level.

Through child media activities, children can interact with and learn from other boys and girls, make new friends and learn empathy for their peers, which is an essential skill for developing political consciousness and social awareness.
In addition, expression through the media can benefit children's psycho-social healing and reconciliation following a traumatic experience, providing hope.

In Sri Lanka, Young Asia Television facilitated the participation of a group of children in a documentary that enabled them to express their feelings about the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean. The film, made entirely by children, portrays the impact of the tragedy and how it changed their lives. Nishak (16) said they wanted to focus on how children were facing their lives with courage.

Child empowerment and active citizenship: Involving young people in all stages of media projects can further develop their potential as active citizens and advocates. Children can be good messengers about how the violation of their rights affects their lives, and media participation can enable them to call for change, in their own voices. The experience helps them to express themselves

effectively in other forums as well.

As a result of their participation in media, children feel valued and can gain self-confidence. This is a result of discovering their own talents and receiving the recognition of adults and their peers. The sense of being useful in a community can also lead children to become active in other domains and can empower them to take on new roles and responsibilities.

Global context

A number of global meetings on children and the media have recognised the importance of children's participation in this area. These include:

- The Day of General Discussion on 'The Child and the Media' by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (Switzerland, 1995): "The media is important for offering children the possibility of expressing themselves. One of the principles of the Convention is that the views of children be heard and given due respect … children should not only be able to consume information material but also to participate themselves in the media."
- The Oslo Challenge Workshop (Norway, 1999): "The challenge to children and young people is to find ways to promote their own active participation in the media and in media development; the challenge to parents, teachers and researchers is to acknowledge and support the rights of children to have access to media, participate in it and use it as a tool for their advancement."
- 4th World Summit on Media for Children and Adolescents (Brazil, 2004), where adults proposed that "media production with the participation of children and adolescents should be promoted"; and children proposed that "children and adolescents have guaranteed space in the production and transmission of media products".
- Youth Media Development Forum (Mali, 2006): attended by 400 delegates from 60 countries worldwide including Plan countries (Albania, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti).
- 5th World Summit on Media for Children (Johannesburg, 2007): More than 1,000 people from about 90 countries, including at least 300 local and international children, gathered at the conference; interactive workshops, debates and discussions were held to explore ways to give children a voice in

the media. The conference addressed the representation of children in the media and how the media in general have contributed to the way children are seen. The summit also looked at ways and means to promote the involvement of children in producing their own images. At the centre of the debate was how children could be involved in the process of producing images and programmes for themselves.

Challenges and obstacles to children's meaningful participation in the media

The CRC committee once stated, "Childhood is not life's waiting-room". Although around one-third of the world's population is made up of young people under 18, the media rarely reflects the opinion or realities of this group. Overall, both in the northern and southern hemispheres, the media provide limited opportunity for children to exercise both their right to participate in the media and their right to express their views in matters that affect them.

There has been inadequate emphasis on the need for children's meaningful participation at every level of the media, including media monitoring. Their participation has not yet received the priority attention it deserves. However, there remain a number of common challenges to facilitating children's participation.

Social attitudes and resistance to child participation

The media is most often controlled by adults who do not always want to give up their power and allow children to set the agenda. On the other hand, parents themselves also do not understand the value of children's contribution; they often believe that media projects are too time-consuming and will make children unmotivated in school. However, evidence demonstrates that children's performance in school often improves as a result of their participation in such projects.

There can be reluctance among parents to allow their children to learn about child rights. Rights are often perceived to be in conflict with the tradition in many countries that children do not question or even address adults unless they are told to do so. It is important that such attitudes are addressed through

information and sensitisation of the media sector and parents.

Ethical and protection issues

In our drive to increase child participation in the media, we must also ensure the protection of children from the media. For example, media exposure of children who have suffered abuse often constitutes secondary abuse, due to the potential for victimisation if a child's identity is revealed. Just like adult journalists, child journalists can sometimes fail to protect other children they are working with.

Commercialisation, violence, sexual pressure, gender stereotypes and other harmful influences can narrow children's opportunities to participate in the media. In many parts of the world a vast number of shows and programmes (for example, on TV) do not reflect the real lives of children and young people. To protect children from harmful influences and negative images, they must play a full part in the process to produce media that provide good information and entertainment which reflect their lives and do not violate their rights.

Little investment and lack of resources

It is crucial that children be provided with adequate resources when producing media, to ensure access and quality. Children's media 'compete' with the other media products worldwide; if it is to be taken seriously and reach the largest audience possible, it needs to offer the same high quality. Children alone cannot reach that high quality without the assistance of media professionals.

The need to develop skills

Children, as well as many adults, are not always aware of their right to free expression. They are often shy and have difficulties expressing themselves when they are not used to doing so. Without media training, children may be afraid to speak out in case they give the wrong message or are unable to express how they think and feel. Illiterate children, disabled children and other marginalised groups sometimes need specialist help to enable them to participate fully.

The media are a tool to raise the voices of the most vulnerable. When media programmes respect the standards and principles of the CRC, they can change adults' perception of children by showing good role models; they can publicly

raise issues such as violence, which are usually difficult to discuss; and can challenge adult behaviour.

Children's participation in the media depends on the opportunity to speak as well as having a relevant audience that listens. In countries where technology allows children to take the initiative, for example by creating their own web-pages, the challenge is to prevent children's voices and concerns from drowning in the wealth of information. Society must include children's opinions and create space for children in the media.

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

Plan International: http://www.plan-international.org/

'To Speak, Participate and Decide – the Child's Right to be Heard', Plan International, 2006.

'Children, Youth and Media around the World: An Overview of Trends and Issues', Intermedia (2004)

'Children in Media', Plan Sweden (2006).

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (1996), 'The Child and the Media'.

8. BEST PRACTICE IN JOURNALISM CONCERNING CHILDREN

> "I still believe that, if your aim is to change the world, journalism is a more immediate short-term weapon." *Tom Stoppard*

KEY LEARNING POINTS

• Good practice in news reporting concerning children

• Monitoring and evaluating children's media: press, radio, television

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THE Oslo Challenge, issued on the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, called on media owners and practitioners, teachers, politicians and children themselves to find new ways of making mass media a positive influence in the lives of children throughout the world.

The challenge to the private sector, including media owners was:

• to take into account the rights of children to access, participation, media education and protection from harmful content in the development of new media products and technologies

• to make the best interests of the child a primary consideration in the pursuit of commercial and financial success, so that today's children become adults in a global society in which all people are protected, respected and free

As we have discussed, many mainstream journalists are sceptical about the value of paying so much attention to the needs (and rights) of children. In the UK, for instance, every week the journalism trade journal Press Gazette carries stories about legal challenges to restrictions on reporting of court cases involving people under 18. Even though the law has recently been changed to take into account the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which acknowledges that young offenders have the right to learn their lessons free from the glare of publicity, it is seen by some as a restriction of the freedom of the press if the media cannot name persistent offenders.

However, many journalists are keen to put the interests of children at the centre of their work, and we can see examples of them working together around the world. Journalists about Children's and Women's Rights (JCWR) in Macedonia,

established in 2003, campaigns for children's rights through media presentations and bulletins and films. An International Club of Journalists for Children's Rights was formed by Matthew Mac-Kwame of the Ghana Institute of Journalism and Frankie Asare-Donkoh of Choice FM in Ghana.

The Brazilian children's news agency ANDI issues awards to Journalist Friends of Children, to encourage journalists to explore and write about children's issues. They found that the accolade gave them increased access to children– including in jails.

The Prix Jeunesse Foundation also seeks to improve the quality of TV worldwide for young people by deepening understanding and promoting communication among nations. Prix Jeunesse endorses the idea that television should be attractive to the target audience and enable children to see, hear and express themselves and their culture, while promoting an awareness and appreciation of other cultures. The Prix Jeunesse award is widely considered to be the most prestigious TV award in children's broadcasting worldwide.

In 2003, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Southern Africa Journalists Association (SAJA) ran a two-day workshop in Cape Town for the promotion of children's rights in the media. Discussions focused on the social responsibility of journalists and the specific care needed in covering issues affecting children. The participants underlined that children are not adults and therefore need special help and protection. In most cases, however, children are largely ignored by the media. The meeting resulted in the publication Putting Children in the Right – International Guidelines for Journalists and Media Professionals.

Other organisations also issue prizes for child-centred journalism. In 2002, Plan Haiti and the Panos Institute, Washington launched a national journalism prize for best reporting on child-rights issues. The initiative resulted not only in increased production of high-quality reports on children and their rights, but also motivated media owners and journalists to listen more to children.

Plan Togo launched a similar project in June 2006 with NGO partner WAO Afrique, establishing the Dzitri price for media institutions and journalists for high-quality reporting on children and their rights. Members of the jury for the annual award are child journalists participating in Plan Togo's children and media programme.

Examples of best practice

NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers in Education
The [World Association of Newspapers](#) (WAN) is a global organisation representing 18,000 newspapers, 71 national newspaper associations, newspaper executives in 100 countries, 13 news agencies and nine regional and worldwide press groups. It has produced a pack with 30 ideas for attracting new young readers, based on experiments conducted throughout the world. WAN has announced a five-year programme of Newspapers in Education (NIE) projects, financed with $1.74 million from the giant Norwegian company Norske Skog, the world's second largest producer of newsprint and third largest producer of magazine paper.

NIE programmes are designed to make printed publications a natural part of the school day all over the world. The new programme will focus on the Balkans and Asia, with the production of training kits for teachers in local languages. The idea is to use publications as a way of improving literacy, general knowledge, analytical skills, and an appreciation of the value of freedom of expression, tolerance and democratic values.

Euro-Arab Neighbourhood: student magazines in the Arab states and Europe
UNESCO launched the project [Euro-Arab Neighbourhood: Students build Bridges](#) project within the scope of the programme Dialogue with the Islamic World. The project started in December 2003. During a workshop in Germany, experts from education ministries, public organisations, publishing houses and schools from Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine established the basis for a strong, long-lasting school magazine network.

The target of the project is to promote Euro-Arab dialogue among young people through the cooperation of school magazines. The dialogue between European and Arab citizens is a prerequisite for peaceful living together in multicultural and multi-religious communities. To reduce prejudices as early as possible and to promote better understanding, the exchange between young people of European

and Arab states is of utmost importance. All types of schools and young people of any age who are interested in journalistic cooperation are welcome to take part in this project.

The Kuleana Centre for Children's Rights

The Kuleana Centre for Children's Rights in Mwanza, Tanzania, sees the media and journalists as important allies. Young people make up half of Mwanza's 800,000 population, including a large number of street children. After the centre opened in 1992, street children began to put their views on to wallpapers pasted up around the city. Today the Mambo Leo poster magazine is put up in every school.

Kuleana approached editors of regional papers with the challenge: "These are your children: what are you going to do about the situation?" At first, coverage of street children was sensational. As the media became more confident, they began to look at underlying causes, and to investigate conditions that led rural children to the streets in the first place. Local radio stations set aside 15-minute slots for street children, with prizes for competition winners. Regular articles appeared in national English and Swahili newspapers. The centre worked with the Tanzania Association of Media Women (TAMWA) to improve coverage of violence against children.

Rakesh Rajani, co-founder and former executive director of the Kuleana Centre, says the media can generate opportunities for the public – including children – to become engaged in child rights as "thoughtful citizens". He also says that journalists should be able to include children's rights in economic news. "A small change for the worse in the economic arrangement can reverse decades of social progress achieved through committed social action. A 1pc change in the national budget can mean 100,000 additional children go without access to safe water."

RADIO

Relatively cheap, easily accessible and portable, radio has proved to be the most enduring and effective medium even in the most inhospitable of social conditions. There are thousands of radio stations, big and small, in Africa, where it remains the most important communication system. Young people have proved adept at harnessing radio technology for their own purposes, seizing access to the airwaves through 'pirate radio', often to make sure that their musical tastes are catered for. Their creative energies can have a powerful influence on mainstream broadcasters.

UNICEF Somalia project

In Somalia, UNICEF has teamed up with youth organisations to develop a radio project which has given young people free access to the airwaves. As part of the project, UNICEF is providing radio production training for youth to broadcast intelligent and popular shows. The project is being used not just to entertain and enfranchise young people but to bring about change in behaviour on social and health issues.

In Somalia daily life is planned around radio broadcasts where, every day at 5.30pm, activity stops and crowds gather around the radio to hear the BBC Somali Service. Somalis have used technology to support their oral culture and built a broadcasting community that spans the war-torn country and is available to Somalis overseas through internet streaming.

Youth in Somalia have experienced a lot and have strong opinions on what peace, development and children's rights mean. Now the voices of Somali youth are being heard with greater credibility than ever before. Broadcasters and producers have been impressed and have given the youth free access to the airwaves. Poetry, drama, songs and other traditional forms of expression provide news and entertainment and foster debate.

The strength of this project is founded on the importance of radio in Somalia and the commitment of the youth broadcasters. The project proved that:

- involving youth in the production of media is fundamental to designing, creating and broadcasting programmes that are interesting and relevant to youth;

- youth producers do not see productions as a source of income but as a way to have their voices heard;

- building youth production capacity through organised youth groups is an extension of the community service they are already active in, so they have a sense of what they want to produce;

- when training youth, they do not consider their attendance an obligation but an opportunity to take advantage of;

- leaving content in the hands of young people ensures that programmes are about topics that are important locally and have qualities that appeal to Somali youth;

- youth-led production helps to ensure that the local community and broadcaster see the programme as a local product worthy of local recognition and support;

- when young people handle controversial issues in the media they are often not overly confrontational on sensitive political issues (in Burundi, young people have interviewed rebel leaders and engaged in unprecedented political debate, with great success);

- young people have an enthusiasm for learning new technology and are excited by the media, so they are often easier to train than adults.

Takeover Radio

In the UK, *Takeover Radio* started back in 1997 when three young people took over a Saturday night slot called 'In and Out With Philip Solo' on a radio station in Leicester called Valley FM. For two hours, Ellie (15), Sam (12) and Rayne (10) Menzies took over Philip's show by bursting in, tying him up and creating a 'hostage situation' in the studio. Inspector Lawton of 'The Radio Police' had to promise pizza and chocolate before they would 'release' Mr Solo and allow him to finish the last half-hour of his show.

The following year the three children took over a similar station in Wigston called NOW FM. This time they captured it on four weekends and produced four one-hour programmes.

By August 2000 the programmes had grown so big they needed their own radio station. In September 2000 the team set up the Takeover Radio Children's Media Trust where more children can learn how to present programmes and enjoy the experiences on offer. Now broadcasting for over six years, they are the first radio station in the UK to be awarded a licence to broadcast exclusively to children.

The charity teaches young people how to work together as a team, the need to achieve deadlines and produce work to the best of their abilities. This builds their confidence, planning and organising skills and improves their communication skills (in some cases, children who lacked such skills have learnt how to express themselves without being physically or verbally abusive). Professional adults in the radio, media and press industries teach them the necessary skills in radio production, journalism, website design and video production.

'I Am a Child but I Have My Rights Too'

'I Am a Child but I Have My Rights Too!' is a radio programme produced by children and aired across West Africa. It first went on the air in 1998, informing parents, children and authorities about their responsibilities to respect children's rights. The project is aimed at promoting the CRC through the airwaves.

The radio project is broadcast in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Togo, Mali, Senegal, Guinea Bissau and Benin. Up to 10 radio stations in each country (including public, private, rural and community radio stations) air the programme, adapting it to that particular country's culture.

Stories promote the right to go to school, to have access to drinkable water, to grow up healthy, and to be protected against exploitation. The stories involve hundreds of professional comedians and children (about 600 children and young people from six to 18). Participation by children is a major part of the project. They take part directly in production but also get involved through interviews and debates, radio contests, and by sending in poems, letters, and drawings.

'I Am a Child but I Have My Rights Too' has grown to become more than a radio campaign. Theatre and school activities are integral parts of the project. The campaign project greatly exceeded its planned outputs and original scope. Hundreds of children have been involved in the production and broadcast of the show and many thousands have participated in its contests and public recordings.

Storytelling and educational drama have proved to be effective and popular ways to raise awareness of children's rights. Children can relate the stories directly to their own lives. The messages give children courage to seek support from adults and to look for solutions to their problems. They gain knowledge, which they pass on by discussing what they have heard with their families and friends. Hearing

other young people talk on the radio encourages and motivates children to participate themselves or in other ways make their voices heard.

Straight Talk – Uganda

Straight Talk newspaper was launched in 1993. By 1997 it had grown into a registered NGO, Straight Talk Foundation (STF), with multiple projects. The mission statements are "Keeping Adolescents Safe" and "Communication for Better Adolescent Health". 'Safe' here means free from infections and unwanted pregnancy, and with the life skills, education and values to be a productive adult.

The radio show went on air in May 1999. The 30-minute weekly programme mainly targets out-of-school and in-school adolescents, reinforcing Straight Talk messages of safer sex, abstinence, the use of condoms and life skills. The show is aired nationwide on 14 FM stations, in English and four local languages.

World Radio Forum

The World Radio Forum (WRF) is devoted to promoting quality broadcasting by and for children. Set up at the Third World Summit on Media for Children in Thessalonika, Greece in March 2001, the WRF seeks to champion child rights and the status of children and young people within their communities through radio. It includes projects and private companies from every continent, particularly from Africa.

TELEVISION

Worldwide, it is estimated, there are some 1.8 billion TV viewers under 15. Of these, 190 million live in the richest regions, and 1.6 billion in the developing world. Around 142 satellite and cable TV channels are aimed at people under 15 in five continents, of which 88 are in Europe.

Public-service broadcasters throughout the world have obligations to provide programming for children that will inform, entertain and educate, although the quality and quantity of the programming varies enormously.

British programmes for young people

In the UK, *Blue Peter*, one of the best-known BBC TV programmes for children will celebrate its 50th year in October 2008. It has a magazine format and is broadcast soon after children return from school. Over the years its agenda has been increasingly influenced by children's own ideas. It features do-it-yourself craft activities, celebrates children's success in a variety of fields, runs non-exploitative competitions, and organises national appeals to help children who are less well off in the UK and abroad.

Its young presenters engage in exciting leisure pursuits (scuba-diving, parachute jumping, skiing, etc,) which give children ideas about activities they might want to take part in as they grow up. Each year the crew visits different parts of the world to give children an insight into how other children live and the issues that concern them.

The BBC also runs a regular programme called *Children's Newsround* which deals simply and directly with the main news stories of the day, including difficult topics such as child abuse, famine and natural disasters, as well as special features of particular interest to children which may not make it on to adult news bulletins. Since the main new broadcasts are aimed at adults they are not popular with children. Having their own version enables children to discuss current affairs with adults, while protecting them from the distressing footage that often accompanies the adult version.

One of the UK's commercial broadcasters, Channel 4, has won awards for its *Wise Up* programme for teenagers, in which young people are encouraged to set the agenda. Programme ideas and guest presenters are sought from viewers and

school visits. Guest reporters contribute part of the programme, often investigating a problem that has arisen in their own lives. They receive professional advice and assistance from a mainly young production team. The programme has a racy, youthful style with fast-moving, hand-held camera shots, but it is carefully edited and produced within formal guidelines laid down by the official regulators.

Mukto Khobor (Free News)

In Bangladesh, *Mukto Khobor* is a weekly, 25-minute adolescents' news and current affairs programme with a focus on children and child-rights issues. The aims are:

1. To create a space for children in the media; a forum for young people to express their views on issues and events around them where they will be heard by children and adults across the social strata.
2. To empower the young journalists by training them in specialised skills; to empower and inspire the large number of young viewers who draw inspiration from the programme as a good example of how effectively they could work in the media when given an opportunity. To help adolescents build self-confidence and self-esteem.
3. To add value to children's views and voices in establishing that they too can offer opinions and solutions; to change the traditional idea that children should only listen and not say much.
4. To make this programme a model of equal opportunities for child participation in the media

The end-product is a widely-viewed programme focusing on children's rights.

A child-friendly selection process for participation in the programme ensures that all sectors of society are considered. Not only are schools contacted to supply candidates, but also organisations that may be working with children who have no access to education. The production team is a mixture of privileged children, working children and some who may not have even basic literacy skills.

The programme has generated much among its audience. At times there have been tensions and unease between children from different backgrounds working together but they have overcome this and have formed excellent working relations. The programme is an accurate reflection of Bangladeshi society and as

such appeals to multiple audiences, making it a ratings success.

Children's Media Center (CMC), Kyrgyzstan

The CMC works in audio-visual and print media, and its work is done exclusively by children and young people. The project aims to create the conditions for the child's self-expression. CMC members study the problems faced by children and young people in Kyrgyzstan and evaluate their observations from their own point of view. They also spread information about child rights in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The CMC members work on many topics highlighting the problems of youth, including child protection, gender issues and HIV/AIDS. The CMC has produced videos and print media articles about homeless children, HIV-infected people and women's-rights violations. The main strength of the project is the fact that the opinions in the media products of the CMC are those of the authentic voices of young people.

ANDI

The Children's News Agency *ANDI* in Brazil was started by journalists concerned about the plight of street children. At first they concentrated on establishing school facilities because they saw education as the way out of poverty, especially under a dictatorship.

Then they began to monitor the media and noticed that the vast majority of coverage about children was negative. They published 'league tables' to show which publishers were the worst offenders, and encouraged a more positive approach. Gradually the pattern of coverage changed, with publishers competing to occupy a better position in the league.

ANDI's mission is to contribute to raising awareness within the media towards the promotion and defence of child and adolescent rights, as democratisation of their access to basic social rights is a precondition for social equity.

ANDI has set a national standard for excellent journalistic performance in issues involving children and youth.   To do this, ANDI:

• defines and suggests specific themes and provides information on them to journalists;

- disseminates the main news about children and youth published in the country;
- provides quantitative and qualitative analyses of the journalistic treatment of children and youth in the Brazilian media;
- disseminates information on challenges and successful experiences;
- recognises professionals whose work is an example of socially responsible journalism;
- trains young communication professionals and students.

In March 2000 the ANDI Network was created, consisting today of six communication agencies from different Brazilian states.

One Minute Junior

The One Minutes Junior is a competition for children and young people to produce their own one-minute videos and express themselves through this media genre.

'OneMinutesJr' is a new category in the One-Minute Movie Festival, held every November by the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam. Like the umbrella festival, 'OneMinutesJr' is not meant to showcase professional movie-making. Rather, it encourages young people to experiment and take advantage of the possibilities afforded by this genre and gain recognition for their creativity and concerns.

Young people between 12 and 20 from Europe and Central Asia are invited to submit entries. Each year the partners involved in the project choose the themes or topics for the competition in close consultation with young people.

A selection of the most creative films is shown during the festival and awards are given to the most outstanding submissions. A jury consisting of three representatives of the sponsoring organisations (the European Cultural Foundation, the Sandberg Institute and UNICEF) and three young people make the selection.

All those who enter the competition receive a certificate of participation. Winners receive awards designed by students from the Sandberg Institute, along with a small financial prize. The focus is not on winning, but on building a creative, stimulating community of young people. Each year, the festival has a game-like element that rouses a great deal of discussion in the audience.

The spontaneous and extraordinary use of new digital media by young people proves that they have a great deal to contribute. This should be acknowledged and encouraged, and a wider platform provided for the fruits of their experimentation.

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

World Association of Newspapers (WAN): http://www.wan-press.info/

World Radio Forum: http://www.worldradioforum.org

World Association of Community Broadcasters: http://www.amarc.org/

Many other exciting *Media Activities and Good Ideas by, with and for Children* (MAGIC), identified by PressWise and Media Action International, are showcased on a special website which also contains codes of conduct for working with and writing about children. It also contains many useful links, and information about the many formal declarations issued by broadcasters and other media agencies insisting that the best interests of children should take precedence in media production: www.unicef.org/magic

ANDI: http://www.andi.org.br

Press Gazette: http://www.pressgazette.co.uk

Prix Jeunesse International: www.prixjeunesse.de

Children and media - a global concern, Mike Jempson, The PressWise Trust.