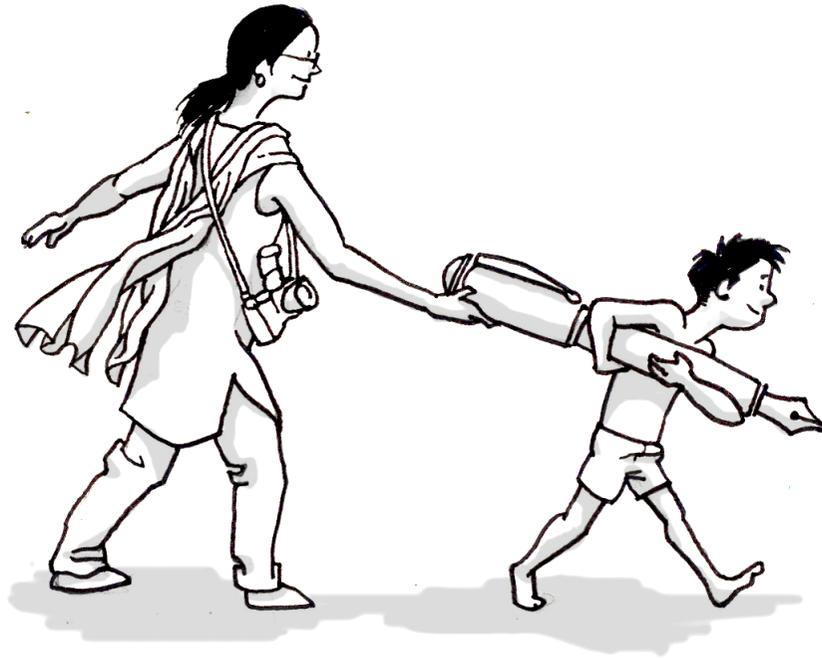


MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT TO REALISE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Media Code of Conduct to realise Children's Rights would have not been possible without the inputs and support of individuals and organisations, who have taken out time to extend their help. We thank all of them for their contributions and co-operation.

Bhima Sangha, for constantly making us see new arenas and enriching the Code with reflections and suggestions.

Child representatives from **Hasiru Sangha, Bala Mandir, Vidiyal, Bhima Kala Ranga, Mobility India** and **Namma Bhoomi**, for valuable insights.

Nandana Reddy, for constant review and feedback.

Brinda Narayan Adige, Makkala Sahaya Vani, for sharing her experiences about media coverage of children and their issues.

Joanna Winterbottom, Reuters (UK) for her indispensable inputs.

Anjali Monteiro and **KP Jayashankar**, for reviewing the conceptualisation and the framework.

Ismail, Udayvani, for taking time out for feedback and ideas.

Revati Siva, for the final editing inputs.

Thank you for helping us bring out this Media Code of Conduct to realise Children's Rights.

FOREWORD

It has been found that those who hold dissenting opinions are least likely to be heard. Eventually, opinions on one side of an issue dominates public channels of communication; while viewpoints on the other side are not heard. This phenomenon is called by communication researchers as "the spiral of Silence."

Never before have the spirals of Silence loomed larger over the world. The mainstream media has become a full-fledged commercial enterprise - quite often a mouthpiece of select political parties or of fundamentalist groups. As the state or elite sections of society own most of mainstream media, they manipulate it to systematically further their own concerns and ideologies, Media projections are determined by those who own and operate it - despite the tall claims they make to the contrary. In their attempts to sell more, they increasingly sensationalise or tow the popular line - at the cost of their integrity and credibility. In this cacophony, the voice of the marginalised gets muffled - most of all children's.

Children are only seen as either 'cute copies' or 'sensational news'. Child victims are routinely written about in gory detail, violating all norms of decency and privacy rights. Children's Rights are hardly talked about, nor are children provided with opportunities to express them selves.

There is no lack of well-formulated International and Regional Declarations and Resolutions on what media policies should be in relation to children. But they remain mostly violated, with violators going unquestioned because neither children nor their guardians have the means or the support systems to hold the media and society accountable.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child upholds children's Right to Information, Self-Expression and Participation. But children around the world are most often denied access to information that has a direct bearing on their lives. They are not considered capable of accessing or analysing information, forming opinions, expressing their thoughts or taking decisions.

¹ International Encyclopaedia of Communications, Volume 3, page 389, University of Pennsylvania, Oxford University Press, 1989

² From the Website of the UNESCO, January 2004 (<http://www.nordicom.gu.se/unesco.html>)

But this lack of respect and recognition for children's rights is a reflection of how the world views children. Even forums such as the World Social Forum,, until now, had not acknowledged children as social actors in their own right. It seems to be slowly, but surely dawning on all that a 'New World' can be possible only if children are actively involved in creating it.

Many civil society movements have discovered the potential of the alternative media - as a tool to reach out to a large number of people and to build public opinion to gather support for their cause. Even these movements have not recognised that among the marginalised are children at the lowest rung of the receiving end. They have not ensured that children either have access to information or the space to articulate their views. Considering that children are almost half the population of this world, this exclusion of children is gross injustice. And we, the adults of the world, stand guilty.

As an organisation committed to advocate children's rights and ensure children's protagonism in order to realise their rights, we, the Concerned for Working Children , have evolved this Media Code of Conduct, in consultation with children.

Children already see this as a tool to assist them to assert their rights vis a vis media. We hope this will become an affirmative protocol - a useful self-regulatory tool for all those who respect Children's Rights.

Kavita Ratna, Director - Communications, CWC
May 2005

³ The Concerned for Working Children (CWC) is a secular and democratic development agency. Since 1980, it has been committed to civil society participation with a special emphasis on the empowerment of marginalised children and their communities. It attempts to ensure children's participation in decision-making and governance on all matters

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Media Code of Conduct to realise Children's Rights, is an effort towards creating a paradigm shift in the media's approach to children - from recipients of adult benevolence to full partners in society.

It has been evolved in the context of the Indian experience of mass media and the many issues that emerge with respect to children's participation, use of and representation in the media.

The Media Code of Conduct has been developed with the following objectives:

- ◀ **To give children a say in defining the media**
- ◀ **To outline children's rights-based standards so that children as citizens are creators of media in society**
- ◀ **To provide a tool for monitoring of children's rights violations by the media or by civil society groups**

The violation of children's rights by the media, whether through insensitive reportage, misrepresentation or denial of space for children's opinions on various issues, is the focus of this Media Code of Conduct.

Although there are many existing codes and standards that by protocol have a section on children and seek to regulate media coverage, they focus only on children's right to privacy and confidentiality. Media reporting on children, however, must not just be fair and honest but should be true to the spirit of children's rights. Children have the right to not just fair coverage but also to be producers of media in society.

The Media Code of Conduct has been evolved with the objective of covering this existing gap. It is conceptualised as an affirmative protocol, not as a prescriptive guideline. It is intended to be a tool with which children can demand their space in the media. The code is conceptualised as a dynamic tool that will continuously evolve through a process of debate and discussion.

NOTE ON PROCESS



The Working Draft of the Media Code of Conduct to realise Children's Rights has evolved out of the experiences of children's groups, adult groups working with children and their opinions and initiatives. We, The Concerned for Working Children, in our twenty-five years of experience, have recognised issues pertaining to the violation of children's rights by the Media.

Our discussions with the members of Bhima Sangha , Makkala Panchayats and other children's organisations form the backbone of this document and its structure.

The Working Draft of the Media Code of Conduct has also drawn from the experiences of organisations world-wide such as Children Now (UK), Children's Express (UK) and UNICEF Magic network. Existing Media codes, including that specific to children's rights, significantly those developed by the UNICEF and IFJ, have been critical background materials. The four world summits on Media for Children, which threw up examples of participatory media for children, have contributed significantly to the conceptualisation of the Media Code of Conduct.

⁴ A union of, by and for working children in Karnataka facilitated by the Concerned for Working Children, with a membership of over 13,000, striving for the realisation of child rights.

⁵ A children's Village Council or parallel government of children, set up in Karnataka jointly by Bhima Sangha and the Concerned for Working Children. It is a forum for all children to participate in decision-making and governance at the Panchayat level.

Based on an overview of secondary sources a preliminary note was evolved for the Media Code of Conduct. There were three primary arenas for examination in evolving the Working Draft of the Media Code of Conduct:

1 Children as 'producers' of Media

Themes include Children as creators of media in society; Creating spaces for children's expression and opinions of realities around them

2 Children as 'users' of Media

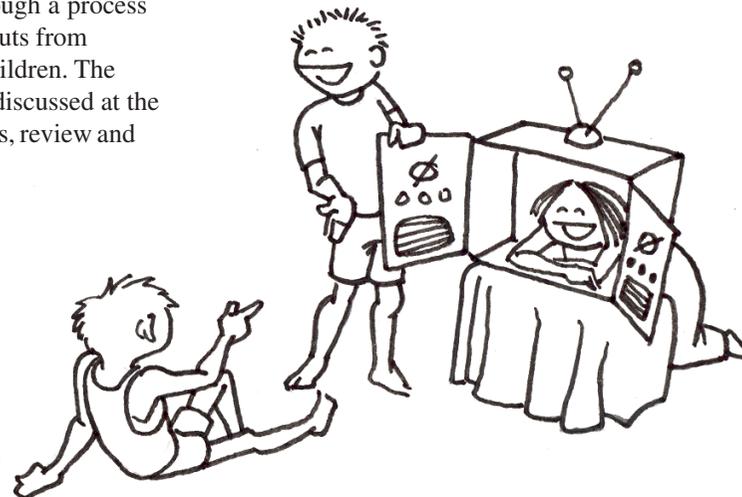
Themes include Children's Access to Media; Right to information; Children's Rights Programming of content, Right to protection from harmful content

3 Children as 'subjects' of Media

Themes include Children as subjects rather than objects of the media; Right to protection from misrepresentation and stereotyping; Right to privacy, confidentiality and dignity

The Media Code of Conduct has been evolved through a process of examining each of these three arenas through inputs from children, media persons and people working with children. The Working Draft of the Media Code of Conduct was discussed at the State Committee meeting of Bhima Sangha for inputs, review and feedback. A consultative meeting with children from different walks of life was held on 3rd May to look at the gamut of issues surrounding children and media.

We intend to circulate this Working Draft widely among the media fraternity, media training and educational institutes and civil society groups for review and feedback, and initiate a process through which a final draft can be evolved and endorsed.



RAISON D'ÊTRE 'ÊTRE

After you've had somebody say to you for the thousandth time, "How come we never hear about these issues in the media," you start to realise that the media itself is an issue

- Svend Robinson, 1997

The average Indian mass media scenario in the context of children - including TV, newspapers, radio, magazines, films, books and the internet - presents two opposing pictures. One is violation of children's rights through insensitive reportage, misrepresentation or denial of space for their opinions on issues. And the other is that of a choice that the mass media can make in becoming a tool for children's participation in civil society.



⁶ Quoted from Rich Media, Poor Democracy by Robert McChesney, p.315

⁷ Jempson, Mike (2003)

Media violations of Children's Rights

There are many forms of violations of children's rights in some of the widest selling and popular media forums.

Children's right to participation violated.

Media facilitates civil society participation, by providing space for multiple actors to express perspectives. Children's participation in the media has invariably been reduced to 'tokenism', in the form of either an event or a short-term project.

Children's issues are never newsworthy unless they have scope for sensationalism.

In the book, Children in News, Anura Goonasekara of Asian Media shares the findings of an Indian study that except for newsworthy events in sports, education or human interest areas; news coverage about children is negligible. . Though 40% of India's population is children, less than 5% of media space is devoted to them.

Children's rights as 'users' and their right to information is violated.

The total proportion of children's media in India is less than five per cent. Programming is usually not participatory and gives little scope for feedback and review.

Children are stereotyped as 'victims', 'vulnerable', 'innocent', 'charming' or 'spoilt'

Media reporting on children and on childhood has had a tendency to border on romanticism and stereotyping - children are portrayed as victims of abuse, conflict, crime and poverty; or as charming, entertaining accessories to the adult world.

Lack of children's programming in media

While Outlook and NDTV never fall short of words in describing "Kids these days.....", not a single media house seems to be bothered that 90% children's programmes are popular cultural imports from the West.

Children are rarely portrayed as protagonists.

Children and childhood are often romanticised; painted in colours that an adult would like to perceive them in. The concept of 'child' as well as 'childhood' in society is an all-adult construction. The media perpetrates and cashes in on this perception.

Children's opinions do not appear in media.

Udaya TV telecast a sensational story of the plight of a child, who was apparently being disallowed by Makkala Sahaya Vani (MSV) to be restored to her mother. The opinion of the child was not sought even once, though her life drama was being written on screens across Karnataka.

Children are commodified, treated as 'objects'. Children are sexually exploited by the media.

"at times - particularly in the case of female children - as objects of desire.....A little girl in an off-the-shoulder black velvet dress and ringlets, dancing in Bollywood film heroine style, frontally, for the camera, may even appear cute to some viewers. But this objectified representation of the little girl mimicking an adult object of desire is to me objectionable... Such modes of representation also begin to set the benchmark for the way little girls dress... wearing more and more inappropriate clothes."

Pinki Virani, Bitter Chocolate, on the portrayal of children in films and advertising

All children do not have equal access to media.

Children of Bhima Sangha, a trade union of children in Karnataka, have expressed concern over the lack of media coverage of rural issues, because there are not enough reporters.

We have not seen many articles on children's rights in our local language newspapers. If they appear in our language we can read them.

Working children, Working Children's Report India 1998

Media displays insensitivity while dealing with children.

One of the best displays of media insensitivity came from the Outlook photographer who accompanied me on this story. Despite being told that the children in the government-run orphanage were scared of the sea, he wanted them to collectively pose near a catamaran "with the sea in the background" for that would make "a great picture." Denied this, he made the children pose behind the sliding iron grill door of the orphanage to (mis)represent "their plight" and, during the photo shoot; a finger of an 11-month-old girl in the orphanage was crushed in the grill.

S Anand, Senior Correspondent with The Outlook

⁸ Alternate Media -A Necessity, Kavita Ratna, CWC, India

Children's contexts are negated

I recall how I was not permitted, in a Radio Talk about 'working children and the society', to retain a sentence about the police harassment to the children. Though its existence is common knowledge and the programme director was sympathetic to the cause, there was hesitation to take the smallest of risks.

Children's consent is rarely sought before interviewing or photographing.

In a TV programme where crime reports are covered, children of murdered victim are often questioned to increase the sensationalism especially in cases where the victim happens to be a woman.

Children are made to stage or say things that are not part of their realities or histories.

This often happens in children programmes where the adults feel that particular views need to be expressed, so they coach the children and this parroted version becomes very obvious to the audience.

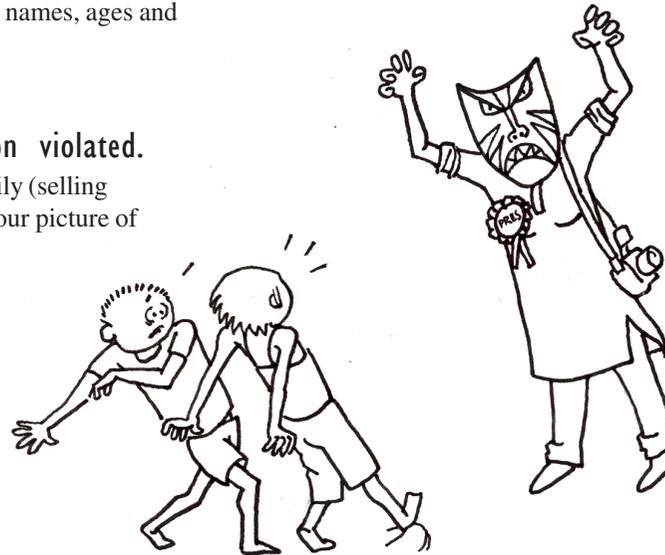
New Delhi Television (NDTV), India's leading 24-hour news channel, showed a correspondent coaxing a 10-year-old to re-enact how she saved two children from a big wave. It was obvious that the children were made to rehearse before it was filmed.

Children's right to privacy and confidentiality violated.

Samyuka Karnataka carried a story on three children in conflict with law, on its front page, with details including names, ages and their so-called 'crimes' along with photographs.

Children's right to dignified representation violated.

Dinamalar, the second largest circulated Tamil daily (selling close to a million copies per day), splashed a colour picture of a dog nibbling a dead child.



What do children say?

Various children's groups consulted for the Code, have expressed unhappiness over the patterns of media coverage. They want to know why the media ignores them and their opinions and perspectives, why their voices and perspectives are never heard or respected, and why information relevant to them is so sparse.

They also ask why information relevant to them is never presented in ways that they can understand. Why does the Media never analyse the Annual Budget's impact on children and present it in ways those children can comprehend? They object to the stereotyping by the media and want to know why children's programmes are never a priority for the media.

Two faces of Media

Media refers to any mode of communication. Mass media encapsulates the whole spectrum of methods of communication that can be used to reach a large number of people, such as TV, newspapers, radio, magazines, films, books and the internet.. Historically, societies have had different kinds of media to communicate among the multiple actors of the world. It is a significant system for civil society participation because it enables space for representing diverse perspectives. It is not just a form of communication, but represents the culture and ethos of society with a strong role in influencing political and social processes. such as economic globalisation. Movements across the globe have gathered support through the media. Whether media represents reality or not, it plays a significant role in shaping it.

Globalisation as a phenomenon is no longer an objective, but is perceived as an imperative even for the media. . The media is not a mere mode of mass communication but an industry, which operates on the market principle. Contemporary media is shaped by the imperative of 'maximising profits'. Media firms are geared towards expanding into foreign markets. 'Popular culture' media products are among the biggest exports from the US.

We have our own opinions and perspectives. We do not say that these are the ultimate truth. People in the media may not agree with them. But that does not mean that they put us down or become offensive while interacting with us. Disagreement must be expressed in ways that are acceptable. We demand respect for our opinions and perspectives.



Bhima Sangha, State Committee Meeting, May 1st 2005

Audiences are morphed into the 'consumers' role, and investments are made on their sentiments. Stories that have market value find space in the media, those that don't are chopped at the editor's desk, or worse, find their way to the bin. Poverty, war and hunger are brilliant stories that can be packaged and sold to the public. Conflicts, disasters and war are great news churners, a fantastic source of income for media firms. The recent coverage of the tsunami is an illustration of this point. All kinds of media (print, radio, television and the internet) were busy dishing out coloured pictures and stories of misery and death, for audiences sitting in drawing rooms. Not a single media firm, however, raised the significant issue of why the government refused to term the tsunami a 'national calamity'.

True to the spirit of 'hegemony', the globalisation of information, rather than increasing public space, diminishes it. Media has evolved from a mode of communication to a mode of perpetuating propaganda. Research suggests that dominant media indulges in the production of social ignorance rather than dissemination of information. The political agenda of dominant parties determines the facts and the way they are presented. A news story that is meant to generate public opinion has the opposite effect. For instance, a sexual abuse case becomes newsworthy and catches the attention of the national media if the perpetrator has considerable political affiliations. Rather than focussing on the violation of rights the trauma of the victim and the inadequacy of current societal and law mechanisms, it is most likely that the story focuses on the comedy of mud slinging.

There is, however, a choice. The media has the choice to perform critical functions, such as helping to crystallise individual and community identity, facilitate civil society discourse and participation in the political process, increase the availability of information and knowledge in the public domain, and enable the use of media for development, educational and human rights purposes.

The media has the choice to be a champion of children's rights; to perform its true role in civil society.. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989 and ratified by all but two countries, clearly spells out the rights to which children everywhere are entitled. It contains four basic principles to guide political decision-making affecting the child:

1. the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in such decisions;
2. opinions of children should be heard;
3. child development, not just survival, should be ensured;
4. each child should be able to enjoy his/her rights, without discrimination.

Several of the CRC's key articles deal with the media and children. Key articles have been summarised below

UN CRC on Children's Rights and Media

Article 17 spells out the important role of the media in disseminating information, promoting the child's well-being in the broadest sense; giving the state specific tasks:

State Parties recognise the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from diverse of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being, physical and mental health. To this end, States Parties shall:

- (a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefits to the child, in accordance with the spirit of Article 29;
- (b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;
- (c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;
- (d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child, who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;
- (e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well being, bearing in mind the provisions of Articles 13 and 18.

Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises the right of the children to express their views in relevant matters

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."

Article 17, together with Articles 12 and 13, should contribute not only to the development of well-informed citizens, but also enable young people's voices to be heard more and more through the mass media. It sends a clear message that children should be both participants in and beneficiaries of the information revolution.

Children are often said to be the 'future' of the country. The fact is that children are also citizens today, part of civil society. A media that marginalises children politically hampers civil society participation by not acknowledging its multiple actors and not appreciating its heterogeneity. As contributing members, children have the right to be heard in all forums and debates; they must have a say in defining and determining media in society.

Media programming, monitoring and regulation must have children's rights perspective.

Existing Codes of Conduct/Guidelines evolved on "Children's Rights and Media"

There are many existing guidelines and codes of conduct for the media that refer to children. Most media firms' in-house codes of conduct have a section on children.

International initiatives for regulation of Media to realise Children's Rights

1995

- ▶ Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), thirteenth session (Geneva, Switzerland) general discussion on the child and the media.
- ▶ 1ST World Summit on Television and Children (Melbourne, Australia)
The Children's Television Charter presented

1996

- ▶ The Asian Summit on Child Rights and the Media (Manila, Philippines), drafted the Asian Declaration on Child Rights and the Media
- ▶ Southern African Developing Countries' Summit on Children and Broadcasting (Johannesburg, South Africa), THE SADC Children's Broadcasting Charter adopted

1997

- ▶ CRC working group on the child and the media (Paris, France)
- ▶ AFRICA CHARTER ON CHILDREN'S BROADCASTING adopted at the All Africa Summit on Children's Broadcasting (Accra, Ghana)
- ▶ Asian Declaration on Child Rights and the Media adopted

1998

- ▶ CRC working group on the child and the media (London, UK)

1999

- ▶ The Oslo Challenge workshop (Oslo)
- ▶ Declaration and Action Plan on Sexual Abuse of Children, Child Pornography and Paedophilia on the Internet (Paris, France), UNESCO
- ▶ The European Union Action Plan on Promoting Safer Use of the Internet adopted

2001

- ▶ 3rd World Summit on Media for Children (Thessalonika), Draft of The Declaration of Thessaloniki: Media and Children: Commitment for the Future put forward by the Hellenic Audiovisual Institute (I.O.M.), World Radio Forum (WRF) founded.
- ▶ "Radio Kidocracy Konference", Bush Radio (Cape Town). Work started on a children's and youth radio manifesto
- ▶ The Asia-Pacific Television Forum on Children and Youth (Seoul, Republic of Korea), Declaration of the Asia-Pacific Television Forum on Children and Youth adopted

2002

- ▶ United Nations Special Session on Children (New York)
- ▶ International Federation of Journalists. Putting Children in the Right: Guidelines for Journalists and Media Professionals Final Draft endorsed
- ▶ AGORA meeting of children's and youth media professionals (Athens), The Declaration of Thessaloniki: Media and Children discussed and finalized

2003

- ▶ AGORA meeting of children's and youth media professionals (Bologna)

2004

- ▶ 4th World Summit on Media for Children and Adolescents (Rio de Janeiro)

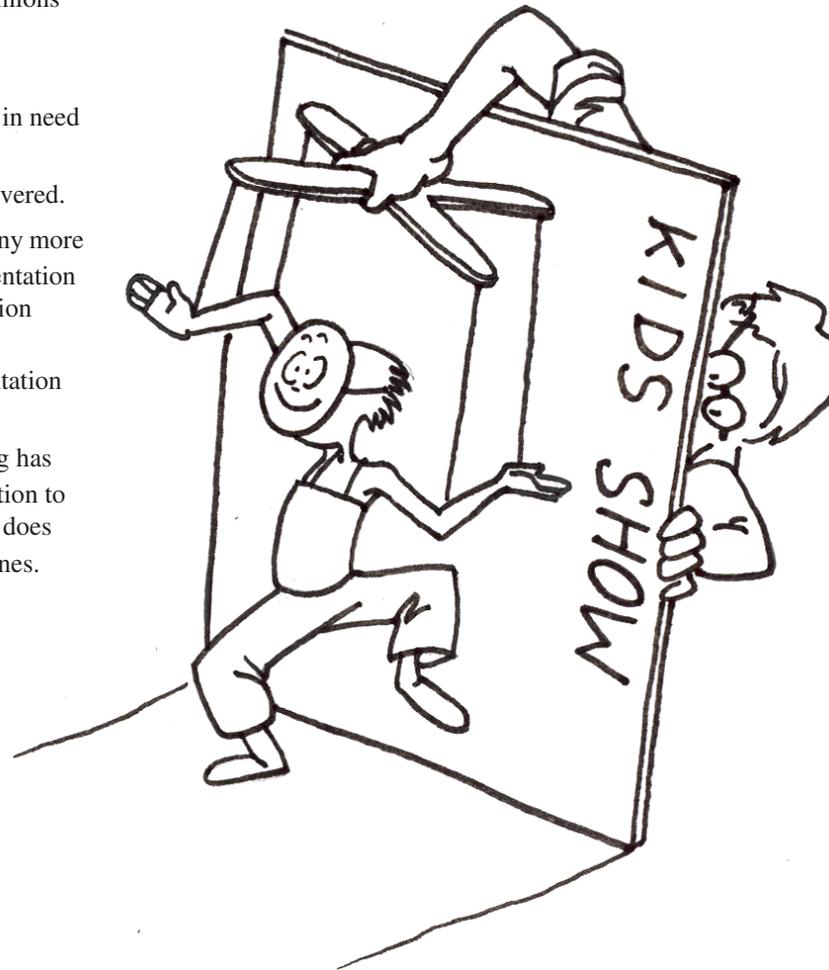
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- ▶ UNICEF and MediaWise Ethical Guidelines for Reporting on Children

Several gaps still remain to be covered. Significantly, none of the charters or codes focuses on the rights of children to be 'producers' of media in society.

To sum up the key points:

- ◆ Emphasis has been laid mainly on the impact of harmful content in media on children.
- ◆ Right to confidentiality is the only right that has been stressed.
- ◆ No reference to Children's Participation in Media has been made..
- ◆ IFJ guidelines for journalists reporting on children, only talks of children's opinions appearing in media.
- ◆ Children are seen as 'victims'.
- ◆ Children are seen as 'vulnerable' and in need of protection all the time.
- ◆ Right to information has not been covered.
- ◆ Right to dignified representation: many more facets apart from sexualised representation that existing codes/guidelines mention should be highlighted.
- ◆ Right to protection from misrepresentation has not been covered.
- ◆ Right to protection from stereotyping has not been covered. The IFJ introduction to guidelines does recognise this, but does not spell it out clearly in the guidelines.



The Media Code of Conduct for realisation of Children's Rights has been evolved in this context to create a paradigm shift in media's approach to children - from recipients of adult benevolence to full partners in society. There is a need to examine media and children's rights in the light of children's right to expression as 'citizens' of this world and their right to be partners in creating media - the fourth estate.

The Media Code of Conduct has been evolved with the following points in mind:

- [01] Children have the right to produce media for communicating among themselves and to the rest of the world.
- [02] Children's opinions and perspectives must be respected by the media and appear in the media.
- [03] Children are consulted for programming of children's media.
- [04] Children must have a voice in deciding how they are represented in the media.
- [05] Children's issues must be represented the way children perceive it.
- [06] Children's realities must be presented the way children perceive it.
- [07] All children irrespective of their gender, class, caste, ethnicity, religion and abilities must have access to media as 'producers' and 'users'.
- [08] Children's media groups must be recognised and treated as part of media fraternity.
- [09] Children's groups must be given space in the media.
- [10] Children's issues must be given spaces in the media.
- [11] Opportunities must be available for all children irrespective of their gender, class, caste, ethnicity, religion and abilities to build their capacities to design, produce and disseminate their media products.

The Media Code of Conduct has been developed with the following objectives:

- ▶ To give children a voice in defining the media
- ▶ To set children's rights based standards for programming of media so that children as citizens are creators of media in society
- ▶ To provide a tool for monitoring of children's rights violations in the media by civil society groups and the media themselves

There were three primary arenas for examination in evolving this Working Draft of the Media Code of Conduct:

1 Children as 'producers' of Media

Themes include Children as creators of media in society; Creating spaces for children's expression and opinions of realities around them

2 Children as 'users' of Media

Themes include Children's Access to Media; Right to information; Children's Rights Programming of content, Right to protection from harmful content

3 Children as 'subjects' of Media

Themes include Children as subjects rather than objects of the media; Right to protection from misrepresentation and stereotyping; Right to privacy, confidentiality and dignity

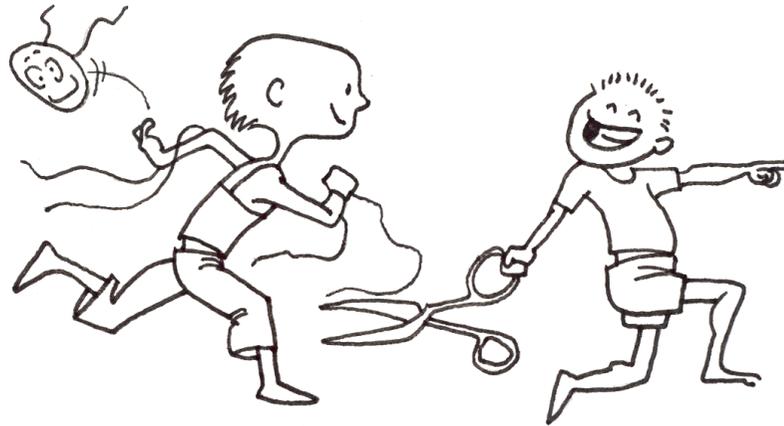
The Working Draft of the Media Code of Conduct has been evolved in consultation with children. It has been evolved with the insights that children have given us in our twenty-five years of engagement with them. It is based on the consultative meetings held with Bhima Sangha, State Committee Meeting on the 1st of May 2005 and with representatives of various children's groups on the 3rd of May 2005.

It has been evolved in the context of the Indian experience of mass media and the many issues that emerge with respect to children's participation, use and representation in the media that children have expressed in the process of consultation and in secondary sources.

People from the media and people engaged with children have also contributed with their feedback and inputs.

We intend to circulate this Working Draft widely among the media fraternity, media training and education institutes and civil society groups for review and feedback, and initiate a process through which a final draft can be evolved and endorsed.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES



- I. Commitment to Core Principles underlying Children's rights
 - I.1. The Core Principles underlying Children's Rights are non-negotiable. They will not be compromised in any situation.
 - I.2. We recognise children as holders of 'rights', respect their personhood and their realities.
 - I.3. We recognise that children are contributing 'citizens'.
 - I.4. We recognise that children as social actors are entitled to political expression.
 - I.5. Participation of children is crucial to ensure that their rights are not violated.
 - I.6. We will respect their dignity and integrity
 - I.7. We commit ourselves to ensuring that children participate as 'users' and 'producers' of media.
 - I.8. We will at all times value children's opinions and account for them in media.

- 1.9. We will respect children's opinions, irrespective of whether we agree with them or not.
- 1.10. We will express our disagreement with their viewpoints in acceptable and inoffensive ways.
- 1.11. We commit ourselves to protection of children from misrepresentation and stereotyping.
- 1.12. We will endeavour to protect children from harmful content.
- 1.13. All programming of media content will be done with reference to their rights.

2. Working in the best interests of children at all times

- 2.1. We will endeavour to ensure that the principle of 'best interests' of children is upheld at all times while programming, reporting, interviewing or photographing children.
- 2.2. The 'best interests' of children will be decided in consultation with them.

3. Facilitating Participation and Working in Partnership

- 3.1. We recognise that children have the right to be 'producers' of media.
- 3.2. We recognise that children have the right to 'produce' media for communicating among themselves and with the rest of the world.
- 3.3. We will offer our services and resources to build capacities of children to design, produce and disseminate media products.
- 3.4. We will work in partnership with children in any endeavour that requires adults to tap children as co-producers, sources of information or 'subjects' of the media.
- 3.4. We will recognise children's media groups across the world and will ensure their representation in all fora and conferences. They are part of the media fraternity.

4. Non Discrimination in Access to Media, Representation in Media and Production of Media

- 4.1. We will not discriminate against children based on gender, age, language, religion, caste, class and abilities during media production, for access to or representation in media.
- 4.2. We will ensure that 'images' and 'messages' (do not discriminate against children on the basis of gender, age, language, religion, caste, class and abilities.

- 4.3. We will recognise children's groups engaged in media production irrespective of their contexts and engage with them as legitimate media players in all fora and conferences.

5. Factual and Sensitive Coverage

- 5.1. We commit ourselves to accuracy and sensitivity in coverage of children.
- 5.2. We commit ourselves to presenting reality without resorting to sensationalism.
- 5.3. We will verify and cross check all sources for facts.
- 5.4. While presenting children's issues or stories we will ensure that sources include children
- 5.5. We will present the actual context of a child's image, story or quote.

- 5.6. We will ensure that children are not asked to stage stories or pose in positions that are not part of their realities and histories.
- 5.7. We will endeavour to use a diverse spectrum of sources and multiple opinions concerning a child's issue or event so that no dominant party propaganda colours the presentation
- 5.8. We will verify the credentials of sources that advocate on behalf of children.
- 5.9. The consent of children is essential before facts are gathered for stories or photographs are taken.
- 5.10. We will present children's issues, stories and images in ways that do not violate the safety, dignity, integrity and development of children.

6. Using children's perspectives for programming of media content related to children

- 6.1. Children have the right to produce media in society.

⁹ Perspectives refer to the definitions / stands views applied while looking at concepts such as 'child', 'childhood', 'child labour', 'interesting', and so on. Children have the right to determine who a 'child' is, what 'childhood' constitutes, what is 'child labour' and what is 'interesting'

- 6.2. For media content related to children, such as reporting on children affected by disasters, cartoon films or books, we will consider children's perspectives as the vantage point.
- 6.3. We will recognise that children's worldview, perceptions and behaviour patterns are different and should be reflected in their media products..
- 6.4. Adults can thus only work on assumptions of what children perceive, think or feel.
- 6.5. We, therefore, commit ourselves to engaging with children and letting them determine the perspectives that will decide programming of media content.

7. Maintaining accountability toward children

- 7.1. We recognise that media is accountable to children who are part of civil society.
- 7.2. We commit ourselves to being accountable to children for everything in print, on air, television, internet or any other medium
- 7.3. We endeavour to give children the opportunity and forum to debate, review and give feedback on media
- 7.4. We will consider children's feedback while evaluating any programme or report

8. Ensuring Quality

- 8.1. We will endeavour to provide quality media for children.
- 8.2. We recognise 'quality' as a dynamic and fluid concept that changes with contexts and with time .
- 8.3. In determining quality standards we will account for the views of children from diverse groups.

9. Accounting for diversities in perspectives of children and childhood

- 9.1. We recognise that the perspectives of children and of childhood are diverse and culture and context-specific.

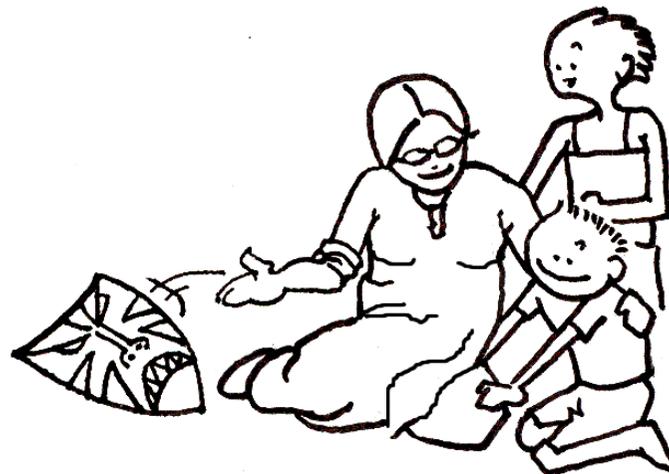
¹⁰ Quality constitutes a wide range of factors like credibility, entertainment, nature of presentation (patronising or empowering), nature of information presented and so on.

¹¹ For instance, what is quality information for a working child may not be so for children who do not work. Images that children in the developed world perceive as reality may not hold true for those in the developing world.

- 9.2. We will, therefore, account for the heterogeneity in the perspectives of children and childhood, without homogenising the culture of childhood and perspectives of children.
- 9.3. We will endeavour to provide space for the diverse, varied and creative opinions of children.

10. Awareness and Training of Media Professionals

- 10.1. We recognise that awareness of children's rights and issues is important before implementing these codes
- 10.2. We commit ourselves to build our capacities related to children's rights, child friendly media and children's participation.
- 10.3. We recognise that these codes represent an ideology that is to be critically examined, understood and internalised and are not rules to be learnt and followed.
- 10.4. We will, therefore, endeavour to spread awareness among media professionals on children's rights and issues.
- 10.4. This awareness can be generated formally through institutional mechanisms, and informally through colleagues and groups.
- 10.5. We will endeavour to include the ideology of children's rights and the principles of this code as part of the training of media professionals.



CHILDREN AS 'PRODUCERS' OF MEDIA



I. Principle of Child Participation

- 1.1. We recognise that children as 'producers' of media play a crucial role in civil society for representation of their concerns.
- 1.2. We recognise that children's participation in the media is a long-time process, not a one-time event.
- 1.3. We commit ourselves to principles 3.1 and 3.2 of General Principles on children's participation in media.
- 1.4. We recognise that children have the right to be 'producers' of media.
- 1.5. We recognise that children have the right to 'produce' media for communicating among themselves and with the rest of the world.
- 1.6. We will endeavour to facilitate the participation of children in media as 'producers' of media

Young voices call out across Liberian airwaves

(Excerpts)

MONROVIA, Liberia, 20 September 2005 - An unusual group of young Liberian journalists is landing more and more major news scoops, such as an exclusive interview with the Liberian Head of State, the Minister of Defence, or UNICEF Liberia Representative Angela Kearney.

What is so unusual about these journalists? The average age of Star Radio's four Kids Talk reporters is just twelve years old. Preparation, hard work, practising the highest professional journalistic standards, and making sure they make it school on time are the secrets to their success.

Kids Talk first hit Liberia's airways in July, and their 27-minute broadcasts are now heard four times a week on Star Radio, one of this west African nation's leading radio stations. Star Radio can be picked up across Liberia on the shortwave band.

"I like hearing my voice on the radio and love it when I get praise for Kids Talk," said correspondent George Toby, 12, who has to constrain his infectious smile when he turns his microphone toward one of the show's VIP guests. But his smile doesn't stop him from asking tough questions: After the Kids Talk team was escorted into Liberia's Executive Mansion, George asked Chairman Gyude Bryant, "Why do people boo you?" Gyude answered with a joke and a laugh.

Annette Ciapha, 12, Samuelle Hare, 11, and Joseph Johnson, 12, are the other Kids Talk correspondents. Star Radio Senior Producer Olive Thomass shepherded the project from the initial concept to the first broadcast, and continues to work closely with the eager young journalists.

"The reporters also want to broadcast on public health issues, like cholera, which is endemic in Liberia," said Thomass. "It's not only great fun when kids talk to other kids - it's also extremely educational to our listeners."

The children have bright hopes for their country.



"I want Liberia to be developed," said Joseph, "and I want education to be free." When UNICEF's Kearney was interviewed she used the opportunity to speak directly to Liberian children associated with fighting forces (CAFF).

"Two years ago there were thousands of Liberian children associated with fighting forces who were in the bush, and now they're in school or getting skills training. But there are some CAFF who UNICEF and its partners haven't reached yet. And if they're listening to Kids Talk, I urge them to get in touch with UNICEF or our partners," Kearney said. "I want to hear from you."

UNICEF has long advocated for the voices of children to be heard in national and international debate. Articles 12, 13 and 29 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child are dedicated to ensuring young people's right to participate in decision-making processes, to express their opinions freely, and to be equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to bring about change in their own lives and communities.

Star Radio is an ideal example of these very rights being put into concrete action.

By Patrick Slavin

SOURCE: http://unicef.org/infobycountry/liberia_28352.html

1.7. We will also endeavour to facilitate initiatives in which adults and children work as partners during production, as co-producers, sources of information or 'subjects' of the media.

2. Principle of partnership and facilitation

2.1. We will offer our services and resources to build capacities of children to design, produce and disseminate media products in order to facilitate their production of media.

2.2. We recognise that facilitation is non-directive and empowering.

2.3. We recognise that as 'producers' ownership is vested with children and not with adult facilitators.

2.4. We recognise that partnership is always based on mutual trust, respect and non-hierarchy and is non-exploitative.

- 2.5. We will follow the principle of non-hierarchy as adult 'facilitators' and /or 'partners'.
- 2.6. We commit ourselves to being non-exploitative in joint adult-child media endeavours.

3. Non discrimination

- 3.1. In facilitating children's production of media we will endeavour that there is no discrimination on the basis of gender, age, language, religion, caste, class and abilities.
- 3.2. We will ensure that resource, opportunity and help in any form for children producing media is available irrespective of their gender, age, language, religion, caste, class and abilities.
- 3.3. We will not compromise or hinder the production of media by children through any discriminatory policies or practices.

4. Non discrimination

- 4.1. We recognise that children have the right to media education.
- 4.2. We recognise that media education enables children to gain understanding of the communication media, its operation and skills needed to use them
- 4.3. We will endeavour to facilitate media education to enable children to analyse, critically reflect upon and create media texts.
- 4.4. We will endeavour to facilitate media education to enable children to identify the sources of media texts, their political, social, commercial and/or cultural interests, and their contexts.
- 4.5. We will endeavour to facilitate media education to enable children to interpret messages and values offered by the media.
- 4.6. We will endeavour to facilitate media education to enable children to select appropriate media for communicating their messages.

¹² Media Education deals with all communication media and includes the printed word and graphics, the sound, the still as well as the moving image, delivered on any kind of technology.

4.7. We will endeavour to facilitate media education that enables children to gain, or demand access to media as 'producers'.

5. Policies that facilitate children producing and using media

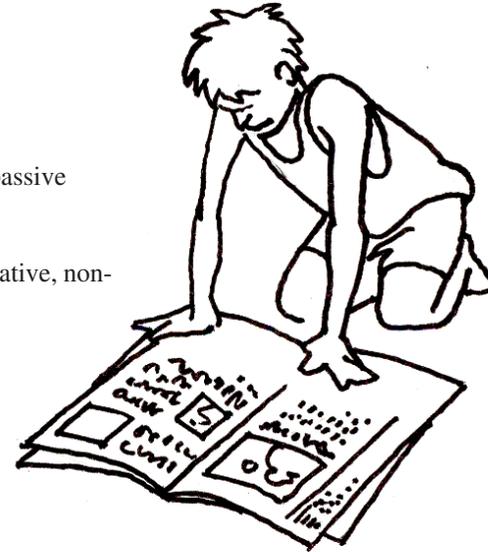
5.1. We commit ourselves to evolving and following policies to facilitate children producing and using media.

5.2. We will endeavour to include policies in media firms that ensures that programming of media involves space for children's 'production' of media, children's participation in planning and reflection of children's opinions and perceptions in media.

CHILDREN AS 'USERS' OF MEDIA

1. Media is a dialectical process

- 1.1. We recognise that communication is a two-way process.
- 1.2. We recognise that 'users' are active participants and not passive recipients.
- 1.3. We will endeavour to engage in communication that is creative, non-directive, empowering and liberating.
- 1.4. We recognise that such a communication encourages free formation of opinions.
- 1.5. In programming media for children, we will endeavour to engage in dialogue with them and be non-directive.
- 1.6. We will programme media forms that are best suited for different contexts that children come from and only those that have been established as child-friendly.
- 1.7. We recognise that media has a role in making children think and reflect, rather than get indoctrinated.
- 1.8. We will recognise and promote practices which evolve participatory media.



2. Children's right to information

- 2.1. We recognise that children have the right to information.

¹³ For example, information on how government policies will impact children, where to get help if they are destitute or have been violated, whom to contact if in distress, what are their rights and what is the status of each of these world wide and in the local context, what has been the impact of a disaster on children and so on.

- 2.2. We recognise that ensuring this right is crucial to their citizenship.
- 2.3. We will endeavour to promote information that is critical to children.
- 2.4. We will present programme information in different media forms so that children can access, understand and interpret it easily.
- 2.5. We will endeavour to create awareness and convey public information messages through children's programmes.
- 2.6. In promoting children's right to information, we will ensure that all children irrespective of gender, age, caste, religion, class, age and abilities have access to information.
- 2.7. We will endeavour to accord priority and devote space for information that children need and want in the media.

3. Children determining Content of Children's Media

- 3.1. We will endeavour to make programming of children's media participatory, by consulting children through various mechanisms, such as surveys, meetings and focus groups discussion.
- 3.2. We will endeavour to involve children in programme planning.
- 3.3. We will endeavour to make programmes based on response and feedback on what children like, what they find interesting, what they want in and through the media, and what form of media they find friendly.
- 3.4. We will ensure space for children's responses, feedback and review of media and highlight it in future endeavours.

4. Relevance of content to children's perceptions of realities around them

- 4.1. We recognise that media is a form of cultural expression, not cultural control.
- 4.2. We will therefore programme media content that is consistent and relevant to their contexts, and their perceptions of realities.
- 4.3. We will consider issues from their perspective, what is their stake, the impact it makes and so on.

- 4.4. We commit ourselves to producing media content that is relevant and meaningful in the context of children's perceptions of realities
 - 4.5. We commit ourselves to promoting media content that is credible and valid in the context of children's perceptions of realities
5. **Children's rights Education for multiple audiences through media**
 - 5.1. We will spread awareness on children's rights and issues through different media in various languages to reach out to multiple audiences.
6. **Children's rights Education for multiple audiences through media**
 - 6.1. We will endeavour to promote content that contributes to the safety and development of children.
 - 6.2. We will endeavour to scrutinise content for its psychological impact on children during the process of programming, before and after broadcast.
 - 6.3. We will endeavour to continuously evolve standards for classifying content as an industry.
 - 6.4. We will adhere to standards evolved by the industry, engage in self-regulation and generate public awareness on the classification.
 - 6.5. We will recognise and promote practices of media programming that do not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, class, caste, religion, age and abilities.
7. **Children's rights Education for multiple audiences through media**
 - 7.1. We will endeavour to present media content in ways that children find easy to access, understand and interpret.
8. **Access to Media**
 - 8.1. We recognise that children are legitimate and crucial 'users' of media.
 - 8.2. We will endeavour to not discriminate against children in the access that they have to media, as compared to other civil society actors.

- 8.3. We commit ourselves to increasing media space for children.
- 8.4. We commit ourselves to increasing media outreach for children.
- 8.5. We will ensure that children's programmes are accessible in ways, forms, places and times that are convenient for different children.
- 8.6. We will promote access to media for children from varying contexts and multiple categories.
- 8.7. We will ensure the transmission of media in multiple languages to various geographical areas.
- 8.8. We recognise that different forms of media are relevant to different contexts and we will ensure broadcast in the appropriate form depending on context.
- 8.9. We will ensure transmission of media at times or schedules that are convenient for children to access.

CHILDREN AS 'SUBJECTS' OF MEDIA

1. Principle of Subject versus Object Programming

- 1.1. We will view children as 'subjects' and not 'objects' in any form of media.
- 1.2. Children are not 'objects' that the media can use to suit their interests, nor are they 'targets' or 'entities' to be moulded, or used, or represented in ways that homogenise or stereotype them.
- 1.3. We will engage in programming of media that does not attribute to children qualities for achieving material media ends.
- 1.4. We will consider contexts and other related factors while engaging in any programming based on children.
- 1.5. We will endeavour to produce media that does not discriminate in the way it represents children based on gender, age, caste, religion, class and abilities.
- 1.6. We will not use stories, images or quotes of children as products or as leverages for propaganda that is not owned by children.
- 1.7. We will engage in vigilance within the industry through formal and informal means in order to prevent objectification of children.
- 1.8. We will recognise and promote practices within the industry that perceive children as 'subjects' of programming.

2. Vulnerable versus Empowered Representation

- 2.1. We commit ourselves to representing children as persons in their own right who possess the power to change their realities or life situations.
- 2.2. We will, while representing children, bear in mind that children are capable of making informed and age-appropriate choices.

- 2.3. We recognise that children are not mere 'victims' but also 'protagonists', that they are not mere 'receivers' but full 'contributors' to society. We recognise that children can be 'actors' and 'decision-makers'.
- 2.4. We commit ourselves to not representing children as 'victims' or as 'vulnerable' persons who need support and adult benevolence all the time.
- 2.5. We will endeavour to produce positive stories and images of children.
- 2.6. We endeavour to produce non-exploitative stories and images of children
- 2.7. In any programming that portrays the violation of children's rights, we will endeavour to bear in mind the context of children's opinions and their initiatives to address them.
- 2.8. We will be vigilant within the industry through formal and informal means to prevent programming that victimises children.
- 2.9. We will recognise and promote practices of representing children as empowered individuals and groups.

3. Children determining their representation

- 3.1. We recognise that children have the right to be represented in ways that are coherent with their identities and the ways in which they perceive themselves.
- 3.2. We recognise that children have the right against misrepresentation and stereotyping.
- 3.3. We will give children the defining voice in determining how they should and should not be represented.
- 3.4. In any representation of children in a story or image we will gather their informed consent.
- 3.5. We will endeavour to not use images or stories of children out of context or in misleading ways
- 3.6. We will constantly engage in feedback and review processes with children to ascertain whether our programming is consistent with the ways in which they want to be portrayed.
- 3.7. We will recognise and promote practices within the industry that engage in participatory representation of children.

4. Children determining their representation

4.1. Every Children's Rights Violation is newsworthy.

4.1.1. We recognise that children's rights violations must be reported.

4.1.2. We recognise that children's opinions and consent are primary in any media endeavour to cover children's rights violations.

4.1.3. We recognise that knowledge of children's rights and children's issues is essential to covering children's rights violations.

4.2. Right to Privacy, Confidentiality and Dignity

4.2.1. We recognise that children have the right to be represented in ways that do not violate their privacy, confidentiality and dignity.

4.2.2. We commit ourselves to report only those facts on children's rights violations that are not confidential.

4.2.3. We commit ourselves to obscuring identities of children.

4.2.4. We will reveal the identity only if the child/children desire so under certain circumstances like:
- When children initiate contact with the reporter, wanting to exercise their right to freedom of expression and their right to have their opinion heard.
- When children are part of a sustained programme of activism or social mobilisation and want to be so identified.

4.2.5. We commit ourselves to not leaving any trails or clues about the identity of the child/children who have been violated.

4.2.6. We commit ourselves to revealing general details of the context of a violation and obscuring particular details that might violate children's privacy.

4.2.7. We commit ourselves to ensuring that children's stories, images and quotes are not sensationalised.

- 4.2.8. We commit ourselves to ensuring that children's stories, images and quotes are not sensationalised.
- 4.2.9. We commit ourselves to ensuring that media portrayal of children is positive and humane.



4.3. Interviewing children

- 4.3.1. We recognise that children are primary sources for reporting on children's rights violations. We recognise that interviews with children are intended to ensure that they get their right to be heard.
- 4.3.2. We recognise that children have the right to determine whether they want to be interviewed or not.
- 4.3.3. We recognise that children have the right to determine whether the media should quote them directly or use their image or not.
- 4.3.4. We recognise that only if we possess enough background knowledge on their rights and issues, do we possess the competency to interview them, especially those who have been directly affected.

- 4.3.5. We will introduce ourselves as persons from the media while interviewing children.
- 4.3.6. We will inform children of the nature and purpose of the interview and ensure that they have understood it. .
- 4.3.7. We will request the informed consent of children before interviewing them.
- 4.3.8. We will clarify any doubts, fears and apprehensions of children before interviewing them.
- 4.3.9. In gathering consent we will not use unfair means or coercion.
- 4.3.10. We will interview children in non-threatening environments.
- 4.3.11. We will limit the number of interviewers and photographers.
- 4.3.12. We will use translators and communicate the principles that are to be followed to translators before an interview.
- 4.3.13. We will ensure that children are not under any pressure during an interview.
- 4.3.14. We will not hurry children while interviewing and give them their time and space.

- 4.3.15. We will show warmth and interest, not just engage in collecting facts.
- 4.3.16. We will be sensitive to the experience of children and try our best to understand their positions.
- 4.3.17. If children are accompanied by an adult/adults we will ensure that they do not feel pressurised into a particular direction.

- 4.4. **Sources**
 - 4.4.1. We will ensure that sources are reliable and check their credibility.
 - 4.4.2. We will acknowledge sources without compromising on their identity or right to privacy and confidentiality.

- 4.5. **Reporting children's multiple experiences**

- 4.5.1. While covering children's rights violations, we will ensure that we report on many different experiences of children.
- 4.5.2. We recognise that children have not just had one particular case of violation, but have also had experiences before and after that with the police, judicial authorities and social workers.
- 4.6. Reporting multiple facets of a story
 - 4.6.1. We will consider different facets of children's rights violations, such as the causes of the violation, persons involved, the factors and structures that facilitated the violation, the historical context of the case, the world-wide initiatives to address such cases, current policies and laws, and problems that children face during such violations.
 - 4.6.2. We will report on different angles that ensure that such violations do not get repeated, by raising public awareness on the structures on which such violations thrive.

5. Combating Child Sexual Exploitation in the Media

- 5.1. We recognise that media exploits children through pornography on the internet, in films and televised programmes, overt and covert sexual content in children's programming and so on.
- 5.2. We commit ourselves to ensuring that the media does not violate children's rights by using them as sexual objects, exposing them to pornography or portraying them in sexualised images and stories.

M MECHANISMS FOR MONITORING NITORING

How young people view content on media

Portrayal of smoking on television

In general young people expected that smoking would be presented on television because they believe that television is supposed to reflect reality, and in reality people smoke. They felt that showing smoking on television might affect the attitudes and behaviour of children, but in light of the substantial amount of health information available and other factors such as parental smoking, participants felt that the amount of smoking they currently see on television was acceptable.

Alcohol

It was relatively simple for young people to deduce that by presenting alcohol on television without showing negative effects it might give some young people the wrong idea and therefore could create harm. Another consistent theme reported across age groups was that participants felt that there were inconsistencies in the way that television dealt with youth and adult portrayals of alcohol consumption.

"On TV it looks fun and it shows everyone at the pub all the time, it doesn't show the side effects and stuff" (Female 14)

Drugs

One very clear finding of this research was the fact that across all groups there was a high degree of concern expressed about the potential influence of television on how and why young people form particular attitudes about drugs and drug use. As a generally hidden activity in society, it was felt that television was one of the major sources of information about drugs that young people experience. Associated with the importance placed on this issue was a high degree of awareness among groups about the potentially damaging effects of showing drug use on television. Among all the issues discussed in the research, drugs were considered to be an important issue that young people felt that they and their peers needed protection from.

"Try to balance it out - not too much of the good side of drugs, also show the after effects. Not to glamourise drugs but to be realistic about them. Young people need to be empowered at some point, but need to be exposed at the right amount" (Male, 17)

Young people emphasise the need for realistic data that provides insight into the positive and negative aspects of

the issue. They want the opportunity to make up their own minds about an issue, and react strongly against situations where they feel that information is in some way being censored to only provide the 'acceptable' view. Furthermore, it was evident from the research that fear based messages (e.g. graphic anti smoking campaigns) provoked suspicion & distrust amongst participants.

Source: *Consultation with Young People on the Proposed Ofcom Broadcasting Code, A research consultation with under 18s, United Kingdom, September 2005*

Self Monitoring

1. Regulation through the Press Council of India
 - 1.1. By recognising, endorsing and periodically reviewing this Media Code of Conduct
 - 1.2. By registering formal protests and complaints with the Press Council of India for media violations
 - 1.3. By instituting procedures and norms for dealing with violations of code
2. Regulation by instituting similar bodies for different forms of media.
3. Regulation through Media Firms in house codes/ guidelines and charters
 - 3.1. By recognising, endorsing and periodically reviewing the Media Code of Conduct
 - 3.2. By including this Code as part of the internal codes/ guidelines and charters
 - 3.3. By instituting formal mechanisms for review of internal staff adherence to code
 - 3.4. By instituting procedures and norms for dealing with violations of code with reference to children
4. Monitoring by identifying and promoting 'best practices' in media forums and conferences.
5. Monitoring by evolving indicators for the industry with respect to children
6. Monitoring by instituting awards and recognitions for 'best practices' in the industry
7. Internal monitoring within each media firm by instituting a committee to periodically review coverage with reference to the code.

Monitoring by editors, producers, directors and media managers

1. Monitoring by colleagues within a firm through informal group processes while programming, coverage and so on.
2. Monitoring by editors, producers, directors and media managers through informal processes
3. Monitoring by media firms specialised in Media Watch (analyses, reporting and follow up on different forms of media)
4. Registering protests and dissent against violations internally and in other firms, through different forms such as letters of protest (individual or collective or as an institution), boycotts and so on.

External Monitoring by Civil Society Groups, including children's own organisations and Government

Formal Mechanisms

1. Regulation through the Court of Law
 - 1.1. Civil Society Groups book cases against media firms for violations under relevant laws (Defamation law, Juvenile Justice Act 2000 and so on)
 - 1.2. Civil Society groups undertake Public Interest Litigations (PILs) with respect to modification /passing of ordinances on Media and Children's Rights.
2. Regulation by the Censor Board of India
 - 2.1. Regulation by rating content.
 - 2.2. Regulation by resorting to cuts and editing.
 - 2.3. Regulation by banning.

Informal Mechanisms

1. Media Watch initiatives and activities by Civil Society Groups, both adult and children's, that monitor different forms of media and highlight violations and 'best practices'.
2. Research initiatives and activities by Civil Society Groups, both adult and children's,) that throw light on current realities and trends in the media.
3. Civil Society Groups (adults and children's groups) undertake Documentation and Publications based on research and circulation among different audiences inclusive of the media.
4. Civil Society Groups (adults and children's groups) undertake Letters of Protest, Boycotts and so on undertaken on the basis of Media Watch and Research initiatives and activities.
5. Civil Society Groups (adults and children's groups) undertake Negotiations with the Media on an individual as well as institutional level on issues that have emerged in the process of monitoring.
6. Civil Society Groups (adults and children's groups) undertake Identification of 'Best Practices' and their promotion in industry.
7. Civil Society Groups (adults and children's groups) undertake initiatives to evolve standards for content regulation in the industry.

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