

The Media and Children's Rights

CONTENTS

Page

- 3. How to use this handbook
- 4. Media professionals and children's rights
- 6. Children with disabilities
- 8. Children and discrimination
- 10. Children and the family
- 12. Child labour
- 14. Children and armed conflict
- 16. Children's health and welfare
- 18. The child's identity
- 20. Children's opinions and civil freedoms
- 22. Children in public care
- 24. Children and the media
- 26. Children in the media
- 28. Education
- 30. Children and crime
- 32. Sexual abuse and exploitation of children
- 34. The responsibilities of the state

Appendices

- 36. 1. The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- 44. 2. UN Millennium Goals
- 46. 3. A World Fit for Children?
- 48. 4. International Federation of Journalists Guidelines
- 50. 5. World Health Organization Guidelines
- 51. 6. A Calendar of 'Hooks'
- 53. 7. Useful International Contacts

This handbook has been produced to help media professionals working on stories about children to appreciate the rights of children and encourage their participation in the mass media. It contains ideas and challenges for journalists, and for those seeking to obtain media coverage about children's needs, problems, achievements and aspirations.

Its purpose is to generate responsible coverage of children, and the impact of adult behaviour and decisions on their lives. It has formed the basis of training programmes for journalists all over the world, supported by UNICEF and the International Federation of Journalists.

Originally commissioned by UNICEF in 1999 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, this handbook is based on the practical experience of working journalists, and was devised by the UK-based media ethics charity MediaWise (formerly PressWise).

Research and development

First edition: Mike Jempson & Denise Searle.

Second edition: Charlotte Barry & Mike Jempson.

MediaWise and UNICEF retain copyright of the contents of this handbook. However, the materials may be reproduced for training purposes providing the sources are informed and acknowledged. [See back cover for contact details.]

ISBN NUMBER: 0-9547620-3-7

Published: January 2005

How to use this handbook

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.

This handbook is designed to strengthen journalists' understanding of children's rights and to suggest how the issue can generate news stories and features for print and broadcast media.

It identifies STORYLINES based on themes drawn from the Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and provides CHECKLISTS to help media professionals measure the extent to which their own practice, and those of the media industry, acknowledge children's rights.

The Appendices include an easy guide to the Convention and UN targets to improve the lives of children, to which most of the world's countries are signatories. There are ethical guidelines for media professionals, a calendar of 'hooks' upon which to hang stories, and more than 60 useful international contacts from whom journalists can obtain facts, figures, quotes and advice.

We hope you will find it useful in developing accurate and positive coverage of children everywhere.

Lynn Geldof

*Regional Communication Advisor
UNICEF CEE & CIS*

Mike Jempson

*Director
The MediaWise Trust*

Media professionals and children's rights

Journalists are champions of human rights. They act as the eyes, ears and voices of the public, drawing attention to abuses of power and human rights, often at considerable personal risk. Through their work they can encourage governments and civil society organisations to effect changes that will improve the quality of people's lives.

Journalists, photographers and programme-makers frequently expose the plight of children caught up in circumstances beyond their control, or abused or exploited by adults. However, it is equally important to consider the 'children's angle' in more conventional news coverage. A good way of testing the value of changes in the law or fiscal policy, for example, is to consider the extent to which children will benefit or suffer as a consequence.

The way in which the media represents, or even ignores, children can influence decisions taken on their behalf, and how the rest of society regards them. The media often depicts children merely as silent 'victims' or charming 'innocents'. 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.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out what governments and individuals should do to promote and protect the indivisible human rights of all children. Unanimously adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1989, it has since been ratified by all the world's governments (except Somalia and the United States of America).

Ratifying the Convention commits governments to ensuring that children can grow up in safe and supportive conditions, with access to high quality education and health care, and a good standard of living. By signing up to the UNCRC, governments agree to protect children from discrimination, sexual and commercial exploitation and violence,

and to take particular care of orphans and young refugees. They also acknowledge that children have the right to:

- express opinions, especially about decisions affecting them;
- freedom of thought, expression, conscience and religion;
- a private life and the right to play;
- form their own clubs and organisations;
- access information — particularly from the state and media;
- make ideas and information known themselves.

The UNCRC provides a benchmark against which the efforts of each government to improve the lives of children can be measured. Every five years governments must report on progress to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee meets with government representatives and listens to the views of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) before making recommendations about further steps each country should take to meet its obligations.

Many countries also signed up to Optional Protocols to the UNCRC which deal with the involvement of children in armed conflict, child trafficking, prostitution and pornography. These came into force early in 2002, and require governments to report specifically about efforts to combat these forms of exploitation. More recently many countries have also agreed to implement the 'Palermo Protocol' of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, signed in December 2000, which deals with trafficking of women and children.

All UN member states have agreed to work towards eight Millennium Goals which should significantly improve the lives of children. At least 150 countries have also ratified the International Labour Organisation Convention 182 on the eradication of the worst forms of child labour (including sexual exploitation) which came into force in 2000. The years 2001–10 have been declared the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World; and 2003-12 is the UN Literacy Decade. The aspirations they represent provide a rich seam of stories that journalists can mine. Media scrutiny is one of the best guarantees that serious efforts will be made to achieve real change in children's lives.

Children with disabilities

- Investigate the legal and social status of disabled children. Do they lack equal opportunities because there are no laws about their rights, or because of prejudice? Do attitudes and opportunities vary according to the disability? Talk to children about where prejudice comes from. They can help to dispel myths and misrepresentation about people who are 'different' by describing their own experience.
- Can the parents of a disabled child get advice, financial assistance and practical help? Is it free or 'means-tested'? Report about self-help and other organisations working with disabled children and their families.
- Many disabled children fail to achieve their potential because adults think they have none. Are they provided with support and encouraged to participate in civil society? Are they consulted about their special needs: education, transport, access to public buildings, leisure facilities, town planning, etc? What support is available when they encounter discrimination?
- Disabled children face practical problems because their special needs are ignored by designers, builders and manufacturers. Report about products and services that result from a collaborative design process, in your country and elsewhere. How is the state improving access to public buildings, transport etc?
- Expose ill-treatment in institutions for disabled children — especially if the children have no-one to speak for them. Who runs them, and how do they get their funds? Report about positive techniques for treatment and care in your country and elsewhere. What do the children think of them?

Children with disabilities

► Is the focus of your story the young person or the disability? Have you introduced your subject by name first? Have you allowed the subjects of your story to speak for themselves? Have you asked the children if and how they want their disability mentioned? If you have mentioned a child's disability, is it strictly relevant? For example if children with disabilities are campaigning for access to a building their disabilities may be relevant, but not if they are campaigning to save a wildlife habitat, or raising money for an unrelated cause.

► The words we choose to use about people with disabilities can help to change attitudes and understanding OR perpetuate prejudice and ignorance. Have you used language in a negative or figurative way, which may be open to misinterpretation, or cause offence to people with disabilities? Have you used correct, specific terminology, or relied upon 'popular' terms or stereotypes which may be insulting or insensitive? If in doubt, consult an expert (including children with disabilities). There is a difference between drawing attention to social inequities that put children with disabilities at an unfair disadvantage, and using emotive language merely to excite pity.

► Remember, a disability may be caused by a disease but it is not a disease, and disabilities are not contagious. Children with learning difficulties are not the same as children with mental illnesses; sight and speech impairments take various forms; people use wheelchairs for different reasons; cerebral palsy, Down's Syndrome, dyslexia, or the effects of rubella are different conditions. Not all people with disabilities are chronically ill; many do not regard themselves as helpless victims; some consider disability as a concept imposed by a society which does not cater for the needs of all its citizens.

Children and discrimination

- Is discrimination common in your country, against ethnic minorities for example? Explore the reasons and the effects — especially upon children. Give children who suffer as a result of discrimination opportunities to tell the public how it affects them and what it feels like.
- Is a government or non-governmental agency collecting and publishing data on children in your country? Does the data identify discrimination against boys/girls, rich/poor, rural/urban, able-bodied/disabled, ethnic groups, etc?
- Does the recognition of equal rights for all extend to girls and young women, refugees, non-nationals, and immigrants? How are children from minority groups treated by the health, education or employment services? What part does discrimination play in bullying among children?
- Investigate the state's priorities, targets or affirmative action programmes to reduce discrimination. How are they monitored, and by whom? Report on the work of state agencies implementing non-discrimination policies, and those NGOs working to overcome prejudice against minorities.
- Report on the measures adopted by your government to ensure that legislation, policies and service delivery are non-discriminatory, including the strategies they adopt to tackle any problems uncovered by, for example, non-governmental organisations or the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- Report on the state's efforts to help vulnerable or disadvantaged children — those living in poverty or with HIV/AIDS. Do children feel such efforts are making a difference?

Children and discrimination

- ▶ Journalism is about specifics and facts – but often relies upon generalisations unsupported by evidence. Have you fallen into this trap, or have you challenged claims implying that children of a particular community are entirely responsible for ‘crime waves’ or damaging social stability? Generalisations are rarely valid and encourage discrimination against minorities.
- ▶ Have you mentioned a child’s race, ethnic origin, religion or disability? Is it strictly relevant to the story?
- ▶ Have you made sure the terms you have used about members of minority groups, or girls and young women, are not gratuitously insulting or perpetuate stereotypes?
- ▶ Have you made assumptions about a child’s cultural, ethnic, or religious background? Check your facts before publishing.
- ▶ Have you ever studied the publications or programmes produced by and for minority ethnic groups, or talked to the journalists working on them?
- ▶ Have you checked the accuracy of claims made by racist or nationalist groups, and sought balancing views from the people under attack — including the children?
- ▶ Have you double-checked ‘official’ allegations about Roma children or young people from other minority ethnic groups? Have you sought the views and responses of the children?
- ▶ Is your story about HIV-positive children or those living with AIDS medically accurate and substantiated? Speculative or sensational stories encourage prejudice or make it worse.

Children and the family

- How is 'the family' defined in law in your country? Does it include the extended family or just nuclear families? Are your family laws and divorce procedures fair and in the best interests of children? Do children have a say about what happens when the courts or welfare authorities intervene in their lives?
- The survival strategies adopted by single-parent families can make compelling human interest features if handled sensitively. They are also a good barometer of the effectiveness of social policies, such as child-care provision. Find ways of reporting on children brought up in unconventional family settings, without putting them at risk. Report on pressure groups that are trying to improve things.
- Investigate teenage pregnancy and parenthood. How do young mothers cope? How did their families and friends react? What difference do they think their age will make to their children's lives?
- Is the effect on children considered before parents are imprisoned? Can imprisoned mothers keep their babies with them? Report on research about the impact on their children, and campaigns to improve facilities.
- How does the state deal with applications from families wishing to enter or leave the country? Report on the efforts by families to stay together when faced with the prospect of being separated by circumstances or officialdom. Ask the children about their feelings and experiences.

Children and the family

- ▶ Does your story help people to understand how new government policies are likely to affect families? Are you providing information that will enable members of the public to assist children in need of care and protection, or obtain the necessary help from state or non-governmental bodies?

- ▶ Does your story help to explain how the family law system works? For example when covering divorce proceedings where children are involved, does your story make clear what rights children have when alimony is being set, or decisions are being made about which parent they will live with?

- ▶ Is your report of a custody battle fact-based and accurate? Have you avoided naming or using emotionally exploitative pictures of the children? If you are reporting an acrimonious 'celebrity divorce', have you considered the consequences of the coverage for their children? Have you raised this with the parents and lawyers involved?

- ▶ When writing about children placed in public care — a children's home, boarding school, foster family or 'respite care' — have you checked the rules about identification, and discovered whether the children can still see their parents if they want to? Where possible have you asked the children, and included their views?

- ▶ Where children are not in a position freely to offer an opinion, did you follow the procedures for obtaining permission to talk to the children or young people involved? Is their right to express an opinion respected by the authorities?

Child labour

- Run stories about the state's efforts (or failures) to protect children from economic exploitation: information campaigns, regulation and inspection of workplaces, education, training, etc. Has your government ratified ILO Conventions 29 (1930) or 138 (1973) on child labour, or 182 (2000) on the eradication of the most extreme forms, such as bonded labour, slavery and commercial sexual exploitation?
- Look for hidden forms of child labour: secret factories, bonded labour, prostitution, girls kept away from school to help in the home. Talk with working children, but protect their identities. What hours do they work? What are they paid? Are they working by choice, and free to leave or organise? Do officials visit to check on conditions? What are unions doing?
- Check the origin of goods in major stores. Does the manager know where and how they were made? If child labour is involved, find out what customers think, especially children.
- Some families rely on children to help maintain a basic household income or sustain a family business. Are they being exploited or are they a vital part of the family economy? What hours do they work? Do they have any option? Are they being kept away from school?
- The child's right to play includes the freedom to explore ideas, use imagination, develop talents and interact with others. Features and images about children's sporting achievements and cultural activities are fun and inspirational. Stories about the lack of public play facilities, or their sale to raise cash for the public sector, or accidents caused by dangerous play equipment emphasise public responsibility for play safety.

Child labour

▶ Have you thought through the implications of an official minimum age for work? Have you considered the longer-term consequences, for the children and for society, if some children are excluded from educational opportunities and exploited because of their age, size, gender or dexterity?

▶ Have you publicised cases of employers who are prosecuted for employing young children, or penalised for the conditions in which they expect young people to work? Have you sought statistics on injuries and fatalities among working children?

▶ Have you considered safe ways of including the views or voices of working children as part of your story?

▶ Have you drawn attention to the most obvious forms of child labour — street-sellers, car and shoe cleaners, messengers, etc — and found out why they are working, who they work for, and what they are paid? Does your story highlight the hazards working children face, and identify those guilty of coercing or exploiting them?

▶ Have you consulted NGOs (including trade unions) as sources for stories of commercial exploitation? They may also be able to identify useful international contacts, and markets, for your stories.

▶ Does your coverage show the difference between safe and imaginative and unsafe play areas and leisure facilities? Have you stressed the importance of proper maintenance and supervision? Have you explained what should happen if a child is hurt at a play area? Have you asked sports/showbusiness stars about their experiences of play as children?

Children and armed conflict

- Focus on the effects of armed conflict on children – direct threats to life, psychological and physical health, personal development; indirect effects on services for children and their families. Report other risks to children – from lengthy school closures or trauma induced by air attacks, etc – and ways they can be helped or protected. Record their resilience under fire. Add the human angle to the political context.
- Many children are killed or maimed by anti-personnel mines. What is your government's record on and attitude towards the manufacture and laying of land mines? Report on mine clearance, and the care of those injured or traumatised.
- In the aftermath of war what is being done to help children: treatment of injuries/trauma; repatriation/reuniting of families; orphanage/school provision? Do children get a fair share of resources? How are they affected by reparation strategies, or economic sanctions? Talk to refugee and internally displaced children and children orphaned by conflict.
- Have girls and young women suffered rape or other forms of sexual abuse — by enemy or 'friendly' soldiers and militia? How many became pregnant as a result, or contracted sexually transmitted diseases? What is being done to help and support them? Are these girls and young women being stigmatised?
- What are your government's wartime obligations to children (UNCRC, 4th Geneva Convention and Protocols, 1997 Cape Town Principles)? Is there military recruitment of young people under 18? Are the military, police and emergency services trained/educated to protect children? When conflict looms, what are the risks for the children of potential enemies?

Children and armed conflict

- ▶ Have you reported on what your country (or the country you are reporting from) is doing to protect children from the impact of war and its after-effects — including the provision of hospitals, orphanages, schools and counselling?
- ▶ Have you been as objective and accurate as possible about the information you file during a conflict? Take care not to become part of the ‘rumour factory’ that starts up when the first gun is fired.
- ▶ Is your report based primarily on hearsay, particularly about ‘child soldiers’? Have you checked that images of (armed) child soldiers have not been constructed for propaganda purposes — putting children at further risk?
- ▶ Does your story feature the actual experience of a young person involved in the conflict? Giving a child a voice establishes a human link with readers/viewers/listeners, but the child’s safety must remain paramount, and careful thought should be given to protecting the child’s identity.
- ▶ Be especially cautious about the use of images of children caught up in conflict which might have repercussions for them: assassination, stigma, or discrimination. Protect the identity of those who have witnessed atrocities, and whose evidence may be required in subsequent war crimes trials.
- ▶ Where appropriate try to ensure that those whose experience you are trying to communicate are accorded the dignity they deserve. Identify them and provide a context where you can; but respect their wish to remain anonymous. Avoid turning children into ‘icons of suffering’.

Children's health and welfare

- Keep an eye on official reports and statistics about child health in your country. For example, mortality rates at birth, deaths before the age of 5, and levels of preventable childhood diseases such as tuberculosis and diphtheria. Seek explanations from acknowledged experts. Look for patterns of discrimination in statistics.
- Investigate childhood epidemics and their causes, including environmental issues and the impact/adequacy of state health services. Are there mass immunisation programmes? How does the state manage child health care? Compare levels of funding with other public services.
- Use 'human interest' features to explore maternity and paediatric services. Is there a high incidence of birth problems? How efficient and child-friendly are hospital services for children? Investigate the availability for children of advanced treatments, such as bone marrow transplants for leukaemia. Are there long waiting lists for essential operations?
- How are children with HIV/AIDS treated and accommodated? What support systems exist? Investigate the effectiveness of health education campaigns in helping children make informed decisions about their lives, especially about their diet and sexual behaviour.
- Investigate the environment in which children live, learn and play. What is being done (in schools, for instance) to improve awareness about healthy lifestyles (diet, drugs, pollution, recreation, road safety, sexual behaviour, smoking, sport)?

Children's health and welfare

- ▶ Is your story thoroughly researched and accurate? Unsubstantiated health 'scare stories' can do more harm than good, by encouraging unwarranted distrust of medical professionals, for example, as well as the media — and even causing public panic.

- ▶ Have you applied the World Health Organization Guidelines for journalists covering health stories? (See Appendix 5)

- ▶ Will your coverage help people to understand childhood disease, preventative measures and treatment procedures? Have you identified sources of information and help about the specific medical condition in the news?

- ▶ Have you obtained sufficient and reliable information from the authorities? Does your story help people to make sense of reports and statistics about child health?

- ▶ If you are seeking to raise young people's awareness about HIV/AIDS, have you included their own accounts of the decisions they face, as well as clear information on 'safe sex', not sharing needles, and other preventative measures?

- ▶ Does your material encourage understanding or incite prejudice about diseases and conditions (such as HIV/AIDS)? Balanced, well-informed coverage can put pressure on the authorities to provide the best treatment possible.

The child's identity

- Report analytically on your country's nationality laws, and their impact on children. When and how can children make autonomous decisions about their preferred nationality? How do they get their names? Do their names have special meanings? What official records are kept about their lives, and can children or their parents gain access to such records? Under what circumstances can they correct errors, or change their name?
- Investigate formal and informal adoption and fostering systems. Do they protect or discriminate against a child's national, ethnic and religious identity? Examine the rights and identity problems of orphans, displaced, fostered or adopted children. Do they have the right of access to all available information about their origins? Can they establish their parentage – by genetic testing or other means? Can they speak freely to the media?
- To what extent can children enjoy their preferred culture, religion and language? Are minority schools recognised and resourced by the state? How do they operate and what is 'different' about them. Do children attend by choice or because of community pressure? Can they transfer between mainstream and minority schools?
- Report objectively about groups that exist to rebuild identities at risk of dilution or extinction. What impact do they have on the children involved, and what role do children play in them?
- Investigate foreign organisations seeking to attract young people away from local cultures. What are their motives? How are they funded?

The child's identity

- ▶ How have you recorded the child's identity in your coverage? Did you check with the children and their parents about how they want to be described?

- ▶ Have you been fair and even-handed in coverage of stories about children or their parents who are challenging the state on identity issues — like the right to practice the religion of their choice, or to protect their cultural values?

- ▶ When reporting claims made about the political intentions of cultural or minority groups, have you considered the views and motives of all parties involved, and especially the impact of the controversy on the lives of the children concerned? Producing stories from the perspective of the children may be a revealing way of examining such problematic issues.

- ▶ Is your story likely to encourage discrimination or incite hatred, or is it more likely to generate understanding and accommodation among different ethnic, cultural or religious groups? Are the best interests of children — their safety and security — served by your story? Is the story presented in a rational and balanced way?

- ▶ When producing material about children from minority groups with their own language, what efforts have been made to ensure that they can understand what is being said about them? For example translation/subtitles/sharing material with 'mother tongue' publications.

Children's opinions and civil freedoms

- Include children and young people when seeking opinions about local and national government policies. Publicise their views, especially about welfare, education or infrastructure projects which directly affect them in the short-term. Encourage them to express their opinions about plans for the future.
- Investigate children's access to information, including the reasons behind restrictions on their access to material. How easy is it for children to get hold of films, publications or games depicting violence, or those which are sexually explicit? At what point does seeking to protect children from harm turn into unjustifiable censorship?
- Do schools run classes on citizenship and how the political process operates? How do children make use of their right to express their opinions — for example, by producing their own publications, making films, using the Internet, keeping private diaries, running mock elections, etc?
- Investigate what happens to young people if they refuse to comply with a legal obligation to take part in military or other forms of public service. Can young people under the age of 18 be conscientious objectors?
- Investigate children's rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly. Report about children making use of these rights. Make sure they are able to speak for themselves.
- Produce features on youth clubs and other associations for young people, especially if they are run by children. How and why were they set up? How do they operate? How are they funded? What difficulties have they encountered?

Children's opinions and civil freedoms

- ▶ Can your publication/programme assist children to express their opinions, and contact others who share their views, interests and aspirations?

- ▶ Do your stories exploit children's vulnerability or seek to impose upon them values and attitudes which they may not understand?

- ▶ Has your publication/programme considered ways of illustrating cultural diversity among children — through guest columnists/presenters, competitions or sponsored events, for example?

- ▶ Has your publication/programme given coverage to those (including children and young people) who promote the rights and opinions of children?

- ▶ Have you covered stories about children organising things for themselves — including school councils, street children's groups, trades unions and campaigning groups as well as clubs devoted to arts, sports and leisure pursuits, and enterprises (commercial/artistic)?

- ▶ When reporting on children's protests, have you ensured that you are not exposing the children involved to risks of imprisonment, violence or other forms of retaliation?

- ▶ Have you reported on the impact of children speaking out — for instance, the support they have received, the changes they have managed to achieve, the reactions of public figures? Have you visited internet sites where children voice their opinions (for example: www.unicef.org/voy)?

Children in public care

- What is being done to improve conditions in institutions in which children live and learn? Is the trend towards smaller, more intimate residential units? How are staff trained and monitored? Is corporal punishment prohibited, and is the prohibition effectively enforced? How is abuse in children's homes checked and prevented? Do children have a secure means of raising complaints and concerns about all aspects of their lives? Are there effective and independent systems of investigation and follow up?
- How many children are in public care, and why? How reliable are the figures? How many are adopted/fostered? Do many run away? What happens to them when they outgrow public care (academic/employment prospects, life expectancy)? Talk to those who have come through the residential care system. Where are they now? How did their experience affect their lives? How do they think things could be improved?
- What happens about adoption and fostering in your country? Are the children's views and rights taken into account? Do adopted/fostered children with disabilities live with able-bodied children? Media coverage can help to improve systems and public awareness, especially where information is scant or unreliable.
- Is the transfer of children to another country for adoption regulated or monitored? What choice are children given? How are they protected from abuse and exploitation? Are children who have been taken away from home willing to describe their new lives? Do parents who have given up a child for adoption regret their decision? Were they tricked in any way? Have they been able to remain in contact with their child?

Children in public care

- ▶ Does your story help to explain how the residential care system works? Is it clear what legal rights children (and their parents) have to challenge the system?

- ▶ Have you made sufficient enquiries to establish why and how children came to be in care? If children have been abandoned and/or taken to crime, it's not necessarily their fault.

- ▶ Have you included positive 'angles' to avoid the risk of alienating the public from the plight of abandoned children, and perpetuating negative stereotypes? Does your story identify or patronise children who are at risk, and lay them open to public antipathy?

- ▶ Have you reported on opportunities for children in public care to join clubs and make links with other young people? Positive reporting about opportunities for children in care to become reintegrated within mainstream society can help to reduce ignorance and prejudice.

- ▶ Have you made the most of opportunities to give children in public care a presence and a voice in the media?

- ▶ Have you incorporated information about organisations that can help young people facing difficulties at home or in institutions? Are there organisations that specialise in assisting children brought up apart from their biological parents? Have you checked the credentials of groups claiming to support those seeking to trace their origins?

Children and the media

- Visit schools/youth clubs to talk with children about your work. Ask if they share the views of children around the world who dislike the way they are represented in and by the media:
 - being treated as a joke or made to 'perform' like animals;
 - the use of 'cute' or distressing images of children just to evoke emotional responses;
 - being 'shown up' as ignorant or spoken down to, or adults speaking for them even when they know about a subject;
 - being treated as homogeneous groups instead of as individuals and the use of 'teenagers', 'adolescents' or 'youths' to denote problems/trouble.*

* **SOURCE:** *Interviewing Children: a guide for journalists and others*
Sarah McCrum & Lotte Hughes, Save the Children UK,
1998, ISBN 1 899120 71 8

- Talk to children from different social and ethnic groups. They can be excellent sources for stories, and provide fresh insight on subjects that affect them directly: education, health, play, culture, politics, bullying and other forms of abuse.
- Monitor the activities of the Ministry/Children's Ombudsman dealing with children's issues. Do children feel they adequately represent them? Contact non-governmental organisations that may be able to put you in touch with young people who have interesting stories to tell — but remember that all such organisations have their own agendas to promote.
- Investigate children's use of photography and information technology, the Internet, chat rooms, mobile phones, etc. Do they know how to protect themselves from harmful material? Have they ever experienced inappropriate approaches from adults or commercial organisations?

Children and the media

- ▶ Media professionals have an obligation to respect children's human rights, in how they operate and how they represent children. Does your finished work, and the way you have collected information, stand up to scrutiny? (See Appendix 4)

- ▶ Did you approach your story with a fixed view about how you wanted the children to respond? Have you done justice to what the children actually said — will they recognise themselves in what you have published, or have their ideas been reinterpreted from an adult perspective?

- ▶ When conducting interviews with children did you:
 - ensure they were comfortable and not under duress?
 - allow enough time to explain your intentions?
 - obtain their consent for the use of their names and the taking and publication of their image?
 - make sure they knew how to contact you, and to obtain a copy of the finished item?

- ▶ Have you assessed the risk to the child of using her or his name or image, and discussed it with the child, the child's parents or guardian, and with editorial colleagues?

- ▶ Have you applied the same checking procedures as you would with adult informants, before publishing allegations or assertions made to you by children?

- ▶ Has your publication/programme arranged to provide reliable/confidential support or advice for children who respond to items concerning personal health, physical or sexual abuse, commercial exploitation or other forms of criminal activity?

Children in the media

- Mass media has a pervasive influence over all our lives. Media professionals can contribute to improve 'media literacy' among children, and adults, by explaining how the mass media operates, and how to interpret its messages.
- It is important to plan carefully for children's involvement in all forms of media production so that everyone understands what can and cannot be done. If your company wants to encourage children to contribute, it should appoint a specialist advisor/correspondent/children's editor to set the ground rules: safe working practices and monitoring systems; the training of supervisors; formal induction of the 'young journalists'; and guidelines about editorial control. Recruiting from young journalists' clubs whose members are proficient in the use of communications technology is an ideal starting point.
- If children are to be present in the workplace, the company must obtain written consents from their parents/guardians, and have adequate facilities for chaperones, first aid, rest periods, refreshments and safe transport to and from home.
- Introduce the young people to basic journalistic techniques and the regulations that affect media production. Give them scope to decide what topics they want to deal with.
- How could you or your company contribute to the annual International Children's Day of Broadcasting (ICDB). Details of the ICDB and other 'Media Activities and Good Ideas by, with and for Children' (MAGIC) around the world, can be found at www.unicef.org/magic. It has links to a global network for media professionals and young media enthusiasts, and to the Young People's Media Network for Europe and Central Asia.

Children in the media

- ▶ Have you or your company considered both the physical and psychological risks of children's involvement in media projects? Devise procedures, guidelines and monitoring systems to protect children from harm when they are working with you — chaperones, health and safety measures.

- ▶ Are you sure that your project is not exploiting children for commercial purposes?

- ▶ Has there been sufficient planning and training of both staff and children to ensure that the children understand what they can and cannot do? Do they know about the regulations that apply to the media? Do they have a mentor from whom they can obtain expert advice?

- ▶ To avoid upset, confusion and false expectations, have you negotiated clear rules with the children about the extent of their editorial control? Are their supervisors realistic about what the children can achieve, and what they might do next?

- ▶ What evaluation systems have been put in place so that the young people can obtain feedback about their work? Have they been asked what they think, and have they been informed about audience reactions?

- ▶ Do you know about 'The Radio Manifesto' developed by young broadcasters from around the world? (See www.worldradioforum.org.) Do you know that every three years there is a World Summit on Media for Children and Adolescents? (See www.childrensmediasummit.com.) Do you know about the World Association of Newspapers Young Reader Programmes? (See www.wan-press.org.)

Education

- Investigate the real extent of equal opportunities for all children within the education system: for example girls and boys; rural and urban; those with disabilities and members of minority communities.
- Can the students influence rules and discipline procedures through school councils? Can children choose what lessons they attend? Discover whether and how parents can influence the curriculum and education services. What role do they have in school management?
- Compare the different types of educational establishments — pre-school, primary and secondary, state and private. Do some children miss out because fees for educational services are too high?
- Look into teacher/pupil ratios. What difference does class size make? What resources are available to teachers? Do children have access to up-to-date equipment? Investigate the safety of school buildings.
- Are 'alternative' approaches to education permitted? How do teaching methods, attendance, discipline and results compare with mainstream schools?
- How do schools deal with 'naughty' children? Are punishments fair or harsh? Is corporal punishment still used by teachers? When excluded or expelled from school do children have a right of appeal? What happens to them next? How do schools deal with bullying? Is there a problem of violence against teachers, and if so what are the causes?

Education

- ▶ Are you familiar with how your country's education service is supposed to work? Have you made yourself aware of current problems, changes or positive initiatives in the education system by visiting educational institutions?

- ▶ Does your publication or broadcasting company have a specialist education unit? Who produces the material it publishes – specialist reporters, educationalists, teachers? How are children and young people encouraged to contribute?

- ▶ Do your education stories include the perspective of the students as well as that of the head-teachers and managers? Have you obtained comments from parents, school governors, and classroom teachers and their unions?

- ▶ Have you made sure children are aware they may be quoted, and checked that your story won't cause them problems they hadn't thought about?

- ▶ What can you do to help children understand the role of the media in society? Has your media company considered ways of producing information in accessible forms that might attract children and even assist teachers in their work with children?

- ▶ How does your media organisation use the Internet? Has it investigated the uses children make of the world wide web? Does it produce material that children will want to access electronically? Has it considered positive ways of engaging young people in news, current affairs and media production by developing interactive links with schools?

Children and crime

- Keep stories about children and crime in perspective. Young people are more likely to be victims than perpetrators of crime. Highlight the human stories behind the statistics. Alert children to ways they can protect themselves from harm.
- Does the law treat children and young people differently to adults? How are young victims of crime perceived and treated? How are the rights of young offenders/suspects protected and monitored? Are judges, lawyers, police and prison warders trained about children's rights? Are children more or less likely to be believed than adults?
- How do children perceive the police? How do the police treat children, especially homeless children and those they arrest?
- Investigate restrictions on press reporting of children in the justice system: court cases, detention and aftercare. Are they appropriate? Are there laws to prevent the disclosure of the names of children who are accused of breaking the law?
- Does the justice system focus on rehabilitation or retribution? Is corporal punishment still used within institutions or as a sentence for crime? Investigate the number and conditions of children in all forms of welfare and penal custody. Are custodial sentences used only as a last resort? Are probation and rehabilitation services for children adequate and effective?
- Investigate the use of drugs and solvents among children. Why do they use drugs? Is it easy to obtain dangerous drugs? Are they criminalised for using them or helped through therapy and rehabilitation? Are they consulted about the style and content of drugs education and rehabilitation services?

Children and crime

- ▶ Violent and anti-social behaviour by children invariably has its roots in adult violence and attitudes towards them. Does your coverage imply that young offenders are deserving of fewer rights than other people?

- ▶ Have you avoided the unnecessary use of the names and images of young law-breakers? Gratuitous identification may put them at extra risk, by encouraging a sense of notoriety, for instance, and reducing their chances of rehabilitation. It is also a denial of their rights.

- ▶ Have you made sure that children who are the subject of allegations by the public or the authorities are given a chance to respond? Don't assume that children are involved in criminal activity just because they are homeless.

- ▶ Have you followed up your report on the arrest or charging of children? Are they safe? If they are in custody, what are conditions like? Are they incarcerated with other children or with adults? Do they have access to appropriate services, such as legal advice and counselling?

- ▶ Is your coverage of drugs and drug abuse accurate and supported by scientific evidence? False and sensational claims do not help to produce sensible strategies to assist drug abusers or convict drug traffickers. Have you investigated those who supply children with drugs? Many members of the public rely upon the media for basic information — have you considered running features with clear factual information for children and parents about the different effects of different drugs, for instance, or treatment procedures?

Sexual abuse and exploitation of children

- Report on sex education and the laws covering sexual activity involving children. How was the age of consent for sexual activity arrived at?
- Investigate the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, and the taboos that surround them. Draw upon evidence from other countries about the extent of sexual abuse within families. Is accurate data collected and published? Can all children (including the disabled and detainees) safely lodge complaints about abuse within their family, school or institution? How are police, social workers, teachers and health staff trained to deal with them? How is confidentiality, protection, support and counselling for children arranged?
- Is it an offence to produce, disseminate or possess child pornography? Investigate the efficacy of measures to prevent child abuse and prostitution and protect children from pornography, telephone 'sex lines', and Internet pornography.
- Report on the legal procedures initiated by such complaints. Do child witnesses get protection and support? Are they treated as criminals, or harmed by the investigation process? Can citizens or residents be prosecuted or extradited for the abuse or exploitation of children in other countries?
- Conduct investigations about the sexual abuse of children with appropriate security and professional support, for both the children and reporters. The safety of children exploited commercially or domestically must be paramount.
- The travel trade has begun to alert the public to sexual abuse of children by tourists. Does your country prosecute people who abuse children in other countries?

Sexual abuse and exploitation of children

- ▶ Is your story about the sexual abuse or commercial sexual exploitation of children scrupulously accurate? Has its 'shock value' been exaggerated — even if it exposes criminal activity or official neglect?

- ▶ Have you portrayed abused or exploited children as victims, criminals or as human beings with rights and dignity? Was it possible or appropriate to give the children space to speak for themselves? Might your words or pictures inadvertently reveal the identity of abused children? Does your story supply information on how to gain access to vulnerable children?

- ▶ Did the children agree to be photographed? Did you also obtain the consent of a responsible adult? Was the adult present? Do the images used to illustrate your story appear to sexualise children, or give the impression that a child is a willing participant in abuse or exploitation? What arrangements have been made to ensure that improper use cannot be made of the children's images?

- ▶ Does your story glamorise 'sex tourism', pornography, or any other form of child exploitation? Have you made sure that it will not appear in the context of sexually explicit material or material promoting sexual services?

- ▶ What is the likely impact of publication on the children involved? Have support systems been set up to protect them? Is there a confidential helpline to deal with responses for people wishing to report other examples of abuse or exploitation? What support is there for reporters who may be traumatised by covering such stories?

The responsibilities of the state

- 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 in Geneva? If so, what are the reasons? Has there been any public consultation?
- Has publicity been given to the response of the Committee on the Rights of the Child? What actions are planned as a result? When is the next Report scheduled? Investigate the work of the Committee. Interview the representative for your part of the world.
- Interview those responsible for supervising implementation of the Convention in your country. Challenge them about (lack of) progress. Ask children what questions they would like answered. Seek official pledges about child-friendly policies, or action on specific problems affecting children.
- How has your government involved non-governmental organisations in its efforts to improve the lives of children? Have such organisations made their own submissions to the Committee on the Rights of the Child? How accurate is the evidence they have collected, and does it call into question the government's claims?
- Report about campaigns in your country to improve the lives of children. How do children view them? Compare their lives now with the childhood of their parents.

The responsibilities of the state

- ▶ Do your stories improve public understanding about children's rights, and the role of your government's policies in promoting and protecting them?

- ▶ Journalists are ideally placed to demand action by the state to honour its international obligations. Are there campaigns your programme/publication could initiate to improve awareness of the Convention among both public and politicians?

- ▶ Have you talked 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?

- ▶ Have you considered ways in which your media organisation might co-operate with non-governmental organisations to produce information and advice materials for interested members of the public who respond to your features?

A journalist's summary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The preamble recalls the basic principles of the United Nations — in particular the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity — and the provisions of relevant human rights treaties and proclamations.

No specific mention is made of journalists' responsibilities, but as watchdogs for the public media professionals have a special role to play when governments ignore their obligations to children.

1. Definition of a child

All people under 18, unless by law majority is attained at an earlier age.

2. Non-discrimination

All rights apply to all children without exception, and the state is obliged to protect children from any form of discrimination. The state must not violate any right and must take positive action to promote them all.

3. Best interests of the child

All actions concerning the child should take full account of his or her best

interests. The state is to provide adequate care when parents or others responsible fail to do so.

4. Implementation of rights

The state is obliged to translate the rights in the Convention into reality.

5. Parental guidance and the child's evolving capacities

The state has a duty to respect the rights and responsibilities of parents or the extended family to provide appropriate direction and guidance to

children in the exercise of their rights.

6. Survival and development

The child has an inherent right to life, and the state must ensure the maximum survival and development of the child.

7. Name and nationality

Every child has the right to have a name from birth and to be granted a nationality.

8. Preservation of child's identity

The state is obliged to protect and, if necessary, re-establish the basics of a child's identity (name, nationality and family ties).

9. Separation from parents

Children have the right to live with their parents unless this is incompatible with their best interests; the right to maintain contact with parents if separated from one or both; and the right to be informed by the

state of the whereabouts of their parents if such separation is the result of action by the state.

10. Family re-unification

Children and their parents have the right to leave any country and to enter their own in order to be reunited or to maintain the child/parent relationship.

11. Illicit transfer and non-return

The state is obliged to try to prevent and remedy the kidnapping or retention of children in another country by a parent or third party.

12. The child's opinion

The child has the right to express an opinion and have it taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

13. Freedom of expression

Children have the right to obtain and make known information and to express their views, unless this

would violate the rights of others.

14. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

The child has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance and national law.

15. Freedom of association

The child has the right to meet with others and to join or set up associations, unless doing so violates the rights of others.

16. Protection of privacy

Children have the right to protection from interference with their privacy, family, home and correspondence and from libel/slander.

17. Access to appropriate information

The media has a duty to disseminate information

to children that is of social, moral, educational and cultural benefit to them, and which respects their cultural background. The state is to take measures to encourage the publication of material of value to children and to protect children from harmful materials.

18. Parental responsibilities

Both parents jointly have primary responsibility for bringing up their children and the state should support them in this task.

19. Protection from abuse and neglect

The state is obliged to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence perpetrated by parents or others responsible for their care, and to undertake preventive and treatment programmes in this regard.

20. Protection of children without families

The state is obliged to provide special protection for children deprived of their

family environment and to ensure that appropriate alternative family care or institutional placement is made available to them, taking into account the child's cultural background.

21. Adoption

In countries where adoption is recognised and/or allowed, it shall only be carried out in the best interests of the child, with all necessary safeguards for a given child and authorisation by the competent authorities.

22. Refugee children

Special protection is to be granted to children who are refugees or seeking refugee status, and the state is obliged to cooperate with competent organisations providing such protection and assistance.

23. Disabled children

Disabled children have the right to special care, education and training

designed to help them achieve the greatest possible self-reliance and participation to lead a full and active life in society.

24. Health and health services

The child has the right to the highest level of health and access to health and medical services, with special emphasis on primary and preventative health care, public health education and the reduction of infant mortality. The state is obliged to work towards the abolition of harmful traditional practices. There is emphasis on the need for international cooperation to ensure this right.

25. Periodic review of placement

A child placed by the state for reasons of care, protection or treatment, has the right to have all aspects of that placement evaluated regularly.

26. Social security

Children have the right to benefit from social security.

27. Standard of living

Children have the right to benefit from an adequate standard of living. It is the primary responsibility of parents to provide this and the state's duty to ensure that parents are able to fulfil that responsibility. The state may provide material support in the case of need, and may seek to ensure recovery of child maintenance costs from absent parents or guardians.

28. Education

The child has the right to education and the state has a duty to ensure that primary education, at least, is made free and compulsory. Administration of school discipline is to reflect the child's human dignity. There is emphasis on the need for international

cooperation to ensure this right.

29. Aims of education

The state must recognise that education should be directed at developing the child's personality and talents, preparing the child for active life as an adult, fostering respect for basic human rights and developing respect for the child's cultural and national values and those of others.

30. Children of minorities or indigenous people

Children of minority communities and indigenous people have the right to enjoy their own culture and to practise their own religion and language.

31. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities

Children have the right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities.

32. Child labour

The state is obliged to

protect children from engaging in work that constitutes a threat to their health, education or development, to set minimum ages for employment, and to regulate conditions of employment.

33. Drug abuse

The child has the right to protection from the use of narcotic and psychotropic drugs and from being involved in their production or distribution.

34. Sexual exploitation

The child has the right to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

35. Sale, trafficking and abduction

The state is obliged to make every effort to prevent the sale, trafficking and abduction of children.

36. Other forms of exploitation

The child has the right to

protection from all other forms of exploitation not covered in Articles 32-35.

37. Torture and deprivation of liberty

Torture, cruel treatment or punishment, capital punishment and life imprisonment is prohibited. Arrest and any form of restriction of liberty must be used only as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time. Children have the right to appropriate treatment, separation from detained adults, contact with their family and access to legal and other assistance.

38. Armed conflicts

States are obliged to respect and ensure respect for humanitarian law as it applies to children. Children under 15 should take no direct part in hostilities or be recruited into the armed forces. All children affected by armed conflict should benefit from protection and care.

39. Rehabilitative care

The state is obliged to ensure that children damaged by armed conflict, torture, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation receive appropriate treatment for their recovery and social reintegration.

40. Administration of juvenile justice

Children alleged or recognised as having committed an offence have the right to respect for their human rights and, in particular, to benefit from all aspects of the due process of law, including legal or other assistance in preparing and presenting their defence. Recourse to judicial proceedings and institutional placements should be avoided wherever possible and appropriate.

41. Respect for existing standards

If any standards set in national law or other

applicable international instruments are higher than those of this Convention, it is the higher standard that applies.

42-54. Publicising and implementing the Convention

- The state is obliged to make the rights contained in the Convention widely known to adults and children.
- States elect a Committee on the Rights of the Child composed of 10 experts, which considers reports submitted by parties to the Convention two years after ratification and every five years thereafter.
- These reports are to be made available to the general public.
- The Committee may propose that special studies be undertaken on specific issues relating to the rights of the child, and make its evaluations known to the

State Party concerned as well as to the United Nations General Assembly.

- To foster implementation of the Convention and encourage international cooperation, bodies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are encouraged to advise the Committee and are permitted to attend its meetings.

- They can submit pertinent information to the Committee and be asked to advise on the optimal implementation of the Convention, together with other bodies recognised as competent — including other United Nations bodies and NGOs which have consultative status with the United Nations.

FOR FULL TEXTS

UNCRC in English:
www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm

UNCRC in 38 languages:
www.unicef.org/magic

Optional Protocol on child prostitution and child pornography:
www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc-sale.htm

Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts:
www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc-conflict.htm

Palermo Protocol against trafficking:
www.ohchr.org/english/law/protocoltrafficking.htm

The United Nations Millennium Goals

The 191 member states of the United Nations have signed up to the following Millennium Goals, which closely relate to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Checking progress towards the targets they have set themselves could make interesting and informative stories. The UN has even published details of the ways in which achievements can be measured by each country.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- By halving, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day, and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

2. Achieve universal primary education

- By ensuring that, by 2015, boys and girls, everywhere, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

3. Promote gender equality and empower women

- By eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

4. Reduce child mortality

- By reducing by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.

5. Improve maternal health

- By reducing by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

- To halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases, by 2015.

7. Ensure environmental sustainability

- By integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reversing the loss of environmental resources;
- By halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, by 2015;
- By significantly improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020.

8. Develop a global partnership for development

- By developing further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system (a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction, nationally and internationally);
- By addressing the special needs of the least developed countries. (Tariff and quota-free access for the exports of the least developed countries; enhanced debt relief for poor countries; the cancellation of official bilateral debt; more generous overseas development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction);
- By addressing the special needs of landlocked and small island developing countries;
- By helping to make the debts of developing countries sustainable in the long term;
- By developing and applying strategies for safe, productive work for youth, in cooperation with developing countries;
- By providing access to essential drugs in developing countries, in cooperation with pharmaceutical companies;
- By making available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications, in cooperation with the private sector.

[See www.un.org/millenniumgoals and http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp]

A World Fit for Children?

A Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 2002 adopted a Declaration, which provides a useful standard against which to measure the policies and achievements of governments and others concerned with the well-being of children.

1. Put children first

In all actions related to children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

2. Eradicate poverty: invest in children

We reaffirm our vow to break the cycle of poverty within a single generation, united in the conviction that investments in children and the realisation of their rights are among the most effective ways to eradicate poverty. Immediate action must be taken to eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

3. Leave no child behind

Each girl and boy is born free and equal in dignity and rights; therefore all forms of discrimination affecting children must end.

4. Care for every child

Children must get the best possible start in life. Their survival, protection, growth and development in good health and with proper nutrition is the essential foundation of human development. We will make concerted efforts to fight infectious diseases, tackle major causes of malnutrition and nurture children in a safe environment that enables them to be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn.

5. Educate every child

All girls and boys must have access to and complete primary education that is free, compulsory and of good quality, as a cornerstone of an inclusive basic education. Gender disparities in primary and secondary education must be eliminated.

6. Protect children from harm and exploitation

Children must be protected against acts of violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination, as well as from all forms of terrorism and hostage-taking.

7. Protect children from war

Children must be protected from the horrors of armed conflict. Children under foreign occupation must be protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

8. Combat HIV/AIDS

Children and their families must be protected from the devastating impact of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS).

9. Listen to children and ensure their participation

Children and adolescents are resourceful citizens capable of helping to build a better future for all. We must respect their right to express themselves and to participate in all matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity.

10. Protect the Earth for children

We must safeguard our natural environment, with its diversity of life, its beauty and its resources, all of which enhance the quality of life, for present and future generations. We will give every assistance to protect children and minimize the impact of natural disasters and environmental degradation on them.

[See www.unicef.org/specialsession/wffc/index.html]

***International Federation of Journalists
Guidelines and Principles
for Reporting on Issues Involving Children***

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 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its implications for the exercise of independent journalism.

Media organisations should regard violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, their education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for investigation 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 shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in reporting children's affairs and, in particular, they shall:

- **strive** for standards of excellence in terms of accuracy and sensitivity when reporting on issues involving children;
- **avoid** programming and publication of images which intrude upon the media space of children with information which is damaging to them;
- **avoid** the use of stereotypes and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children;

- **consider** carefully the consequences of publication of any material concerning children and shall minimise harm to children;
- **guard** against visually or otherwise identifying children unless it is demonstrably in the public interest;
- **give** children, where possible, the right of access to media to express their own opinions without inducement of any kind;
- **ensure** independent verification of information provided by children and take special care to ensure that verification takes place without putting child informants at risk;
- **avoid** the use of sexualised images of children;
- **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;
- **verify** the credentials of any organisation purporting to speak for or to represent the interests of children;
- **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 put to critical examination the reports submitted and the claims made by governments on implementation of the UNCRC in their respective countries. 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.

Launched in Recife, Brazil in May 1998, adopted by the IFJ Congress in Seoul, 2001.

UNICEF has developed its own Ethical Guidelines
for the Reporting of Children:
www.unicef.org/media/media_tools_guidelines.html

***European Health Communications Network
Guidelines for Professional Health
Correspondents***

Drafted in 1998 by PressWise (MediaWise) and developed over two years in consultation with health communicators and correspondents and the IFJ, the final version was adopted in 2000 by the World Health Organisation European Health Communications Network as guidance for good practice.

1. First, try to do no harm. Human rights and the public good are paramount.
2. Get it right. Check your facts and your sources, even if deadlines are put at risk.
3. Do not raise false hopes. Be especially careful when reporting on claims for 'miracle cures' or potential 'health scares'.
4. Beware of vested interests. Ask yourself 'who benefits most from this story?'
5. Reject personal inducements. Always make it clear if material is being published as a result of sponsorship.
6. Never disclose the source of information imparted in confidence.
7. Respect the privacy of the sick, the handicapped, and their families at all times.
8. Be mindful of the consequences of your story. Remember that individuals who may be sick or handicapped — especially children — have lives to live long after the media have lost interest.
9. Never intrude on private grief. Respect the feelings of the bereaved, especially when dealing with disasters. Close-up photography or television images of victims or their families should be avoided wherever possible.
10. If in doubt, leave it out.

A Calendar of 'Hooks'

It is always useful to have hooks or pegs on which to hang story ideas. This selection of international events offers some suggestions. There will be many more national, cultural and religious anniversaries and events around which to construct a 'children's angle'.

March

- 8 International Women's Day
- 21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- 22 World Day for Water
- 24 World Tuberculosis Day

April

- 7 World Health Day

May

- 3 World Press Freedom Day
- 31 World No Tobacco Day

June

- 4 International Day of Child Victims of Aggression
- 12 World Day Against Child Labour
- 26 International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
- 26 International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

August

- 9 International Day of Indigenous People
- 12 International Youth Day
- 23 International Remembrance Day for the Abolition of the Slave Trade

September

- 8 International Literacy Day
- 21 International Day of Peace

October

- 5 World Teachers' Day
- 16 World Food Day
- 24 United Nations Day

November

- 20 Universal Children's Day
- 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

December

- 1 World AIDS Day
- 2 International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
- 3 International Day of Disabled People
- 5 International Volunteer Day
International Children's Day of Broadcasting
- 10 Human Rights' Day
- 18 International Migrants' Day

Useful international contacts

Many of these will have national offices or local affiliates in each country.

1. Organisations concerned with children's rights

Amnesty International

99-119 Rosebery Avenue, London, EC1R 4RE, UK

tel +44 20 7814 6200

fax +44 20 7833 1510

email amnestyis@amnesty.org

web www.amnesty.org

Anti-Slavery International

Thomas Clarkson House, The Stable Yard, Broomgrove Road, London SW9 9TL, UK

tel +44 20 7501 8920

fax +44 20 7738 4110

email info@antislavery.org

web www.antislavery.org

Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media

Institute of Education, London University, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL, UK

tel +44 207 612 6515

fax +44 207 612 6177

email d.buckingham@ioe.ac.uk

web www.ccsonline.org.uk/mediacentre/main.html

ChildHope

Lector Court, 151 Farringdon Road, London EC1 3AF, UK

tel +44 207 833 0868

fax +44 207 833 2500

email chuk@gn.apc.org

web www.childhopeuk.org

Children and Armed Conflict Unit

Human Rights Centre, Essex University, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, CO4 3SQ, UK

tel +44 1206 873 483

fax +44 1206 874 026

email armedcon@essex.ac.uk

web www.essex.ac.uk/armedcon

Children's Express Worldwide

Exmouth House, 3-11 Pine Street, London EC1R 0JH, UK

tel +44 207 833 2577

fax +44 207 278 7722

email enquiries@childrens-express.org

web www.childrens-express.org

**Childwatch International
Research Network**

P.O. Box 1132 Blindern, N-0317
Oslo, Norway

tel +47 22 85 43 50
fax +47 22 85 50 28
email childwatch@uio.no
web www.childwatch.uio.no

**Coalition to Stop the Use
of Child Soldiers**

2nd floor, 2-12 Pentonville Road,
London, N1 9FP, UK

tel +44 20 7713 2761
fax +44 20 7713 2794
email info@child-soldiers.org
web www.child-soldiers.org

**Committee on the Rights
of the Child**

c/o Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human
Rights, 8-14 Avenue de la Paix,
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

tel +41 22 917 9000
fax +41 22 917 9022
email crc@ohchr.org
web [www.unhchr.ch/html/
menu2/6/crc](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/crc)

Concerned for Working Children

303/2 L B Shastri Nagar,
Vimanapura Post, Bangalore
560 017, Karnataka, India

tel +91 80 52 34 611
fax +91 80 52 34 258
email cwc@pobox.com
web www.workingchild.org

**Defence for Children
International**

Rue de Varembe 1, CH-1211
Geneva 20, Switzerland

tel +41 22 734 05 58
fax +41 22 740 11 45
email dci-hq@pingnet.ch
web [www.defence-for-
children.org](http://www.defence-for-children.org)

Early Childhood Unit

UNESCO, 7 Place de Fontenoy,
75352 Paris, 07 SP France

tel +33 01 45 68 08 12
fax +33 01 45 68 56 27
email secretariat@unesco.org
web [www.unesco.org/
education/educprog/ecf](http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/ecf)

Education International

5, Bd du Roi Albert II (8th floor),
B-1210 Brussels, Belgium

tel + 32 2 224 0611
fax + 32 2 224 0606
email headoffice@ei-ie.org
web www.ei-ie.org

**End Child Prostitution, Child
Pornography and the Trafficking
of Children for Sexual Purposes
(ECPAT) International**

328 Phaya Thai Road, Bangkok
10400, Thailand

tel +662 215 3388
fax +662 215 8272
email info@ecpat.net
web www.ecpat.net

**European Council for Refugees
and Exiles**

103 Worship Street, London, EC2A
2DF, UK

tel +44 207 377 7556
fax +44 207 377 7586
email ecre@ecre.org
web www.ecre.org

EveryChild

4 Bath Place, Rivington St, London,
EC2A 3DR, UK

tel +44 207 749 2468
fax +44 207 729 8339
email paul.dimmick@everychild.org.uk
web www.everychild.org.uk

Human Rights Internet

8 York Street, Suite 302,
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5S6 Canada
tel +1 613 789 7407

fax +1 613 789 7414
email hri@hri.ca
web www.hri.ca

**Human Rights Watch -
Children's Rights Project**

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor, New
York 10118-3299, USA

tel +1 212 290 4700
fax +1 212 736 1300
email hrwnyc@hrw.org
web www.hrw.org/children

**International Centre of Films for
Children and Young People**

3774 St-Denis, Bureau 200,
Montreal QC, Canada H2W 2M1

tel +1 514 284 9388
fax +1 514 284-0168
email info@cifej.com
web www.cifej.com

**International Committee of the
Red Cross (ICRC)**

Public Information Centre, 19
Avenue de la Paix, CH 1202,
Geneva, Switzerland

tel +41 22 734 60 01
fax +41 22 733 20 57
email press.gva@icrc.org
web www.icrc.org

**International Confederation
of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)**

5 Boulevard du Roi Albert II, Bte 1,
1210-Brussels, Belgium
tel +32 22 24 0211
fax +32 22 01 5815
email internetpo@icftu.org
web www.icftu.org

**International Federation of
Red Cross and Red Crescent
Societies**

PO Box 372, CH-1211 Geneva 19,
Switzerland
tel +41 22 730 4222
fax +41 22 733 0395
email secratariaat@ifrc.org
web www.ifrc.org

**International Programme
on the Elimination of Child
Labour (IPEC)**

International Labour Organisation,
4, Route des Morillons, CH-1211
Geneva 22, Switzerland
tel +41 22 799 8181
fax +41 22 799 8771
email ipecc@ilo.org
web www.ilo.org/public

Save the Children Alliance

2nd Floor, Cambridge House,
100 Cambridge Grove, London,
W6 0LE, UK
tel +44 208 748 2554

fax +44 208 237 8000
email burkhard@save-children-alliance.org
web www.savethechildren.net

**International Society for the
Prevention of Child Abuse and
Neglect (ISPCAN)**

25 W.560 Geneva Road, Suite
L2C, Carol Stream, IL 60188, USA
tel +1 630 221 1311
fax +1 630 221 1313
email ISPCAN@ispcan.org
web www.ispcan.org

International Youth Foundation

32 South Side, Suite 500,
Baltimore, MD 21202, USA
tel +1 410 951 1500
fax +1 410 347 1188
email youth@iyfnet.org
web www.iyfnet.org

**Medzasi (First Children's
Embassy in the World)**

Str. 'Kosta Novakovikj' 22a,
1000 Skopje, Macedonia
tel +389 2 46 53 16
fax +389 2 46 39 00
email first@childrens-embassy.org.mk
web www.childrensembassy.org.mk

**Minority Rights Group
International**

379 Brixton Road, London,
SW9 7DE, UK

tel +44 207 978 9498

fax +44 207 738 6265

email *minority.rights@
mrgmail.org*

web *www.minorityrights.org*

Street Kids International

38 Camden Street, Suite 201,
Toronto M5V 1V1, Canada

tel +1 416 504 8994

fax +1 416 504 8977

email *ski@streetkids.org*

web *www.streetkids.org*

Terre des Homme

Ruppenkampstrasse 11a, D-49084
Osnabruck, Germany

tel +49 541 7101 -0

fax +49 541 7072 33

email *info@tdh.de*

web *www.tdh.de*

**United Nations Children's Fund
(UNICEF)**

3 United Nations Plaza,
New York NY 10017, USA

tel +1 212 326 7000

fax +1 212 887 7465

email *netmaster@unicef.org*

web *www.unicef.org/media/
media_fastfacts.html*

**UNICEF Innocenti Research
Centre on Children's Rights**

Piazza SS. Annunziata 12
50122 Florence Italy

tel +39 055 20 330

fax +39 055 24 4817

email *florence@unicef.org*

web *www.unicef-icdc.org*

**United Nations High
Commissioner for Human Rights
(UNHCHR)**

8-14 Avenue de la Paix, 1211
Geneva 2, Switzerland

tel +41 22 917 9000

email *1503@ohchr.org*

web *www.ohchr.org*

War Child International

5-8 Anglers Lane, London NW5
3DG, UK

tel + 44 207 916 9276

fax + 44 207 916 9280

email *info@warchild.org.uk*

web *www.warchild.org*

**World Bank – Early Child
Development**

1818 H Street, NW Washington,
DC 20433, USA

tel +1 202 473 1000

fax +1 202 477 6391

web *www.worldbank.org/
children*

World Health Organization

Avenue Appia 20, 1211 Geneva 2,
Switzerland

tel +41 22 791 21 11
fax +41 22 791 31 11
email info@who.int
web www.who.int

World Tourism Organisation

Capitan Haya 42, E-28020
Madrid, Spain

tel +34 91 567 8165
fax +34 91 567 8219
email omt@world-tourism.org
web www.world-tourism.org

2. Media Organisations

Article 19

6-8 Amwell Street, London EC1R
1UQ, UK

tel +44 207 278 9292
fax + 44207 278 7660
email info@article19.org
web www.article19.org

Committee to Protect Journalists

330 7th Avenue, 11th Floor, New
York YK 10001, USA

tel +1 212 465 1004
fax +1 212 465 9568
email info@cpj.org
web www.cpj.org

European Broadcasting Union

Ancienne Route 17A, CH-1218
Grand-Saconnex, Geneva,
Switzerland

tel + 41 22 717 2111
fax + 41 22 747 4000
email ebu@ebu.ch
web www.ebu.ch

INDEX on Censorship

6-8 Amwell Street, London, EC1R
1UQ, UK

tel + 44 20 7278 2313
fax + 44 20 7278 1878
email contact@indexon-censorship.org
web www.indexonline.org

International Federation of Journalists

IPC-Residence Palace, Bloc C,
Rue de la Loi 155, B-1040
Brussels, Belgium
tel +32 2 235 22 00
fax +32 2 235 22 19
email ifj@ifj.org
web www.ifj.org

MediaWise Trust (formerly PressWise)

38 Easton Business Centre,
Felix Rd, Bristol BS5 0HE, UK
tel +44 117 941 5889
fax +44 117 941 5848
email train@mediawise.org.uk
web www.mediawise.org.uk

Young People's Media Network in Europe and Central Asia (YPMN)

c/o European Centre for Media Competence, Bergstrasse 8, D-45770 Marl, Germany
tel +49 2365 502480
fax +49 12 125 125 21981
email cschuepp@unicef.org

3. Selected Websites

Advocates for Youth

US-based information service; section on youth sexuality
www.advocatesforyouth.org/glbqtq.htm

BOES – Children's Rights Across the World

Multi-lingual links to children's rights and development organisations.
www.boes.org

Child Helpline International

www.childhelplineinternational.org

Children's House

Links to child welfare experts.
www.child-abuse.com/childhouse

Children's Rights Information Network

www.crin.org

Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma Europe

www.dartcentre.org/europe

Defence for Children International

www.defence-for-children.org

European Union (EU) – Youth Programme

Multi-lingual youth information about European Union
http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/index_en.html

Every Child

International charity working in Eastern Europe, Balkans and Caucasus
www.everychild.org.uk

Human Rights Watch

www.hrw.org

International News Safety Institute

NGO for protection of journalists
www.newssafety.com

Internet Watch

Combating sexual exploitation of children via the internet
www.iwf.org.uk

Internews Network

Non-profit organization supporting independent media in emerging democracies.
www.internews.org

Media Activities and Good Ideas by, with and for Children (MAGIC)

www.unicef.org/magic

NGOs concerned with children and youth

www.ngo.org/links/index.htm

Safer Internet Programme

European Union initiative on internet safety issues
www.saferinternet.org/index.asp

World Radio Forum

www.worldradioforum.org

Youth Guardian Services

Internet-based support for homosexual or transgender young people
www.youth-guard.org