A handbook for media professionals

The issues of child rights generally, and child exploitation in particular, are high on the agenda of politicians and the news media.

Bad journalism adds to the indignity of children who have been abused. However, it is possible for journalists to depict children in a way that maintains their dignity, and avoids exploitation and victimisation.

This book contains the guidelines and principles for reporting on issues involving children first drawn up by journalists from many countries, meeting in Recife, Brazil, in May 1998.

This book also contains a commentary on the human rights of children and tips on how journalists can protect them. It is designed for journalists and other media professionals working in any area where children are visible and vulnerable.

The guidelines avoid the trap of telling journalists what to write, but help them decide how to address these issues. They should be read by every working journalist and camera crew, by editors, producers and other decision makers in the media, and by media trainers and media students.
This handbook has been made possible through the excellent work that has been done on child rights in the media by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and many dedicated individuals and organisations.

The IFJ has had a long-running program of research and training on the issue of child rights that has included the expertise of many individuals including PressWise Trust’s Mike Jempson and Peter McIntyre, author and producer of the first IFJ child rights handbook, *Putting Children in the Right*, which provided the foundation of this handbook.

The IFJ’s child rights project would also not have been made possible without the invaluable support of UNICEF and the ongoing work of ECPAT, the international network for the elimination of child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking of children.

We would also like to thank the contributors to the handbook whose reportage and work in bringing child rights and sexual exploitation to light continues to change the prospects for children in the Asian media.
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Child exploitation and the media: the challenge for journalists

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which seeks to protect children and guarantee their human rights, is the most widely ratified of all conventions. And ILO convention 182 on the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, which highlights child labour in the sex industry, was unanimously adopted by representatives from all 176 member states.

But while these emphasise that children have the same rights as adults, in reality, children lack the power to secure these rights on their own and so they must rely on adults to deliver them.

There are many committed individuals and organisations working to eliminate the problem of child exploitation. But these efforts will only have a lasting impact if we are able to raise awareness and mobilise public opinion to end child exploitation and build a culture of respect for children.

The aim is very simple and direct. It is based on understanding our journalistic role as watchdogs of the rich and powerful and as defenders of human rights.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), representing more than 500,000 journalists worldwide, has over the last decade developed an ambitious program to encourage journalists everywhere to consider their professional responsibilities in relation to the rights of children. The IFJ’s program in Asia has developed in response to these findings.

While working to raise awareness among journalists of the need to focus attention on this problem we have developed resources and training to assist journalists as they approach the challenge of reporting on child exploitation.

So how do we raise awareness?

The training package (available online at www.ifj-asia.org) takes journalists through the challenging professional questions that arise: how can we include the opinions of children in the media; interviewing children; what kind of images are suitable to use; how can we broaden our coverage of issues away from a narrow focus on specific incidents of abuse.

The IFJ’s child rights website for Asia (http://childrights.ifj-asia.org) is a resource centre for journalists reporting on children and child rights and includes a media kit, contacts and resources from across Asia as well as listing a range of positive actions for children.

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1. Raising awareness

By Aidan White
General Secretary, International Federation of Journalists

Raising awareness about the rights of children and the promotion of children’s rights is a challenge to media. It is our role to not only report fairly, honestly and accurately on the experience of childhood, but it is also our responsibility to recognise children’s rights and reflect them in our work.

While journalists can uncover cases of abuse and raise awareness of children’s rights, media also infiltrate the public with tolerant attitudes towards the exploitation of children such as child pornography and prostitution. On one hand, news media tell the stories of abused and abused, through news reports, photographs, documentaries, and drama. But on the other, media can also exploit children by creating sexually provocative images of children in news or advertising, or, at worst, as the vehicle for child pornography, or a source of information for paedophile networks.

Journalists need to be aware of the consequences of their reporting and their role in safeguarding the rights and the dignity of children and young adults.

While some editors argue sensationalism permits awareness 1. Raising awareness

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Although there are no easy answers to complex issues or to ethical dilemmas, there are standards and benchmarks by which media can judge how they portray children in society.

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commercial pressures on journalists and media

Fierce commercial competition is a key factor leading media to exploit children. Journalists, therefore, sometimes take an ill-considered, easy route to newsgathering, perpetuating myths and stereotypes.

So too, an uncomfortable balance of interests prevails where ethical standards are too often sacrificed in defence of commercial imperatives.

Media professionals need to challenge commercial constraints. Journalists, writers, and producers must work ethically for their audiences and address the needs of children without deviating them.

While deadline pressures and the competitive nature of the industry are pressures we deal with daily, journalists must remain aware of the need for fair, open and straightforward methods in obtaining information.

Journalism should always be ethical, above all when considering the needs of children.

Pulling it together

This handbook sheds light on the rights of children and includes a number of practical recommendations intended to make media and journalists more responsible and to encourage debate within media about the portrayal of children and their rights.

Although there are no easy answers to complex issues or to ethical dilemmas, there are standards and benchmarks by which media can judge how they portray children in society.

The need for journalistic training in reporting on the rights of children has never been greater. Bad habits in the newsroom and the tyranny of deadlines, can be overcome if journalists and program-makers at all levels are exposed to good practice and information about the importance of children’s rights.

The important thing to remember is that journalists can depict children in a way that maintains their dignity, and avoid exploitation and victimisation.

There is a need for media to identify good practice, to applaud high standards and to encourage improved coverage.

Aidan White
2. Why journalists need guidelines for reporting on children

*Because we work autonomously*
*To avoid pressure or influence from outside news organisations and also from within our own media*
*So we can defend our work within the newsroom and in the community*
*To help solve ethical problems and dilemmas*

Journalists need to work independently and make decisions about whom to interview, photograph, film or record and how they then construct a story or program. So while journalists will generally resist outside forces and attempts by some to tell them how to do their jobs, this is not always a simple task.

Many journalists know and appreciate that often the greatest pressures come from within their own media organisation. This means they still inadvertently succumb to instructions that contravene their code of professional conduct, or to drastic editing that damages the integrity of their material.

The best guidelines are not a set of dos and don’ts, but rather a framework for thinking through ethical issues so journalists can confidently address the conflicts that confront them.

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Guidelines also give journalists a basis for challenging improper use of that material or distortions added during the editing process and help those who direct the work of other journalists.

Finally, guidelines can educate members of the public about how journalists approach their work, and allow journalists to defend their decisions in public.

While many journalists subscribe to codes of conduct, many people working in the media industry tend to work by instinct rather than rules laid out in such codes.

Children on the other hand require precise protocols if their human rights are to be protected. These guidelines will help children to see that journalists do take their issues seriously and that their human rights are to be protected. These guidelines were first adopted in draft by journalists organisations from 70 countries at the world’s first international consultative conference on journalism and children held in Recife, Brazil, on May 2nd 1998.

After regional conferences and workshops they were finally adopted at the Congress of the International Federation of Journalists in Seoul in 2001.

**Preamble**

Informed, sensitive and professional journalism is a key element in any media strategy for improving the quality of reporting concerning human rights and society. The daily challenge to journalists and media organisations is particularly felt in coverage of children and their rights.

Although the human rights of children have only recently been defined in international law, the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child is already so widely supported that it will shortly become the first universal law of humankind.

To do their job of informing the public effectively, journalists must be fully aware of the need to protect children and to enhance their rights without in any way damaging freedom of expression or interfering with the fabric of journalistic independence. Journalists must also be provided with training to achieve high ethical standards.

The following guidelines for journalists have been drawn up by the International Federation of Journalists on the basis of an extensive survey of codes of conduct and standards already in force across the world. The aim of the guidelines is to raise media awareness of children’s rights issues and to stimulate debate among media professionals about the value of a common approach which will reinforce journalistic standards and contribute to the protections and enhancement of children’s rights.

**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 International Convention on the Rights of the Child 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 investigations and public debate. Children have an absolute right to privacy, the only exceptions being those explicitly set out in these guidelines.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. **Avoid** the use of sexualized images of children;

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

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

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

Journalists should put to critical examination the reports submitted and the claims made by Governments on implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 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.

Recife, Brazil
May 2nd 1998
3. Child sexual exploitation: the reality

“Only 16 years old, but I must have slept with dozens of men. All of them are beasts. Sometimes, I feel like killing my customers or myself. Life has lost all meaning for me. Only death will rescue me from all this suffering and mental ordeal”

16-year-old female commercial sex worker, Pakistan.

The World Health Organisation estimates that in Asia the sex industry accounts for up to 14 per cent of gross domestic product in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Japan. There is a high demand – and often a higher price – for children. The sex industry thrives where men have money to spend.

In Cambodia, a Human Rights Vigilance survey of 6,110 sex workers found 31 percent of those interviewed were children aged 12 to 17.

In Sri Lanka, the availability of child sex is publicised in magazines, web sites and chat rooms. According to a study conducted by PEACE there are 15,000 children engaged in the sex trade.

In Bangladesh, ECPAT International estimates the number of child victims of prostitution in the country range from 12,000 to as high as 29,000. One problem in particular is the issue of boy victims of prostitution. The government provides even fewer services for boy victims and a socio-cultural analysis the legal definition of prostitution does not account for male prostitution.

According to a survey by India Today magazine, there are between 400,000 and 500,000 child prostitutes in India.

In Nepal there is the prevalence of “culturally disguised prostitution”. Females are offered to the temples as gifts to the celestial. The girls (aka /lahal /nuna /badis) are raised in temples and are not permitted to marry. These girls often turn to prostitution as a means of support. This is facilitated by a myth that sexual relations with a deuk is will bring eternal bliss. It estimated that there are 19,000 deukis /nuna /badis in Nepal.

Despite strongly defined gender roles, adolescent boys are often victims of sexual exploitation in Pakistan. This occurs in work situations, pools halls, cinemas etc.

In some countries, there is a traditional view that if you are a ST or an HIV positive, having sex with a virgin is a cure. The sale of a girl, particularly a virgin, into prostitution brings an enormous sum of money to the family by Cambodian standards. On average a family can earn US$150 for the sale of their virgin daughter.

Many girls are sold into prostitution by their families or are tricked into a job offer either as a maid or cook.

Research by Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Cambodia reports that 72 per cent of the girls interviewed were tricked by persons who offered them other forms of employment.

The NGO Child Workers in Asia estimates that up to 20 per cent of Vietnam’s growing commercial sex industry is comprised of children under the age of 18.

According to the Bangladesh National Lawyers Association, there is a great demand for underage Bangladeshi girls in brothels in India, as they are believed to be free from sexually transmitted infections.

The Philippine National Plan of Action estimates that between 60,000 and 75,000 children are involved in the commercial sexual exploitation of children in that country. NGOs have estimated that the number is closer to 100,000.

According to ESCAP International, the Philippines is an international sex tourist destination with 300,000 Japanese sex tourists alone visiting the country each year.

According to ECPAT it is commonly cited that 80 per cent of the world’s child pornography is produced in Japan.

Although most child sex abusers are local men, regions well known for sex tourism are also frequent destinations for trafficked children brought in to satisfy foreign tourists, undermining the demand-driven nature of this exploitation.

Research shows that children suffer especially severely in the commercial sex trade: they are forced to accept large numbers of clients, can almost never negotiate safe sex, are often beaten or otherwise ill-treated.

Because of the illegal clandestine nature of prostitution of children, their “keepers” most regularly keep them locked away from public view, depriving them not only of access to education and health facilities but even of fresh air and exercise.

According to IOM: Combating trafficking in South-East Asia (Geneva, 2000), it has been estimated that 200,000-250,000 women and children in the region are trafficked every year. Many trafficked Cambodian children end up in the sex industry in Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville, although there is also movement of girls into the sex trade in Thailand. Girls are trafficked into Cambodia’s brothels from southern Vietnam, which also faces a serious problem of trafficking of rural children into the sex sector in large urban centres such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Min City.

According to the US Department of State, 150,000 South Asian boys and girls are trafficked every year.

It has been reported that of the approximately 200,000 sex workers trafficked from Nepal to India, 40,000 are below 16 years of age. Recent ILO-IPEC Rapid Assessment research suggests a speculative figure of 12,000 children per year.

(Source: Profiting from Abuse: An Investigation into the Sexual Exploitation of Our Children; UNICEF, ILO and ECPAT International)


The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) came into force in 1990 and has been ratified by almost every country.

By 2002, only the United States of America and Somalia had failed to ratify the Convention, and the USA had signaled its intention to do so.

The media now has the task of taking the convention to the world by discussing the issue of child rights. The UNCRC emphasises that children have the same human rights as adults, but one defining characteristic of childhood is a relative lack of power and the reality that few children have the ability to exercise rights without support.

In practice rights for children are conditional on adults delivering them. The full text of the UNCRC can be consulted on the UNICEF website (www.unicef.org/uncrc).

Here we outline those articles of most direct relevance to journalists.

The right to have views and to express them

One of the most important rights promised by the Convention is the right for children to form their own views and express them. The Convention places an obligation on States to ensure that young people are heard and appropriate media is available. Article 12 of the CRC states that:

States shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Freedom of expression and access to the media

Article 13 gives children the right to freedom of expression, and the right to access to media:

The child shall have 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.

States can legislate to restrict this right but only if to the extent necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others; or for the protection of national security, public order, public health or morals.

The right to privacy

States are expected to legislate to protect the privacy of children as well as to protect them from slander and libel. Journalists should know about such legislation and have access to information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of human, social, spiritual, and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

States undertake to:

Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child;

Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;

Encourage the production and dissemination of children’s books;

Encourage the mass media to pay attention to the language needs of the child who belongs to a minority
Protection from abuse

The UNCRC recognises the need to protect children from exploitation or sexual abuse. Under Article 19:

States/Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other appropriate measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

Article 34 says that States must protect a child from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, and specifically the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and media representations.

In 1990, the United Nations also adopted Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines) which place a social responsibility on the media towards young people, especially in relation to pornography, drugs and violence.

The Optional Protocols

In May 2000 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted two Optional Protocols to the UNCRC:

One covers the involvement of children in armed conflict and the other covers the sale of children (‘trafficking’), child prostitution and child pornography. States are encouraged, but not compelled, to ratify these Protocols and to enact legislation and take other measures to implement them.

They provide a number of measures challenge member states in various ways and provide journalists with opportunities for holding governments to account for the way that they implement them.

Involved of children in armed conflict

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict came into force in February 2002. This seeks to make it illegal for children to be coerced into military service before the age of 18. Under the Protocol, governments must publish age limits and criteria for voluntary recruitment above that age and ensure that younger soldiers do not take part in armed conflict. The Protocol says that armed groups (as distinct from the armed forces of a State) should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use child soldiers unless the child is 18 years old.

Under Article 8, States must protect the rights and interests of child victims, keeping them informed of their rights and allowing their views, needs and concerns to be presented in proceedings. Of particular note for journalists is the provision (Article 8 Section 1) protecting a child’s right to information, the privacy and identity of child victims and taking measures in accordance with national law to avoid the inappropriate dissemination of information that could lead to the identification of child victims. Legal measures may also forbid publication of the address of a child or of other information to protect the safety and integrity of those persons and/or organisations involved in the protection and/or rehabilitation and protection of victims of such offences.

The Protocol does not mention the media by name, but Article 9 says that States shall:

• promote awareness in the public at large, including children, through information by all appropriate means, education and training, about the preventive measures and harmful effects of the offences.

Media organisations pursuing a story of child exploitation across borders could find support in Article 10 which says that States shall promote international cooperation to address root causes, such as poverty and underdevelopment, contributing to the vulnerability of children to trafficking in children, child prostitution, child pornography and child sex tourism.

Worst form of child labour

“…The exploitation of childhood constitutes the evil the most hideous, the most unbearable to the human heart…”

Albert Thomas, first director of the ILO

The ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (182), unanimously adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1999, identifies the most repugnant forms of child labour as slavery-like practices, such as the trafficking and sale of children across national borders for labour and commercial sexual exploitation.

The onus should be on media and journalists to show that they acted ethically and properly in their dealings with young people

The Convention applies to girls and boys under the age of 18 and defines the worst forms of child labour to include:

• Slavery and slavery-like practices, including forced labour and anything that falls within a broad definition of trafficking. The preamble to the Protocol expresses concern at:

...the widespread and continuing practice of sex tourism, to which children are especially vulnerable... child prostitution and child pornography.

The Protocol calls on States to:

• Undertake appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to prevent and address the following factors contributing to child labour, child prostitution, child pornography and child sex tourism.

The Protocol seeks to tackle transnational offences such as ‘child sex tourism’ and offences against children. It expressly includes the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

The Protocol seeks to protect child victims of the worst forms of child exploitation across borders. The Protocol expresses concern at:

...the significant and increasing international traffic in children for the purpose of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, … the widespread and continuing practice of sex tourism, to which children are especially vulnerable... child prostitution and child pornography.

The Protocol calls on States to:
Children - different needs at different ages

The CRC defines children as young people up to the age of 18, but the point at which someone ceases to be a child and becomes an adult cannot so easily be pinned down. Most countries extend adult rights to young people at a variety of ages, including the right to marry, the right to vote, and the right to join the armed forces. In Asia, many children are forced into adulthood from a relatively young age to support their family or because of circumstances beyond their choosing such as financially supporting their family through prostitution. As young people mature physically they become more autonomous and expect to take more decisions for themselves.

Journalists, like all adults, should respect young people and give them opportunities to express themselves and have their opinions and experiences used and valued. At the same time they should recognise that a young person may not be as confident as he or she looks, and not exploit this vulnerability.

There are questions to consider when approaching the topic that you may take on to monitor your country's role in child rights.

◆ Has your country submitted a report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child? If so, how often is it updating it?
◆ Has your country adopted either of the Optional Protocols?
◆ How has your country publicised the Convention and the Optional Protocols?
◆ What are the strengths and weaknesses of your country's national action regarding children?
◆ Is your country cooperating with other countries on the issue of child rights?
◆ Are you getting information and material from your government from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources?
◆ Does your country have any guidelines for the protection of children from material 'injurious to his or her well-being'?
◆ What policies and legislation has your country put in place to protect children from exploitation or sexual abuse?

BENCHMARKS FOR REPORTING

Benchmarks indicate a standard to which a person should strive professionally. In the case of child rights and reporting, there are benchmarks that journalists should constantly ask of themselves and of their country so as to ensure they are fulfilling their duty in reporting on child rights while acting as a watchdog on their country's success or failures in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The following are questions to consider when approaching the topic that you may take on to monitor your country's role in child rights.

◆ Has your news organisation run a story or feature highlighting the main aspects of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child? Use national children's days or anniversaries of the Convention's ratifications as hooks to hang stories on to.
◆ Stay alert in any breaking news stories about an angle for children's rights. This may be research by NGOs or academic studies, criminal proceedings relating to children or changes to government policy.
◆ Talk to NGOs and people working with children about the work they are doing. New projects and developments can also promote child rights.
◆ Question school curriculums. Are schools and education facilities reinforcing children about their rights? Schools can become role models to others through such stories.
◆ Expose ill-treatment of children wherever possible – especially if the children have no-one to care for them. Report about the positive ways to support children who have been discriminated or abused and highlight treatment, care and support options.

5. How are young people abused and exploited?

If the Convention of the Rights of the Child was delivered universally, children would be brought up in a safe and supportive environment. We do not live in a world that delivers this to all children. The reality is that children throughout the world are physically abused, neglected or orphaned. Many more miss education and the right to play, because they have to take up a burden of work at much too early an age.

Journalists should investigate these issues. The emphasis in international conferences and agreements has been on the commercial exploitation of children. This is both because children are increasingly targeted by this industry, and because this organised and cynical exploitation of children requires international as well as national action.

The primary role in defending the rights of children is the responsibility of adults, parents, extended families, communities and the state.

Reporting on the rights of children can rarely be done without reporting on the state of their communities, and the value placed on children.
◆ What are the pressures that mean some young people end up living on the streets?
◆ Why do families sell their daughters into prostitution?
◆ What are the pressures that mean some young people end up working in the streets?
◆ How are young people abused and exploited?

The reasons leading to the occurrence and rise in trafficking are common to many Asian countries. Poverty, lack of education, and the status of females and children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are all contributory factors.

Poverty and complex social issues

Lured by promises of good jobs or marriage, trafficking victims are frequently forced into debt bondage outside of
The country. For reasons of ignorance, abject poverty and a social perception of the girl child, parents willingly send their children. Criminal gangs conduct much of the trafficking and the porous international borders in parts of Asia facilitate their activities.

**Economics**

In the tourism sector in Sri Lanka, activists are disappointed by the lack of public outcry from parents, the local community and regional leaders. Suspicions have been voiced that the hesitancy may stem from a fear of losing the income generated from the tourists. Others have suggested that the reluctance is due to a sense of fatalism: if a child enters prostitution, it is their karma.

**Social Structure**

In India there is the disadvantageous social structure for girls and lower caste children which results in a process where females are denied access to economic resources. Marriage is emphasised as the only means of status and livelihood. In many cases, parents, relatives, and husbands are working with the traffickers. This is compounded by a fatalistic attitude that girls are suffering their fate.

**Replicating life cycles**

A child—not yet a woman—forced into prostitution is at risk of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. She has no power over the decision to use contraceptives, and no independent means of obtaining them, and so has no control over her fertility or birth spacing. She may not have access to health care or adequate legal protection. Such a girl has an almost no control over any of the events or aspects of her life. A girl who has undergone this experience will not be in a strong position to defend her own daughter from such a fate when the time comes. Researchers or reporters, who summarise the situation by concluding the girl's mother does not love her, will have misunderstood the issues.

**Children face multiple risks**

When children suffer abuse it is largely because they lack the power to control their lives and adults will not or cannot protect them.

Children may be vulnerable from a number of different sources, where others exercise power over them. Children who grow up exposed to danger or unprotected by adults, are often at risk from multiple causes. Sexual exploitation is one of a range of threats to vulnerable young people that rarely exists in isolation. Children in all the above categories are at risk of sexual abuse as an additional oppressive factor in their lives.

For example, children being drawn into prostitution is a fundamental abuse of children's human rights, since it explicitly brings an end to childhood and immediately cuts the children's lives at immediate risk by exposing them to disease and potentially death by abuse or HIV/AIDS.

**It is important to remember, however, when planning or working on stories the degree of hidden abuse that exists in the community or culture, either within families or within institutions.**

The degree of hidden abuse that exists in the community or culture, either within families or within institutions, of children is a major problem, but that is not the only form of exploitation or abuse that journalists should investigate.

- Children may suffer from neglect, in poor communities because there is no-one to care for the child while parents work to feed the family, or in better-off communities because parents have substituted material possessions for their own time and love.
- Millions of children have to work long hours, either directly to support the family or in commercial exploitation.
- Girls are discriminated against in many ways, from not being given equal rights with their brothers to food, to education or to choose their own futures.
- Children are displaced by war, drought or natural disasters and become refugees. Many are caught up in wars not of their making.
- In most major cities there are homeless children who live by their wits.
- Street children are vulnerable to every form of exploitation and abuse.
- Children in closed institutions are at high risk of abuse, because there is no-one to see what is happening and to blow the whistle to protect them. Children at extra risk include those in boarding schools, penal institutions, or institutions for children with disabilities.
- Children with disabilities may lose their rights, because they are not valued as children by society. Even where the right to physical care is accepted, the rights to play, education and self-expression may be denied.
- Children who are in a country illegally, or semi-legally, are at extra risk of exploitation through begging or sexual trafficking.
- Sexual exploitation is one of a range of threats to vulnerable young people that rarely exists in isolation. Children in all the above categories are at risk of sexual abuse as an additional oppressive factor in their lives.

Children and their mothers are likely to become infected with sexually transmitted diseases. For homeless or trafficked children, sexual assault or sexual exploitation may constitute one of a number of risks. Sexual exploitation may also be connected with commercial child labour, in that the young people are often dependent on adults who are willing to exploit them in exchange for money.

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**Storylines**

- How effectively are you promoting awareness in the public about the harmful effects of child exploitation?
- What is the status of children in your community – what value is placed on them?
- How are myths or social taboos affecting children? What can be done to challenge these beliefs?
- Look at social problems involving children and investigate the sources of these issues. Ask the public and the powers that be why children are being treated in this way.
- Is discrimination endemic in your country? Explore the reasons and the effects of child abuse.
- Give children a chance to tell the public how they have been affected and how they feel.
- Investigate your government’s priorities or programs to deal with child abuse and exploitation.
- Report on the work of NGOs.
- Report on the government’s efforts to help vulnerable or disadvantaged children including those living in poverty or with HIV/AIDS.
- Investigate recruitment into trafficking. Is it evident in your community? What are the primary sources of children and what issues does it raise? Who are the people running the trade?
- How are children treated before the law – are they protected or punished?

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**Checklist**

- ✔ If you have mentioned a child’s race, ethnicity, religion or disability, is it necessarily relevant to your story?
- ✔ Have you investigated all the angles carefully and checked your facts?
- ✔ Have you sought multiple viewpoints – especially those of the child?
- ✔ What other angles might allow you to follow up your story and create a more in-depth analysis?
- ✔ Have you outlined about the child rights that have been violated and related your country’s obligations to this situation?
- ✔ Have you checked your story for stereotypes and commonly held myths about children? Make sure you don’t make assumptions when a child’s life is at stake.
- ✔ Ensure you do not typecast a child because of his or her circumstances.
- ✔ Have you suggested possible headlines and discussed the story with your editor or sub-editor to ensure they understand the context?

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**“They succeeded in raping me and even insulted me ... My first experience with a customer was really frightening and painful. My genitals were tortured and I froze ... During my first few months in this trade, I was really upset. But now I am more or less used to it although I still cry every morning.”**

Lusa, 15, The Philippines
6. How well is the media doing its job?

Media Reporting: A Snapshot

Most members of the media report on some aspect of child rights and exploitation in some way on a regular basis. Under the United Nations’ Convention of the Rights of the Child, the media has a clear role in the dialogue and actions to combat exploitation and to raise awareness of the violation of child rights. As part of its work on SECT in 2002/2003, the IFJ conducted surveys in Sri Lanka and Cambodia to gauge the level of knowledge and the type of coverage children received in the media. It also set out to determine journalists’ opinions on how their countries had tackled the issue and on what they perceived as obstacles to good reporting.

The Child Rights Survey Project included surveys with journalists, journalists’ organisations/unions and NGOs. The alarming message is that while reporting is happening, there are many negative factors working against the coverage of child rights in the media. While most journalists are aware of the gravity of the problem of child exploitation in their country, they are confronted with even bigger hurdles in their reporting such as cultural censorship of the issue, government corruption and an inability to access adequate information from authorities.

More than 80% of journalists in both countries rated the problem of child exploitation as a major problem for their nation and overall journalists felt both governments and the tourism sector had not done enough to counter the problem of child exploitation. In Cambodia, 96% of journalists felt that government had not done enough to counter sexual exploitation and 94% felt that enough work had been done to counter the problems of sexual exploitation in the tourism sector. So too in Sri Lanka, 76% of journalists felt that government had not done enough and 78% said the tourism sector still had work to do.

Given that journalists realise both the gravity of the issue and the need for more attention from both governments and the tourism sector, child rights and sexual exploitation should be high on the news agenda. The Child Rights Survey Project found that journalists realised that the media has a clear role in the dialogue and actions to combat exploitation and to raise awareness of the violation of child rights. As part of its work on SECT in 2002/2003, the IFJ conducted surveys in Sri Lanka and Cambodia to gauge the level of knowledge and the type of coverage children received in the media. It also set out to determine journalists’ opinions on how their countries had tackled the issue and on what they perceived as obstacles to good reporting.

In terms of the language used in media reports, journalists in Cambodia verged more toward reserved language and identified the problem of social taboos in reporting sexual exploitation while in Sri Lanka journalists described the language most commonly used as emotional. Sensational language also figured highly. Only 27% of Cambodian journalists and 19% of Sri Lankan journalists described the language used as balanced.

Language used by journalists when reporting on children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Used by Journalists</th>
<th>Cambodian Journalists</th>
<th>Sri Lankan Journalists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserved</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensational</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cambodian journalists and 44% of Sri Lankan journalists agreed that stories about child exploitation in tourism had a low level of coverage in the media. NGOs working in the child rights sector are monitors on the standard of coverage by journalists in relation to the Convention of the Rights of the Child. 81% of Cambodian NGOs said the main mistake made by journalists was the publication of children’s identities while 70% of Sri Lankan NGOs said the major problem was a lack of balance. Half of the Cambodian journalists described covering the eyes of a child as a means to protect the child’s identity in photographs while in Sri Lanka’s 38% of journalists agreed their media organisations regularly identified children in stories of exploitation. More alarming is that of the NGOs surveyed, 70% of Sri Lankan NGOs and 88% of Cambodian NGOs said reporting had not improved over the past five years. As the survey found, part of the problem may be a lack of communication or cooperation between NGOs and the media, the quality of information and the difficulties journalists encounter getting access to information or vital sources such as children.

In Sri Lanka, in particular, 63% of journalists did not have contact with NGOs, human rights groups or other organisations about SECT. The survey showed that while most Cambodian journalists rated the information provided by NGOs as good or very good, journalists in Sri Lanka information from NGOs as poor or satisfactory.

The other major interpretation is that journalists need training and guidance on the major developments in child rights that have occurred globally and of the actions and legislative changes that have taken place as a result within their own countries. Only 4% of Sri Lankan journalists were aware of the IFJ guidelines compared to 61% of Cambodian journalists surveyed. 85% of Sri Lankan and 70% of Cambodian journalists said further training would improve reporting on the issue.

Journalists’ contact with NGOs, human rights groups or other organisations about SECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact with NGOs</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On a positive note, the research found journalists identified and understood the issues surrounding child exploitation and their views were in line with many of the NGOs as to the major causes. In Cambodia, both journalists and NGOs identified poverty (more than 80%), lack of education (more than 50%) and parents being cheated (more than 25%) as the major factors, while in Sri Lanka journalists identified drug abuse and lack of parental care as the major causes. But further examination of economic links of exploitation and tourism and legislation changes could be missed, with 85% and 75% of Cambodian and Sri Lankan journalists respectively identifying they were not aware of existing legislation on sex tourism.

Journalists did identify that sexual exploitation was not isolated from other social and cultural factors and that it had to be dealt with as a complex social issue. For many journalists in Cambodia in particular, this meant confronting greater problems of corruption within the law enforcement agencies and endemic cultural censorship of the issue.

As many as 70% of Cambodian journalists and 50% of Sri Lankan journalists agreed that a culture of censorship exists on the topic in their countries. There is no doubt that journalists understand their role in educating on child rights and how reporting makes a difference to community education on child rights. As many as 88% of Cambodian journalists and NGOs agreed that the publicising of the issue in the media...
In Srilanka, journalists felt they could influence a culture of change by doing more investigative reporting, by exposing abusers and by educating parents. But the full story on child exploitation cannot be told, if journalists themselves are not equipped with the knowledge or understanding of the rights of children and if children are not given a news priority.

How well is the media doing its job?

In the IFJ survey indicated, 70% of non-government organisations in Srilanka considered coverage of child sexual exploitation as poor, agreeing that the main mistake that media make is lack of balance in their reporting. At the same time, children in many cases find they are a lower news priority. Stories about children were acknowledged by journalists themselves in Cambodia and Srilanka in the study as receiving moderate to low prominence in media organisations. A quick feature on child prostitution can be put together with fewer resources and little investigation and is often coupled with calls for ‘something to be done’. Ultimately, this story generates sensation but does little to illuminate.

In a survey of five Taiwanese daily newspapers, a general hostility towards young prostitutes was discovered. Out of 133 news items about arrests for offences involving underage prostitutes, 34% used unsympathetic headlines, and 35% were unsympathetic in content, using language such as childishly; selling herself; deflowered; doesn’t study but sells her body and slut.

In exposing and highlighting abuse, the media plays a crucial role in exposing how exploitation of children can be stopped. The media has the task of bringing these abuses to the attention of politicians and the public, and of giving unheard children a voice. This is the high ground that the media often claim, and sometimes occupies. Well-trained and motivated professionals, working to a clear set of aims and ethics can indeed achieve these results.

6. How well is the media doing its job?

Does your country have a culture of censorship on the issue of sexual exploitation of children?

Overall, the message from the IFJ’s research was that reporting had not and could not improve without further training for media professionals and better access to information from both the government and NGO sector. While NGOs were working hard, their message was not getting out to vast sections of the media. Both NGOs and media professionals identified their need to understand and work together to counter sexual exploitation and promote child rights.

Generating noise and heat

The “villain or victim” scenario is when an article or program identifies a problem about children. An example of this may be a feature on delinquency, street children or child prostitution. In such cases children find themselves condemned for their behaviour but the journalist makes little attempt to present the child’s point of view. Such stories may be hurriedly put together following a statement by a political leader or a court case and is often coupled with calls for ‘something to be done’.

Generating light

Reporting can go beyond identifying a problem and include interviews with young people and others that influenced the levels of government response to child exploitation. Half of journalists surveyed felt an increase in reporting would result in a culture of change on this issue.

7. The Media’s Role in Reporting Abuse

Within their own media organisations too, child rights is not given a high news priority and is too often put in a negative light.

Media professionals are frustrated by the limitations of their working environments and crave more information and guidance to help them in the day-to-day reporting on child rights.

Will your story help or hinder their cause?

In exposing and highlighting abuse, the media plays a crucial role in exploring how exploitation of children can be stopped. The media has the task of bringing these abuses to the attention of politicians and the public, and of giving unheard children a voice. This is the high ground that the media often claim, and sometimes occupies. Well-trained and motivated professionals, working to a clear set of aims and ethics can indeed achieve these results.

When reporting on children, the usual journalistic virtues all apply - having good contacts, investigating carefully, checking facts, using a variety of sources and giving affected people an opportunity to speak.

But it also requires adequate time and resources for investigations. Reporting on children also needs consistent follow up over time, so that instead of reinforcing rather than challenging myths and stereotypes. Without adequate follow-up, the good work achieved in even a small piece can be lost.

In Srilanka, journalists felt they could influence a culture of change by doing more investigative reporting, by exposing abusers and by educating parents.

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show how the problem arose. Such stories will report consequences and describe the issue from a variety of points of view. This may be through a series of features, articles or programs over a period of time. Such an approach is more likely to generate public policy by informing policy makers and those in a position to take action.

There is no doubt this makes a difference to reporting.

Generating understanding
At its best the media can go beyond ‘generating light’ and explain the context of a problem. This may be the result of a long-term investigation, or through the media working with a support group or NGO. In these cases the media may reveal an unsuspected link with a problem, or investigate a new angle, or even bring to light an unseen problem or solution. In such cases the media reaches a degree of excellence that can have a profound effect on readers, listeners and viewers and create a real climate for change. When media reach this degree of excellence, each program or series of articles has its own unique features. They play a double role in promoting rights and positive coverage of children and they do not themselves damage those rights in their coverage. Excellence of this sort can only be achieved with time, resources and a determination to put the interests of the children at the centre of program making or journalism. The focus of reporting is on the rights of children, not the ratings or circulation figures.

A quick feature on child prostitution can be put together with few resources and little investigation and may entertain or divert the audience, but at the cost of reinforcing rather than challenging myths and stereotypes.

BENCHMARKS/STORYLINES

Has your government ratified the International Labour Organisation Convention? What has it done to eradicate the most extreme forms of child labour?

✔ Look for stories about attempts by governments to protect children from exploitation. Are they succeeding?

✔ Look for hidden forms of labour and exploitation in the course of your work. Talk with child workers or NGOs and build relationships bearing in mind that they may not be the subject of a story but a useful source.

✔ Keep your mind open to the possibility that not all stories about children need to be about exploitation and the negative realities. Positive stories can also have great impact.

✔ Talk to child refugees and add the human angle to the issue of cross-border traffic.

✔ Keep an eye on child health in your country – particularly the growth of HIV/AIDS in children. How are they being treated and looked after?

✔ Highlight the sexual proclivities of those who abuse children.

✔ Investigate the criminal networks through which the trade is conducted.

✔ Do stories of the children themselves, including rescue and recovery programs for those who survive abuse.

✔ Investigate what the police are doing – are they working to establish special units with child friendly facilities in their precincts?

✔ Refuse to write or publish sensational articles or use photos that further exploit a child or reveal the identity of a child.

✔ Check what your travel industry bodies are doing and follow their progress on anti child sex tourism campaigns and/or legislation; and any moves to establish a national or regional Code of Conduct.

CHECKLIST

✔ Have you identified the child in your coverage? Did you check with the children and their parents about how they want to be described?

✔ Is your story thoroughly researched and accurate? Or is it a sensationalised story that has an alarmist tone – and has potential to do more harm than good?

✔ Have you referred to the IFJ Guidelines for Reporting on Children to assist you with your story?

✔ Have you demanded sufficient and reliable information from the authorities?

✔ Does your story help people to make sense of complicated issues including reports and statistics released by governments or NGOs?

✔ Does your story encourage understanding and compassion to the plight of children and reinforce their rights and the need for the community to protect them? Ensure this includes children from ethnic minorities and trafficked children.

8. Storylines – Topical Issues

Many journalists and media organisations would express unease at the thought of an international convention (or an IFJ guide) telling them what to produce or how to report social issues. However, most would subscribe to the principles expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Media organisations should therefore be able to spell out how they put these principles into practice, and what steps they take to show that they do not abuse the rights of children.

This section looks at some topical issues surrounding the child vulnerability and sexual exploitation, including trafficking and cultural and national challenges.

It is not to dictate the story or angle to journalists. Each story can be different, and it may change over time. However, it is as well for journalists and media organisations to be aware of these issues.

The most important issue for journalists to remember when covering stories about children is the need to look beyond the sensationalised/victim stories and find substance to the causes and problems and create a constructive debate about the issues affecting children.

Street children

In most of the world’s big cities children live rough, drawn to the city from surrounding rural areas in the belief that they will be able to improve their lives, but this is not the survival without home, or unaware to care for them. Street children are at risk from violence, disease and exploitation. They may be targeted by forces of law and order or by criminal gangs. Those who survive become street wise, and may partly rely on crime to keep themselves alive. In many cities there are NGOs that run special programs to support street children and which may be able to help. It is journalists who are seeking to focus on this issue. An investigation into street children may:

include extended interviews with young people; look at the child like consequences for them in terms of risk of violence, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, ill health, crime and punishment; report problems they face from authorities and from abusers; report on sources of help and support; report on programs run by NGOs and police and authorities about the young people; interview police officers and those with a role in public policy.

The media may also follow young people who have survived the dangers of the street and include their perspective as to how others can be helped to do the same. It may point to some of the underlying causes, and return to this topic over time to see if the situation has improved. This sustained approach is more powerful because it includes the views and viewpoint of young people, not only of people who see them as a problem. It is rare for the media to ask how the children can be helped to change. If it seems the better option to children, what does that say about how they were living in their rural communities?

Commercial Sexual Exploitation

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a fundamental violation of children’s rights. It comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is treated as a sexual object and as a commercial object. The commercial sexual exploitation of children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children, and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery. The media may also follow young people who have survived the dangers of the street and include their perspective as to how others can be helped to do the same. It may point to some of the underlying causes, and return to this topic over time to see if the situation has improved. This sustained approach is more powerful because it includes the views and viewpoint of young people, not only of people who see them as a problem. It is rare for the media to ask how the children can be helped to change. If it seems the better option to children, what does that say about how they were living in their rural communities?

UNICEF estimates that a million children a year are recruited to the commercial sex trade in the developing world. UNICEF investigation into the sexual exploitation of children—Profiting from abuse—shows how poverty and dislocated communities are the
highest risk factors.

- The commercial sex trade targets mainly, but not exclusivity, girls. Boys are also at risk.
- Refugees are vulnerable to demands for sex by camp officials, border guards and even the police who are supposed to protect them.
- Girls in conflict areas may trade sex to protect their families from violence.
- Where very poor and richer countries exist side-by-side it is girls and boys who are working as prostitutes?
- Boys are also at risk.
- The media's role is to look at issues of selection, salary and complicity.

Telling Their Stories – Child rights, exploitation and the media

Somes come from a poor family of farmers. She has seven brothers and sisters. When she was 13 years old, someone from her village asked her to work in town. Her parent knew that the person was a sex worker, but because they were poor and in debt, her parents allowed her to go. She was lost her way, and was taken when she was 13 years old. At that time, her father came to the brothel to retrieve the money from the owner. Even though she was later was able to leave the brothel to work as a tailor, she soon found this was not enough to support her family and returned to sex work.

report on sources of help and support
- report on sex education and detail available data – or exclude
- include interviews with police officers and those with a role in public policy.

If investigative journalism is to make a difference it has to go beyond superficial stories that rely on sensational styles of presentation and portray children as innocent, helpless victims.

It also needs to target the organisations and bodies who are charged with protecting children's rights:

Governments, police and non-government organisations

Trafficking

In trafficking and child violence and child abuse as economic commodities are not acceptable. So too, the media needs to encourage debate on the abuse and inadequacy of legislation and the failure of law enforcement personnel.

In South East Asia, child sex users face severe local punishment, hard jail-time and public humiliation. But legislation is useless if it is not enacted and journalists have a duty to ensure the legislation is followed and the courts are working together to enforce the law.

An investigation into the sexual exploitation of children may:

- Investigate the deeper factors that led to a child's involvement in prostitution, hard jail-time and public humiliation.
- Look at the likelihood for consequences for children who have been involved.
- Ask questions about the existing legislation surrounding child prostitution and how the laws may be better protected and enforced.
- Report on the most common forms of abuse and exploitation.
- Tackle common myths about child sexual exploitation within the framework of the Conventions of the Rights of the Child.

“You’re too smart to be tucked away in this village. You should be in university doing a good job that pays a high salary. I can help you if you like.”

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Storylines

Are children and their parents allowed to leave any country and to enter their own in order to be reunited or to maintain the child/parent relationship?

What is your country doing to prevent and remedy the kidnapping of children?

Report on sex education and alert the public to the sexual exploitation of children. Is accurate data about the abuse of children readily available?

Investigate the laws covering sexual activity involving children. Is there an age below which they cannot give their consent to sexual acts?

Investigate the laws covering sexual activity involving children. Is there an age below which they cannot give their consent to sexual acts?

Investigate measures to prevent child prostitution and protect children from pornography and sexual exploitation. How can children lodge complaints about abuse? How are police, social workers, teachers and health staff trained to deal with them?

How is confidentiality, protection, support and counselling arranged for exploited children?

How are children protected within the legal system? Can citizens from your country be prosecuted or extradited for exploitation of children in other countries? What is your country's track record in charging offenders?

Always make sure that investigations into the sexual exploitation of children are conducted with appropriate security and with professional support, protection and advice.

Not all stories need to highlight the negative aspects of the issue. There are many positive stories of recovery, reintegration and reunification with families that can be told to educate the public and illustrate that help is available. Talk to NGOs, which run special programs to support street children, and which may be able to help journalists who are seeking to focus on this issue.

Investigate hidden abuse that exists in the community or culture, either within families or within institutions. Boys are often forgotten in reporting on exploitation – see how they fit into government policies etc.

Behind India's child prostitutes

By Joseph Gathia, child rights activist, India

You would expect child prostitution to be an area where any potential conflict between ‘rights’ and ‘culture’ could be easily resolved. You would argue that children have an overwhelming right to be protected from prostitution, and that there can be no place for a debate in which issues of culture are taken into account. Yet the issue of the sexual exploitation of children is rarely as simple as it is portrayed.

In India, children – particularly girls – from several marginalised groups (Dalits and Adivasis) are drawn into the flesh trade in the name of cultural practices. In Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka – two southern Indian states – the practice of offering a girl child to a certain deity still exists, despite being banned by law. These girls are later sexually exploited. Similarly, certain communities in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan induct the eldest daughter of the family for prostitution. And these girls feel that they have an obligation to do so.

In Indian thinking, karma and dharma determines your status in the present life. What you have is the result of how you acted in your previous life; any suffering in the present is the result of past misdeeds, and is part of the cycle of rebirth. To avoid suffering in the next life, you must ‘obey goodness’ in this one.

This cult of obeying goodness teaches a dependence on parents, elders, teachers and traditions. There is an obligation on the younger generation to recognise the authority of their elders. Failure to recognise this obligation on the younger generation to recognise the authority of their elders. Failure to recognise this obligation of gratitude is a sin, with social and karmic consequences.

The Indian ethos is one of avoiding confrontation (do not get involved when you have no business). It leads to a tolerance of evil and non-involvement.

Children all over the world are dependent on their parents and elders, but in India children are not encouraged to be self-dependent but rather to depend on others for satisfaction. They are taught to acknowledge their dependence, respect their elders and develop a sense of obligation.

In these circumstances, children see prostitution as one of the ways of fulfilling their obligations to their parents by bringing in money for the family.
Cambodia’s children in danger
By Sary Bossokol, television journalist, Cambodia

Three children aged under 18 are raped in Cambodia every day, and each year the victims are getting younger. At the Women in Crisis Centre in Phnom Penh, at least 200 children who have suffered sexual violence they have helped. The children are mostly from poor families living in remote parts of Cambodia. Their attackers are neighbours, grandfathers, fathers, and sometimes strangers.

“The parents do not have time to take care of their children,” explains Mrs Sothy, one of the staff at the Centre.

One ten-year-old girl, now living at the Centre but originally from Cambodia’s northwest, volunteered to tell her story.

“My stepfather asked me to go into the jungle with him to collect logs for cooking. First I did not want to go, but my mother forced me. In the jungle, my stepfather and I collected logs and stored them in an oxen cart. When the cart was full, it was time to return home,” she said.

On the way back home, they made a stop and took a rest. Her stepfather called the girl to him, then made her fall down and undressed her.

“I screamed and asked for help, but he warned me if I screamed again he would cut my throat,” she said.

Another pretty, talkative 11-year-old girl from the northern part of Cambodia was raped by a stranger in her village. She and her sister had been riding a bicycle together as they returned from a nearby Buddhist temple.

“When I approached an intersection, a man appeared on the road and he grabbed my bicycle. I was extremely scared and I ran away, but my younger sister could not. I decided to go back to help my sister, and the man grabbed me and pulled my dress off and raped me,” she explained.

“I screamed and felt very hurt. The man raped me twice. My sister cried a lot and she asked me to go home... The man told my sister to be quiet.

“It was a dark night, so I could not remember his face,” she said.

To the police, the girl reported the attack, and the police investigated. The girl was taken to the hospital, and her parents were informed. The police said they were unable to find the man, but they did not take any action to protect the girl from further attacks.

The family of the girl reported the attack to the police, and they gave her medical treatment.

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To the police, the girl reported the attack, and the police investigated. The girl was taken to the hospital, and her parents were informed. The police said they were unable to find the man, but they did not take any action to protect the girl from further attacks.

The family of the girl reported the attack to the police, and they gave her medical treatment. She was later taken to the police station, and the police investigated the case.

“The old man is living in my village. He gave 100 riel (Cambodian currency) to my brother and let him go to buy cookies nearby while we were picking up mango fruits,” the eight-year-old victim told me.

“When my young brother went to buy the cookies, the old man grabbed me, took my dress off and raped me. I screamed for help. My brother heard this and came back and picked up a bamboo stick and tried to defend me, but he was hit by the old man, too,” she said, quietly crying.

After the attack, her brother helped her home, but it was late at night before their mother returned from selling vegetables in a market. She saw the state of her daughter and that her son’s shirt was stained by blood.

The children told her what had happened.

“I took her to the community health centre quickly. After checking, a nurse told me that my daughter was raped,” confirmed the mother.

The old man is now in police custody awaiting trial. A province judge reported that although the man aged 68 still needed to be on trial. In Cambodia there are no laws to judge old men.

Madame Mour Sok Hour, the minister for women affairs, insists that sexual violence has increased because social morality in Cambodia is falling down and the judicial system is ineffective.

She also adds that most of the culprits have not been sentenced to the recommended 15 to 20 years. According to Ms Sothy, culprits offer money to the victims for compensation and the victim’s families need money more than justice. Many families think that any trial may take a long time and that if they lose the case they will not get any money at all.

There have been some fair trials, but bribery and vested interests have seen unfair trials, too. In most cases, police try their best to arrest the culprits, but sometimes trial judges have released the accused, citing insufficient evidence.

In Cambodian society, it is very shameful for a woman to be raped. Because of this, some victims keep the attack secret and do not go to the local authorities, leaving the culprits to continue their activities.

Victims who do report the crime carry the stigma of being raped. They become isolated from society and face such problems as pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases on their own. They also face loneliness and the real prospect of remaining unmarried for the rest of their lives.

Self-censorship saves no-one
By Sunanda Deshapriya, senior journalist and convenor, Free Media Movement, Sri Lanka

“We decided not to report the story because it would have tarnished the reputation of the school.”

“We all know that child sexual abuse takes place in temples but if we report them our religion may be degraded.”

“Some parents know that their male children are going with white tourists to earn money and tolerate it.”

“How could I report that a father had raped his own 12-year-old daughter? What will happen to the noble idea of fatherhood?”

These are some of the remarks made by journalists in Sri Lanka while discussing the sexual exploitation of children by tourists.

Out of 50 journalists surveyed in the IIJ’s 2003 research, almost half of them agreed that there is a cultural censorship in reporting sexual exploitation/abuse in Sri Lanka.

Sex is not discussed openly. There has been a decade-long debate about whether sexual education should be a part of the school curriculum or not, but as a society we have not yet taken a decision.

According to Professor Herendra de Silva, chairperson of the National Child Protection Authority, child sexual abuse takes place very much within the family circles. But it is still a taboo subject in the social discourse.

Homosexuality is prevalent in Sri Lankan Buddhist temples, too, like in some other religious institutions. In the Sinhala language, homosexuality is called “play of the temple” among other colloquial words. In Buddhist temples, children as young as ten are ordinated. It’s an open secret that child sexual abuse takes place in temples, but no effort has been made to discuss the matter openly.

Incidents of child sexual abuse have been found in a number of educational institutions. In one instance, journalists from the city decided not to report the abuse, fearing that it would bring a bad reputation to the school. That was the second such incident at that school.

Some parents living in the southern tourist belt of Sri Lanka allow their male children to be with much older foreign tourists, knowing that they may be exploited sexually.

Even after two decades of tourism, the general population in these areas hasn’t seen substantial economic benefits deriving from tourism. Poverty is still visible. But letting their sons go with tourists brings in money to these poor families. On top of it they would say, “Whatever a boy does you wash him and takes in, there won’t be a problem”. That means a boy does not have a virginity to lose.

Cultural censorship plays a major role in reporting the sexual exploitation of children in Sri Lanka. A holistic approach is needed to tackle these taboos and self-imposed censorship.

Checklist
✔ Did you report on sources of help and support?
✔ Have you investigated the actions of authorities? Are they doing their job?
✔ Did you include the words and viewpoint of young people?
✔ Have you challenged well-known myths that make children especially vulnerable?
✔ Did you open up a debate about the legal framework around the sex industry?
✔ Did your story push for rehabilitation or prosecution of children involved? Did you meet your intentions for the story?
✔ Did you look at issues of selection, salary and working conditions of police and law enforcement officials? Did you investigate their supervision and disciplinary procedures?
✔ Did you use factual information and real-life stories from NGOs?
✔ Has your story promoted the child’s well-being and rights?
Changing the child agenda in Pakistan
By Masroor Gilani, journalist, Pakistan

Reporting on child rights in Pakistan was a dangerous task for the journalists till mid 1990s. It was only in April 1996, when the government for the first time acknowledged that there were 3.3 million child labourers in Pakistan, journalists could feel safer to take their pens up to write about these abuses. The ILBS-assisted national survey on the state of child labour in Pakistan was a turning point in adverse and hostile attitude of state towards printing child rights stories.

In April 1995, the Benazir Bhutto government cracked down on a senior journalist Zafarullah Ahmed and arrested him on charges of sedition and treason. The journalist was detained for many months but was released after a trial in which he was found not guilty. The ILBS also began a campaign in Pakistan to educate the government and journalists about the importance of protecting children.

The challenges for journalists reporting on child rights in a developing country like Pakistan can be identified as:

- The general attitude towards children due to lack of awareness about some projects or government policy for the welfare of children.
- Children's issues: journalists object if they feel an NGO is trying to include it in their stories.
- Journalists at the workshop expressed frustration that reporting on children's issues was generally regarded as a junior role, and that inadequate media coverage of the sexual exploitation of children was a key focus for the IFJ.
- The rights of children are denied in different ways, every day, around the world. Understanding children's rights is critical for journalists wanting to work against these abuses, as they must respect a child's right to privacy and allow the child to voice their opinions when pursuing a story.

The IFJ has published a manual, Telling Their Stories: Child Rights, Exploitation and the Media, and organised training workshops on child rights and the media in Sri Lanka, India, Laos and Cambodia.

Most recently, 25 journalists from around Asia met in Bangkok in late June to review the campaign. Over two days they discussed the commercial sexual exploitation of children across the region, sharing information to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of child sex tourism and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking in people.

For many of the journalists, these kinds of exploitation were apparent all around them at home. But they said they faced great difficulties in generating consistent action related stories within their newsrooms. It wasn't just that there was disinterest. The journalists from South Asia, for example, pointed to social taboos as a significant impediment in pushing public debate about the sexual abuse of both girls and boys. And in some countries, the immediate economic advantages of tourism weighed against serious media agitation for a crackdown on the sexual exploitation of children. Furthermore, many governments have ratified UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), but do not respect a child's right to privacy and allow the child to voice their opinions when pursuing a story.

Many NGOs are sympathetic to the everyday pressures on journalists, but the best interests of a child might not be given automatic priority in editorial decision making. Coccozo said that journalists considering reports or story ideas always seek advice from acknowledged experts on children's issues.

While workshop participants shared her concerns about ethical standards, some acknowledged that media operators often fail to contemplate the real-world consequences of their editorial choices. From the publication of photos of children to the way in which journalists deal with children in interviews or as subject matter.

Although some of the journalists remained concerned about working too closely with NGOs, they agreed that public accountability and credibility require that journalists and media organisations work closely together, they could play a very active role in bringing about a change of culture in their newsrooms and organisations.

Journalists at the workshop felt that if they worked together, they could play a very active role in bringing about a change of culture in their newsrooms and organisations. The workshop concluded with the participants agreeing to pursue more debate within their media organisations as a way to push editorial standards and professionalism, as well as a corporate commitment to socially responsible journalism. The ultimate beneficiaries of achieving this will be children.
10. The Tourism Challenge: child exploitation and tourism

Commercial sexual exploitation

The form of abuse that brings together personal and commercial exploitation in its simplest form is child sex tourism. The higher profile given to this by the media has contributed to attempts to prevent abuse and to catch offenders.

Today sex tourism is a multibillion-dollar global industry—an industry of organised crime with complex systems involving influential individuals from gang members to government officials. The sexual exploitation of children in tourism, however, is not restricted to paedophilia. Sex exploiters are also those profiting from abuse and can also include individuals who find themselves in situations where a child is more readily or cheaply available for sexual gratification than an adult. There are also adults who choose children primarily on the basis of misconceptions about sexual history or behaviour because they uncritically accept sexual myths about children.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is possible largely because of economic disparities. But weak laws and corrupt law enforcement also allow for the trade to flourish. While other factors such as globalisation and new communications technology promote an unregulated industry and exchange which advocates for meeting grounds for predators stalking children. Although many countries have laws to investigate, it should be emphasised that this represents a small part of the total sexual abuse of children, or even of the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The World Health Organisation estimates that in Asia the sex industry accounts for up to 14 per cent of gross domestic product in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Japan. Although the sex tourism industry is highly visible and lucrative it remains much smaller than the domestic markets. There is a high demand—and therefore a higher price—for children aged 12 to 16 years. The sex tourist trade has increased because relatively rich tourists from overseas use their money to exploit other societies. However, while tourists from the West fuel mass tourism, rich tourists from overseas use their money to exploit the commercial sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking.

The language that journalists use is important. The sex industry traffuds its trade in the language of fantasy and desire. Journalists can cut through the advertising and call it for what it is—child abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child trafficking.

Revel the trail. How did the children come to be put on sale? How did the tourists know where to find them? Who profits? Not just the pimps and brokers, but the ‘respectable’ clubs who attract custom because they allow children to be sold on their premises, the media outlets who advertise and act as go-betweens.

The health risks. In some countries almost half of sex workers are infected with HIV. Children are more likely to succumb to sexually transmitted diseases because their immune systems are not mature. Journalists can counter the myth that says that younger children are ‘safer’.

Journalists can describe the excellent work that is done in some countries by organisations working with sex workers to try to protect them from HIV and other life-threatening sexually transmitted infections.

The story does involve the sex tourism trade, media from different countries can form a partnership to investigate from both ends of the market and agree to publish at the same time. Such investigations might include the role of the Internet and what can be done to prevent this being a medium for fuelling the trade in children.

The media is a key way to bring the issues into light. One of the most important things that journalists can do is to talk to the children who are being abused, and to tell their story.

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The media is a key way to bring the issues into light. One of the most important things that journalists can do is to talk to the children who are being abused, and to tell their story.
11. Practicalities: Interviewing, photographing and filming children

Golden rule for interviewing children: “Treat a child as you would want a reporter to treat your own child”

The guidelines that accompany this handbook are designed to help you resolve ethical questions. They provide a framework for media professionals to work through difficult issues. This section aims to address some of the practical issues journalists have to consider.

Issues for consideration

1. Considering the child
   - The child’s age and maturity
   - The degree of violence involved if he/she has been violated/exploited
   - The child’s connection to any other victims
   - The presence of parental permission
   - Whether the footage is taped or live
   - Are there any practical reasons to interview the juvenile?

2. Conducting the interview
   - The interviewer should sit or stand at the same height as the child, both in the circumstances of the interview and with regard to the likely consequences of what is published.
   - The child’s age, maturity, and degree of violence involved indicate he/she has been violated/exploited.
   - The child’s connection to other victims indicates he/she has been violated/exploited.
   - The presence of parental permission should be obtained.
   - Whether the footage is taped or recorded should be noted.
   - Are there any practical reasons for interviewing the juvenile?

3. Respect for the child’s rights
   - The interviewer should always have the juvenile’s interest at heart and not be concerned about the immediate consequences of the interview.
   - The interviewer should respect the juvenile’s right to privacy, confidentiality, and autonomy.
   - The interviewer should respect the juvenile’s right to decide whether or not to participate in the interview.
   - The interviewer should respect the juvenile’s right to decide what information to provide.

4. Recording the interview
   - The recorder should be clearly identified as a recording device.
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

5. Follow-up and aftercare
   - The interviewer should ensure that the juvenile receives the necessary support after the interview.
   - The interviewer should provide the juvenile with the contact information of a child protection agency.

6. Ethical considerations
   - The interviewer should always have the juvenile’s interest at heart and not be concerned about the immediate consequences of the interview.
   - The interviewer should respect the juvenile’s right to privacy, confidentiality, and autonomy.
   - The interviewer should respect the juvenile’s right to decide whether or not to participate in the interview.
   - The interviewer should respect the juvenile’s right to decide what information to provide.

7. Legal considerations
   - The interviewer should be aware of the legal considerations that apply to the interview.
   - The interviewer should ensure that the interview is conducted in accordance with the law.

8. Conclusion
   - The interviewer should ensure that the juvenile receives the necessary support after the interview.
   - The interviewer should provide the juvenile with the contact information of a child protection agency.

Issues for further consideration

1. The juvenile’s right to privacy
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

2. The juvenile’s right to confidentiality
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

3. The juvenile’s right to autonomy
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

4. The juvenile’s right to decision-making
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

5. The juvenile’s right to protection
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

6. The juvenile’s right to information
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

7. The juvenile’s right to redress
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

8. The juvenile’s right to be heard
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

9. The juvenile’s right to be protected from harm
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
   - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

10. The juvenile’s right to be protected from discrimination
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

11. The juvenile’s right to be protected from exploitation
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

12. The juvenile’s right to be protected from torture
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

13. The juvenile’s right to be protected from violence
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

14. The juvenile’s right to be protected from oppression
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

15. The juvenile’s right to be protected from economic exploitation
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
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16. The juvenile’s right to be protected from political exploitation
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
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17. The juvenile’s right to be protected from cultural exploitation
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
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18. The juvenile’s right to be protected from environmental exploitation
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

19. The juvenile’s right to be protected from all forms of exploitation
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be kept confidential.

20. The juvenile’s right to be protected from all forms of abuse
    - The juvenile should be informed that the recording will be used for journalistic purposes.
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21. The juvenile’s right to be protected from all forms of neglect
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11. Practicalities: Interviewing, photographing and filming children

undoubtedly infringed when this photograph was taken, but they had sadly already been abused when the napalm was dropped on her village. Most people would conclude that there was a strong public interest in this picture being taken and shown. One could say that a lesser intrusion was justified to show a greater abuse. It is important to remember that a photograph taken for a feature and published later may be pulled out of the picture library and used as a dressing picture on a story about children in difficult circumstances. The publication is probably only aware of what has happened to that child in the meantime, and what the (now older) child feels about this use of their picture. Consent can have a timescale and lapse after an interval of time.

There are some principles that can be applied to interviewing children, and photographing or filming children.

The first is that children have a right to privacy, and that this right should only be overridden where it is in a child's own interests or in the public interest, and when permission is given.

A journalist who photographs a child should be sure that the child understands that it will be published or broadcast. Clearly the child should consent to this process, and depending on the age of the child, so should a responsible adult.

The photograph (and interview) should never normally take place without another adult being present. The adult would normally be a parent, but might be someone else who was acting in the capacity of a parent, such as a teacher, or someone working for a children's agency.

For older children, it is all the more necessary it is to explain the use of material fully and let them make a decision. With younger children, permission must always be sought from a responsible adult or guardian. It is therefore a matter of responsibility for the journalist to believe that a relevant adult has made a proper decision or one designed to protect their own interests, the decision should be respected, except where there is a clear and strong public interest to do otherwise.

The issue of seeking permission is often more clear-cut for reporters than for photographers. It is therefore important to consider the public interest and the rights of the child to privacy, and seek consent wherever possible.

The common use of a black strip across a child's eyes used by many media is in many ways a futile exercise when it comes to both newsworthiness and protecting a child. As above, if it feels wrong or uncomfortable, it probably isn't the right image to use.

Naming or not naming

One of the most difficult ethical issues is whether to name children or show their faces in photographs or on film.

While the IJF Guidelines say that media professionals should guard against identification of children unless it is demonstrably in the public interest, the Convention on the Rights of the Child also states that a child's right to privacy outweighs the right of the media to publish information that would normally be published about adults.

Journalists should not lightly dispose of this right where there is no harm. If a child is featured in a story that reflects well on the child and where the child is not a victim, and where coverage has the agreement of the child, parents and, where it does not put the child at risk, there is a poor reason why the identity of the child and using his or her name would be insufficient.

Worries over identification are often associated with negative media coverage—which does not cover children's issues except when some kind of problem is involved. The IJF clause is drafted to put the onus on the media to show that where they name a child they can justify it in the public interest, rather than it being the responsibility of the family or of media critics to show that harm was done to the child.

Where a child is involved in a legal case or is a ward of the court, the journalist must consider identifying the child in relation to proceedings or the issue that led to proceedings. Such laws vary between countries, but a journalist in any case should never name a child who is the victim of a sexual assault or a rape. All journalists should be very familiar with the legislation protecting disclosure in the country where they are working.

When working on sexual abuse stories, the media must be extremely sensitive to the legal and ethical issues that arise, and be thoroughly with the young person and their guardian or carer.

Information that should never be identified – The address of a young person should never be revealed in a story.

One advantage of using real names and faces, is that a journalist can be held accountable for what he or she produces. By giving particular information about a particular child, the media emphasises that the individual child is involved in the story and is not being used as a cypher.

The first duty of the media is to avoid inflicting further harm on a child and guard against publishing identifying information that may be brought by publicity which identifies a child and brings him or her to public attention. However, in considering the public interest and the rights of the child to privacy, media professionals should take into account the attachment that a child has to its own name. If a child's name is used, the child and the child's family lose control over the child's identity, which also dehumanises a child, who is entitled to look at the final piece and wonder why that journalist took the risks associated with the child's name. Often, it is sufficient just to use one name, and in an era of rising concern about identity and whether it could clearly be irresponsible of the media to identify the address of a child under any circumstances.

The overall duty of a journalist or other media professional doing this kind of work is to act in the best interests of the child and make sure he or she does not interfere with the child's right to privacy.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is based on the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. Journalists should extend those qualities to children. As the preamble to the IJF guidelines states: "In view of the importance of sensitive and accurate media portrayal as a key element in any media strategy for improving the quality of reporting concerning human rights and society. The daily challenge to journalists and media organisations is
**Particularly felt in coverage of children and their rights.** The primary responsibility is to ensure that young people are not harmed or exploited by media coverage lives with media organisations. They should put into place clear protocols for deciding when it is appropriate to film or interview young people, whether and how permission needs to be sought and how well this will be explained to the young people. In addition, media organisations should have clear methods for discussing and resolving difficult cases. These procedures must go beyond naming and blaming to take decisions. They must outline a method of holding a professional discussion, even (especially) when deadlines are tight. There is no accountability on an organisation. Each individual journalist and media professional also has an individual responsibility to act ethically, even if he or she is under pressure to bring back results. Following orders cannot be used as excuse for inflicting harm on children. Journalists and media professionals have their own codes of conduct and to work according to their consciences, even if that means falling out with managers.

**Refuse to accept no-go areas for standards**

This handbook has been written mainly with media professionals connected to news and current affairs in mind. But it applies with equal force to those working in sport, fashion or entertainment. There should not be ‘no go’ areas for standards. Many media outlets seem to adopt a split personality—news and features departments which work to standards and supplements which push the boundaries in every direction.

Media professionals are not expected to arbitrate on cases where courts are the appropriate bodies to do so. However, if the publication for which a journalist works carried advertisements that attract paedophiles, or the TV station which hosts a probing documentary team also exposes children to harmful material at a time when they are watching, then all media professionals have a duty to play a wider role in persuading the media to clean up its act.

**What morals in a media scrum?**

The story of a 13-year-old schoolgirl who gave birth to a baby was widely reported in Sri Lanka. Almost all the news media picked up the story from either hospital or police sources and gave it wide publicity.

This girl’s father was working in Middle East and her mother had left the child in the care of her grandmother. A hospital worker befriended the girl when she was attending to a relative in the hospital; she became pregnant by him. She was handed over to a shelter for young women to be looked after by the police. A Dutch woman who had lived in Sri Lanka for a long time was in charge of the shelter.

For the birth, the girl was admitted to a private nursing home in Kandy. Some of the hospital staff tipped off the couple. This is how some of the English language dailies report the story.

Central Province Health, Indigenous Medicine, Protection and Child Care Ministry Saliya Bandara Dissanayake has ordered the Protection and Child Care Commissioner of Central Province to conduct a full scale inquiry into what happened to a 13-year-old girl of a child’s home in Peradeniya who was delivered a child in a private hospital in Kandy. The Minister has ordered the officials to conduct this child’s home.

If the admitted to the care for foreign countries is being conducted in several children’s homes in the Central Province.

Police denied reports that this home has been run by a foreigner fraudulently. Police investigations revealed that the child’s home has been registered at the Ministry of Social Services, Battaramulla under registration number 1(1) 52/71.

The story is focused on the rare case of childbirth, last night and the baby is kept separate from the mother in a private hospital premises to collect information regarding the rare case of child birth, last night.

Meanwhile, DKG Central Nimal Mediwalka has ordered a police investigation… – The Island

Sira ra radio station broadcast a live program where the announcer repeatedly accused the women’s shelter as a place reported to be selling children.

Some newspaper, too, ran news stories with headlines allegedly accusing the shelter of selling children. But none of the media organisations gave any information to substantiate the allegation.

A provincial minister gave the name of the Dutch woman who was running the shelter and gave the telephone number of the shelter over the Sri Lanka radio.

The organisations running the shelters for abused and battered female children and women had to face uncomfortable questions because of this media exposure.

The whole program was focused on finding a fault with the shelter. It did not discuss the child abuse and how to look after the abused children.

When the identity of the schoolgirl became known she could not continue her education. News organisations forget the story, the child’s fate is not a concern of any of them any more.

Here are some quotes taken from the rejoinder sent by the Psychiatry Department of the Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya University:

- We are issuing this statement in response to the false and inaccurate media exposure of the delivery of a baby by a 13-year-old child at a private hospital in Kandy. The televisions, radio channels which broadcast this news on 7th November and the newspaper accounts published on the 8th November claim this was done in a secretive manner under mysterious circumstances. This child was first referred to the Forensic Department of the Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya by the Provincial Commissioner of Probation and Child Welfare.

- A criminal investigation was also commenced by the Provincial Commissioner of Probation and Child Welfare.

- The painstaking efforts of her caregivers were negated by the ham-fisted inquiry conducted by the Commissioner of Probation and Child Welfare.

- The organisations running the shelters for abused and extremely traumatic to the child, her mother and her caregivers who have worked hard over the past few months to help this unfortunate child.

The attempt by the Consultant Obstetrician to protect the privacy, confidentiality and the rights of this child has been misinterpreted as threatening behaviour. The intrusion has greatly affected the professional standing of this consultant.

- The damage and hurt they have caused to the child and her caregivers will be difficult to repair. We will appeal and urge all authorities concerned to take steps and appropriate action to prevent such irresponsible and unprofessional behaviour by the media, public officials and the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Law and Justice.

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Even at this late stage we appeal to all concerned to stop the harassment of this child.
Abuse, rape, assault. Ask any journalist what they consider to be the hardest people to interview, and the chances are that they will nominate victims of these three categories.

It's the nature of the psychological injuries on these people that makes them difficult to interview. They become difficult to predict. People go through a series of stages. Many reporters may have suffered traumas themselves, so they might have some understanding of what can and can't be said to such victims. But what happens when the victim is a child?

Many reporters will run a mile when given the prospect of interviewing a child. At the best of times (at a parade or celebration) children are often shy or monosyllabic. Add trauma to the scenario, and getting information from the child can be impossible. Youngsters may not have learned the social skills to 'perform'; or to have that instinctive block in their mind to stop them from blaming people.

There is the far more serious issue of damage to the child. The presence of a camera when the child is going through what is probably the most traumatic moments of his or her life can reinforce and exacerbate the gravity of the situation. Then, when the story is aired or published and the child can see or hear themselves, the trauma can again be reinforced, and the damage set for many years to come.

We should always question whether the interview with the child is worthwhile in the first place. Children interviewed after the Columbine High School shooting provided little more than tears and emotion. These emotions might be obvious if the children are openly distressed. It might be better to just report these clear emotions, than to bother a child at this sensitive moment by asking them how they feel.

A traumatised child should never be approached openly. It is always safer to go through a responsible parent or police officer. They know the true situation for the child. Children have a great capability to mask their emotions, or to give wrong impressions. They might appear to be laughing when they are frightened.

Talk to the child in a situation that is comfortable for them. I remember an interviewer telling me she was having great troubles talking to children. She showed me her tape, which was shot in the child's bedroom. The interviewer was outside the bedroom and was shouting the questions from the hall. The child was obviously frightened by all the television technology crammed into her tiny bedroom, and her answers were extremely short.

She didn't know where to look. Sadly she had the 'whites of the eyes' syndrome. I suggested the interviewer sit on the bed with the child. The next time I saw the interviewer, she said that being near the child made all the difference.

Don't milk the child. Trying too hard to draw out feelings of regret or blame might do the reverse, and set in these very feelings. Also children may not know yet what their feelings are about a particular situation. It might be all too much for them to understand. They are susceptible.

Children will probably not be able to judge how other people are handling a situation. So there is limited value in asking a child about this. The answer is likely to be an obvious one; "they're very upset" "they're crying a lot".

A clearer-thinking adult who can decipher the signs of trauma reaction would probably provide more insight in this situation. So use an adult.

At the same time, the child (if interviewed) should be allowed to have his or her own voice. The presence of adults in an interview could limit what the child says. The child might be shy, or worried what the adult thinks of what he or she says. This is a difficult line to tread. Do you allow adults to listen in? Or do you take the child to a quiet, safe place for the talk? In most cases of trauma, an adult will probably insist on being present. So perhaps you can ask for the adult to be out of the line of the child's sight. Also you could ask the adult not to suggest answers for the child. Make it clear that you don't mind if the child is slow in answering. If it sounds like the child is speaking the same language as the adult (‘parroting’), then you might need to dig, carefully, a little deeper.

Leave plenty of time for the interview. Do not give the child the impression that you are in a hurry. Looking at your watch, or speaking quickly will add extra pressure on the children, just the sort of pressure that will make the interview unworkable.

Press conferences pose special difficulties. Although it might seem the child is speaking from a position of safety (flanked by parents and officials), the child is likely to be feeling anything but safe. The presence of three of four cameras, many reporters and microphones is daunting for anyone, let alone a child. Perhaps it might be suggested that the child be interviewed singly in a 'good' situation and the tape distributed to all the media outlets later.

A Final Point: Respect

One thing I always tell cadets is that you must respect your interviewees be they people charged with murder; someone who has threatened you; or a person who has refused to give you an interview.

We live in a world where people are down on children. We are not that far from a time when people thought it was good parenting technique to slap a child as a way of teaching them good behavioural responses. This, to my eye, is an indication that many people have considered children as a suspect group. Respect is the last thing they are given.

Yet children react well to respect (honest respect, not just verbal tokenism).

In my 2002 Churchill Fellowship study of journalists and trauma around the world, I found that many journalists who still believed that it was appropriate to push grieving people for interviews. Too many still go to front doors of mourning houses with cameras rollings and notebooks in hand.

Fortunately journalists are learning that this is not only rude and hurtful, but also often unsuccessful. In children this is especially the case.
13. Recommendations for raising awareness of SECT

Guidelines for Journalists

Media professionals need to develop strategies that strengthen the role of media in providing information on all aspects of children’s rights. The following recommendations are designed to raise awareness about the importance of the rights of children.

The key recommendations for journalists working in the area of child rights include:

- Training
- Awareness raising
- Education
- Self-regulation of the media
- Media as watchdog – monitoring actions
- Building networks – cooperation
- Expanding sources of information
- Improving reporting
- Resources for journalists

1. Training for journalists and media education

a) Ethical questions should have a higher profile in journalists’ training, particularly with regard to standards of conduct in reporting issues affecting children.

b) Materials outlining the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implications for media as well as examples of good practice within media can form the basis of training courses and manuals for journalists and other media professionals.

2. Creating conditions for professional journalism

a) Governments and authorities should work with media and other civil society groups to create a legal and cultural framework for professional journalism, including freedom of information legislation and respect for independent journalism.

b) Media professionals should recognise that freedom of expression must go hand in hand with other fundamental human rights, including freedom from exploitation and intimidation. They should give careful consideration to the facts when weighing up the relative merits of the different claims, and not allow themselves to be swayed by commercial or political considerations.

c) Dialogue between media organisations, journalists and programme makers and relevant groups within civil society should be supported to highlight problems and concerns and give better understanding of the needs of journalists and media when reporting children’s issues.

d) National NGOs should consider compiling a directory of reliable experts on the rights of children and related topics, to be distributed to media. Such information could also be accessible on computer data banks.

3. Codes of Conduct and self regulation

a) Codes of conduct and reporting guidelines can be useful in demonstrating that some media professionals believe in the importance of the rights of children.

b) Specific guidelines on child rights reporting, such as those adopted by the IFJ, should be drawn up by professional associations to accompany their general ethical codes.

c) Journalists and programme makers have a duty to increase public awareness of the violation of children’s rights. However, reporting needs to be carried out with enormous care. In particular, media should adhere to the highest standards of professional conduct when reporting on the rights of children.

d) They should avoid, or challenge, the myths and stereotypes that surround children, particularly those from developing countries. For instance, the myths that parents in developing countries do not value their children; that girls are inferior to boys; that children are drawn into crime through their own fault; or that child labour and sex tourism alleviate poverty for the victim, or the host nation.

e) Journalists should never publish details that put vulnerable children at risk. Journalists should take particular care not to reveal information that damages the dignity of children, and avoid identifying them, while at the same time should tell their stories in a compelling and newsworthy way.

4. The need for newsroom debate

a) A constructive and supportive debate should be encouraged between media professionals, about reporting of children’s rights and media images of children. Such dialogue should take place between media managers, editorial departments and marketing sections.

b) Media editors and managers should implement — and make explicit — a policy which makes clear their opposition to biased and sensationalist coverage of children, and their support for high ethical standards among journalists and programme makers. This could be done through the elaboration, in consultation with media professionals, of guidelines, which should be seriously implemented and monitored.

c) Media organisations should consider appointing specialist ‘children’s correspondents’, with responsibility for covering all aspects of children’s lives. Specific training to help journalists to express children’s points of view. This might include: child growth and development, child abuse, risk factors, children’s sexual terminology, the law, interviewing techniques, communication with children, etc.

d) New means of giving children access to the media, as sources’ or commentators, should be investigated. Children should know that information or opinions offered in confidence would be protected as such.

5. Children, media and the community

a) Children, from primary school upwards, should undergo media literacy training, to help them understand and decode the messages they receive from both programmes and advertising, so as to become critical and well-informed media consumers.

Sources


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In the Light of Child Rights Volume V Issue 2 April 1999.
World Tourism Organization
The WTO is the leading intergovernmental organisation in tourism. WTO is entrusted by 138 countries and territories with the task of promoting and developing tourism. It is running an Awareness-raising campaign to:
1. Prepare a study on the incidence of child sex tourism to measure the effectiveness of the international campaign against sexual exploitation of children in tourism.
2. Develop and implement guidelines and procedures for national tourism administrations and tourist destinations.
3. Develop training material for tourism curricula.
5. Development links to the WTO Internet service Child Prostitution and Tourism Watch with other relevant online sites.

World Tourism Organization - Capitán Haya, 42 E-28020 Madrid, Tel. +34 91 567 8165, Fax: +34 91 567 8219 E-mail: campaign@world-tourism.org

ECPAT/respect
ECPAT International is a network of organisations and individuals seeking to encourage the world community to ensure that children everywhere enjoy their fundamental rights free and secure from all forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism is an International Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism by involving industry representatives from all countries globally.

Levels of the Code of Conduct-project
The Code of Conduct project is organised at three different levels:

- National efforts and projects in collaboration with tourism companies to introduce implement and evaluate the code of conduct in their respective national travel and tourism sectors.
- Regional co-ordination and co-operation between the different on-going national projects in between the so-called CC-partners.
- On an international level, the global implementation through the Steering Committee and its Secretariat of an International Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism by involving industry representatives from all countries globally.

For further information, contact:
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terre des hommes—Deutschland e.V.
The International Federation of terre des hommes is a network of 10 organisations terre des hommes that works for the rights of the child and promotes equitable development without racial, religious, cultural or gender-based discrimination. The international federation of terre des hommes works in collaboration with the relevant bodies in the UN system to promote and implement the rights of the child.

Detailed responses to the problem of the sexual exploitation of children in tourism are outlined on the Internet at www.child-hood.com. The aim is to raise awareness on the issue of sexual exploitation of children in tourism through the creation and the development of an Internet site providing:
1. Information facilities for tourists who are using the Internet for travel preparation, by means of a user-friendly system.
2. A common platform for actors in the fight against child sex tourism, in the form of a searchable information pool.
3. Information facilities focusing on the practical needs of the travel and tourism industry, and facilitating its further involvement in this fight.

The website offers travellers on-line information on problems and laws, and explains the different ways tourists can respond to the situation in their destination countries. Tourists can find tour operators who are engaged in the campaign against the sexual exploitation of children. The objective is to support tourists in their personal efforts to combat this problem. This is communicated by the website slogan: “Please disturb!”

The tourism industry - from major travel companies to local travel agents and tour guides - can also find practical information related to the problem. For example, how should professionals in the tourism industry react when confronted with the sexual exploitation of children? The website offers specific responses (What can I do?), along with practical tips and information on local laws. Information on organisations dedicated to the prevention of the sexual abuse of children through tourism is also included at www.child-hood.com, a site co-financed by the European Commission.

Since the early nineties, terre des hommes has been actively involved in preventing the sexual exploitation of children in tourism with campaigns including the ‘toys’ spot shown by several international airlines on long distance flights, as well as on European television networks.

For further information, contact:
terre des hommes, Deutschland - Christa Dammerman Ruppenkampstrasse 11a, D-49084 Osnabrück, Tel: +49 (0)5 41 71 01-0 Fax: +49 (0)5 41 70 72 33 E-mail: kampagne@th.de Website: www.child-hood.com
A handbook for media professionals

The issues of child rights generally, and child exploitation in particular, are high on the agenda of politicians and the news media.

Bad journalism adds to the indignity of children who have been abused. However, it is possible for journalists to depict children in a way that maintains their dignity, and avoids exploitation and victimisation.

This book contains the guidelines and principles for reporting on issues involving children first drawn up by journalists from many countries, meeting in Recife, Brazil, in May 1998.

This book also contains a commentary on the human rights of children and tips on how journalists can protect them. It is designed for journalists and other media professionals working in any area where children are visible and vulnerable.

The guidelines avoid the trap of telling journalists what to write, but help them decide how to address these issues. They should be read by every working journalist and camera crew, by editors, producers and other decision makers in the media, and by media trainers and media students.