

Principles for Ethical Reporting on **CHILDREN**

Principes Directeurs pour le Reportage Ethique sur les **ENFANTS**



Prepared by UNICEF Communication

FRENCH

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ENGLISH

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Reporting on children and young people has its special challenges. In some instances the act of reporting on children places them or other children at risk of retribution or stigmatization.

UNICEF has developed these principles to assist journalists as they report on issues affecting children. They are offered as guidelines that UNICEF believes will help media to cover children in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner. The guidelines are meant to support the best intentions of ethical reporters: serving the public interest without compromising the rights of children.

I Principles

- 1.** The dignity and rights of every child are to be respected in every circumstance.
- 2.** In interviewing and reporting on children, special attention is to be paid to each child's right to privacy and confidentiality, to have their opinions heard, to participate in decisions affecting them and to be protected from harm and retribution, including the potential of harm and retribution.
- 3.** The best interests of each child are to be protected over any other consideration, including over advocacy for children's issues and the promotion of child rights.
- 4.** When trying to determine the best interests of a child, the child's right to have their views taken into account are to be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

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

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 Do not publish a story or an image which might put the child, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used.

II Guidelines for Interviewing Children

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

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

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

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

5. Obtain permission from the child and his or her guardian for all interviews, videotaping and, when possible, for documentary photographs. When possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing.

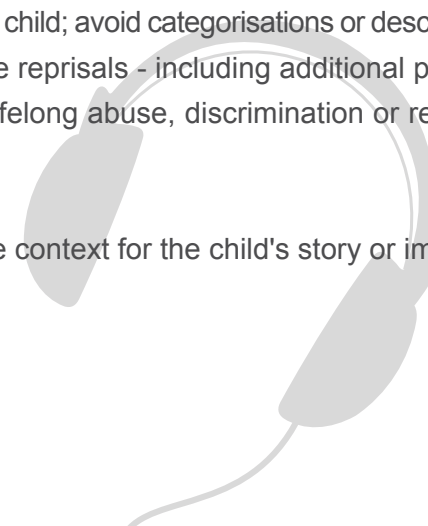
Permission must be obtained in circumstances that ensure that the child and guardian are not coerced in any way and that they understand that they are part of a story that might be disseminated locally and globally. This is usually only ensured if the permission is obtained in the child's language and if the decision is made in consultation with an adult the child trusts.

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

III Guidelines for Reporting on Children

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

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



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

- a. A victim of sexual abuse or exploitation,
- b. A perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse,
- c. HIV positive, or living with AIDS, unless the child, a parent or a guardian gives fully informed consent,
- d. Charged or convicted of a crime.

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

- a. A current or former child combatant,
- b. An asylum seeker, a refugee or an internal displaced person.

5. In certain cases, using a child's identity - their name and/or recognizable image - is in the child's best interests. However, when the child's identity is used, they must still be protected against harm and supported through any stigmatization or reprisals.

Some examples of these special cases are:

- When a child initiates contact with the reporter, wanting to exercise their right to freedom of expression and their right to have their opinion heard.
- When a child is part of a sustained programme of activism or social mobilization and wants to be so identified.
- When a child is engaged in a psychosocial programme and claiming their name and identity is part of their healthy development.

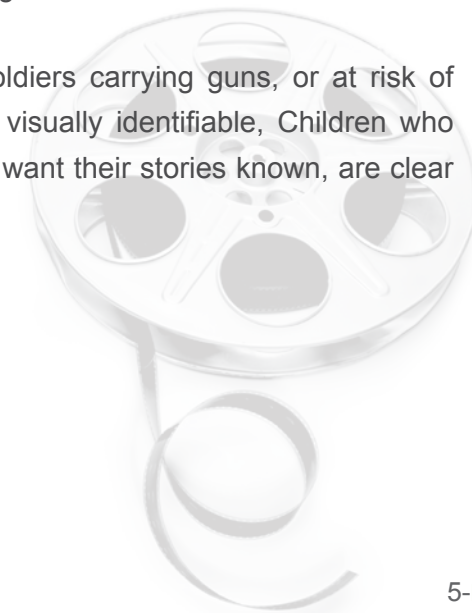
6. Confirm the accuracy of what the child has to say, either with other children or an adult, preferably with both.

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

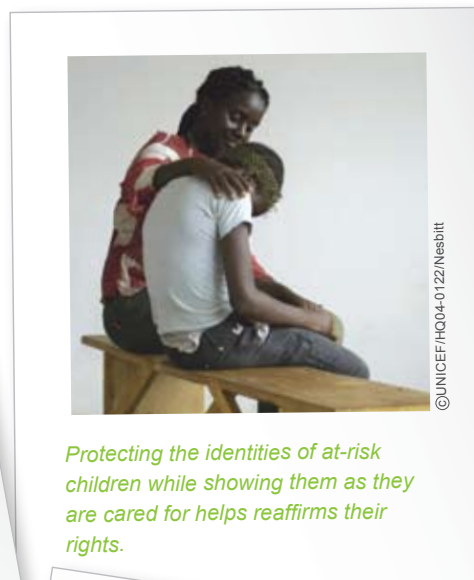
IV Protecting Children at Risk : Hiding Identity

The Convention on the Rights of the Child mandates every child's right to privacy and protection in all media. This fact should always be borne in mind when creating imagery. The following groups of at-risk children should never be identified visually: victims of sexual exploitation; HIV-positive children; children charged with or convicted of a crime.

We also recommend that child soldiers carrying guns, or at risk of being abused if identified, not be visually identifiable. Children who wish to be identified because they want their stories known, are clear exception Continued on next page



There are many ways to photograph creatively while still protecting identity. However, never use black bands or pixelation of faces to protect identities because these styles ruin the image quality and impact, and can connote criminality. Instead, you can use one of the photographic techniques illustrated below.

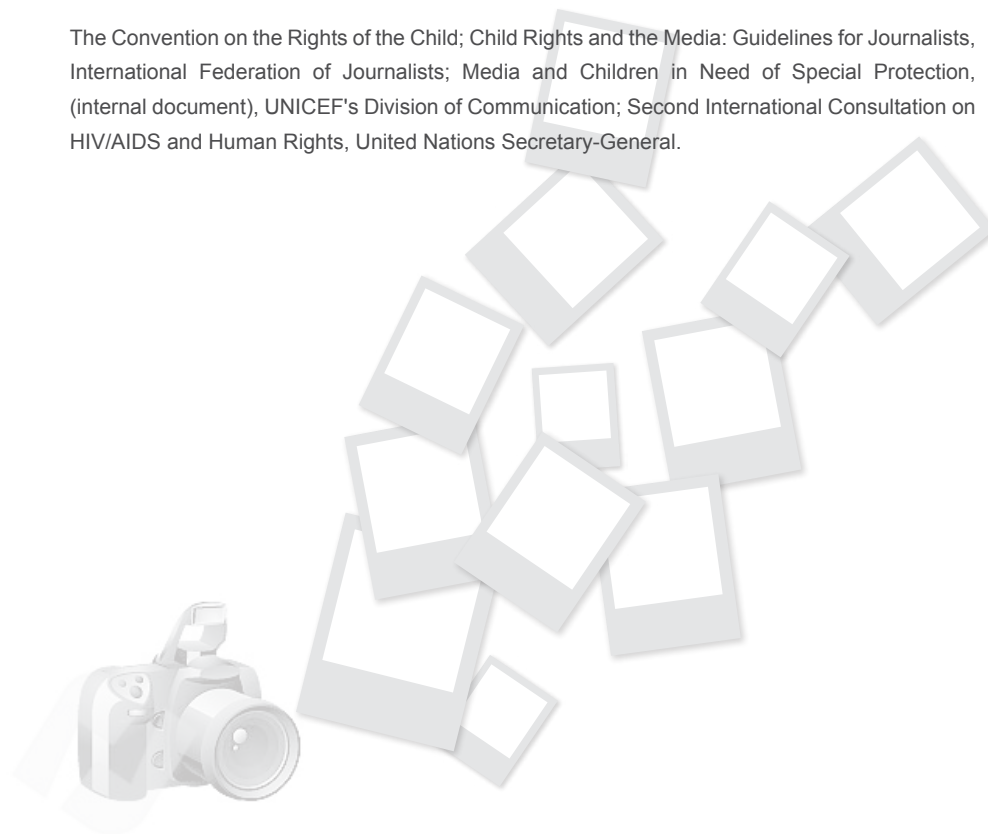


IIV Use of UNICEF Materials

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Sources

The Convention on the Rights of the Child; Child Rights and the Media: Guidelines for Journalists, International Federation of Journalists; Media and Children in Need of Special Protection, (internal document), UNICEF's Division of Communication; Second International Consultation on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights, United Nations Secretary-General.



The Arab Media Award on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Children's Fund / Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (UNICEF MENA RO), jointly with Dubai Press Club and UAE's Al-Bayan Newspaper, offer on an annual basis, the Arab Media Award on Children's Rights. This Award is granted for excellence in media reporting being published in the Arab media on the state and issues of children in UNICEF's MENA Region.

- A theme for which the Award will be granted shall be selected every year;
- The award shall be given to the authors of published works in four different categories: Radio, TV, print media and on-line (web-based) resources.
- The Award will be granted to individuals, not to institutions. However, due credit will be given to the institutions employing the contestants who reach the final stage of competition and those who win the prize.

For more information about how to contribute to this Award, visit :
<http://www.unicef.org/arabic>

Prix des Médias Arabes Pour les Droits des Enfants

Chaque année, le bureau de l'UNICEF au Moyen-Orient et en Afrique du Nord présente, en collaboration avec le Club Dubaï de la Presse et le journal émirati Al-Bayan, le Prix des médias arabes pour les Droits des enfants. Ce prix est attribué aux articles journalistiques arabes portant sur les sujets qui s'attachent à la situation des enfants dans la région du Moyen-Orient et de l'Afrique du Nord (MENA).

- Annuellement, le bureau de la région MENA détermine le sujet pour lequel elle va attribuer le prix.
- Les prix concernent quatre types de support médiatique, à savoir : la Télévision, la Radio, la Presse écrite et Internet.
- Les prix sont attribués aux personnes et non aux institutions médiatiques. Toutefois, les institutions où travaillent les journalistes qualifiés aux phases finales de la compétition et ceux qui vont décrocher les prix, seront reconnus.

Pour plus d'information, connectez-vous au site :
<http://www.unicef.org/arabic>



جائزة الإعلام العربي لحقوق الطفل

يقدم مكتب اليونيسف الإقليمي للشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا سنوياً بالشراكة مع نادي دبي للصحافة وصحيفة البيان الإماراتية جائزة الإعلام العربي لحقوق الطفل. حيث تُمنح جائزة وسائل الإعلام للتميز في مجال إعداد التقارير الإخبارية المنشورة في وسائل الإعلام العربية. عن وضع الأطفال في منطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا. وعن قضاياهم.

- في كل عام يتم اختيار عنوان الموضوع الذي ستُمنح فيه الجائزة لذلك العام.
- تُمنح الجوائز إلى أصحاب الأعمال المنشورة في أربع فئات من الوسائل الإعلامية المختلفة. هي: الإعلام التلفزيوني، والإعلام الإذاعي، والإعلام المطبوع، والإعلام عبر شبكة الإنترنت.
- ستُمنح الجوائز مكافأةً للأفراد وليس للمؤسسات. ولكن، سيتم الاعتراف بفضل المؤسسات التي يعمل لديها المتسابقون الذين يشاركون في المراحل النهائية للمسابقة. والمتسابقون الذين يفوزون بالجائزة.

للمزيد من المعلومات حول كيفية المشاركة:
<http://www.unicef.org/arabic>

