



## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY IN THE MEDIA**

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Ethical Guidelines to Safeguard the Best Interests of Children

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## PREAMBLE

*“The child protection policy in media; Ethical guidelines to safeguard the best interests of children” is a joint project between Kafa (enough) Violence and Exploitation and UNICEF in Lebanon. It aims to safeguard the best interests of children, boys and girls, while reporting on children or when they are directly exposed to media.*

*The policy is addressed to media professionals including journalists, reporters, video recorders, photographers, audio technicians, editors and all staff who might have a direct or indirect contact with children. The ethical guidelines apply to social media and other forms of public online exposure.*

*Kafa (enough) Violence and Exploitation and UNICEF are committed to promote children’s participation and ensure their right to express their views. Both organizations acknowledge the importance of freedom of expression and recognize the tremendous role of media in advocating for children’s rights.*

*The policy is meant to support media in its endeavor to serve the public interest while prioritizing the best interests of children and protecting them from any possible harm associated with unsafe public exposure, especially for boys and girls who have experienced severe violations such as maltreatment and sexual abuse.*

*All media outlets are encouraged to develop their internal child protection policy in compliance with the ethical guidelines that safeguard the best interests of children. It is also advisable to dedicate a well-trained staff to report on children and engage directly with them.*

**The policy was developed by Zeina Ismail-Allouche, an international expert on child protection, in conformity with the Ethical Guidelines for Reporting on Children<sup>1</sup>.**

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, “Ethical Guidelines for Reporting on Children”, 2018.  
<https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/ethical-guidelines>

## DEFINITIONS



### A child

A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless the age of majority is attained earlier under national legislation<sup>2</sup>.



### Child protection

This term includes policies, standards, and procedures that aim to safeguard children from intentional and non-intentional harm<sup>3</sup>.



### The best interests of the child

The term “best interests” broadly describes the well-being of a child. Such well-being is determined by a variety of individual circumstances, such as the age and level of maturity of the child, the presence or absence of parents, the child’s environment and experiences. Its interpretation and application must conform to the CRC<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child; 1990, Article 1, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Child Safeguarding Policy, Save the Children, 2018, [https://www.savethechildren.net/sites/www.savethechildren.net/files/SCI\\_HR\\_POL\\_Child%20Safeguarding%20External%20Policy\\_EN.docx.pdf](https://www.savethechildren.net/sites/www.savethechildren.net/files/SCI_HR_POL_Child%20Safeguarding%20External%20Policy_EN.docx.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child. 2008, <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/children/4566b16b2/unhcr-guidelines-determining-best-interests-child.html>



## Informed Consent

The ability to give consent based on relevant information that accounts for the age and capabilities of the child, or his/her legal guardians. A special consideration should be given in instance of mental disabilities.



## Violence against children

It is the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age.

It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Exposure to intimate partner violence is also sometimes included as a form of child maltreatment.<sup>5</sup>



## Gender

The term gender is given to relationships, social roles, and values that society assigns to both sexes (male and female). These roles, relationships, and values change according to their interaction and interconnectedness with other social relations such as religion, social class, race, etc. Gender is acquired through socialization and responds to changes in the social, political, and cultural environments.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> World health Organization; [https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-children#tab=tab\\_2](https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-children#tab=tab_2)

<sup>6</sup> Definition adopted by KAFA (Enough) Exploitation and Violence

## FORMS OF VIOLENCE <sup>7</sup>

### Physical violence

Threat of beating or hitting, shaking, burning, kicking, biting, pinching, slapping, etc. Children may be subjected to physical abuse at home, school, street, social centers, etc. Physical abuse and the use of physical force may cause injury and, in any case, great psychological and moral damage.

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### Mental violence

Humiliation and degrading treatment such as insults, constant criticism, belittlement, prejudice, impeding freedom, and limiting a child's interaction with his/her social environment. This form of abuse is reflected in the child's well-being, and in his/her emotional and psychological development. Discrimination based on color, race, social role, or any other difference is also considered a form of mental violence. This extends to labeling children as "illegitimate".

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### Sexual Abuse

All forms of sexual activities, including but not limited to early forced marriage, rape inside or outside the family, pornography, and sexual slavery. Sexual abuse against children may include any contact of sexual nature, appearing naked in front of a child, using sexual language with children and displaying pornographic material to children. It could happen by force and violence, by trick and courtship or by intimidation and blackmail.

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### Neglect or negligent treatment

Failure to meet children's physical and psychological needs, protect them from risk, or obtain medical, birth registration or other services. In these cases, poverty should not be considered as the barrier to providing such services. Neglect usually results from the decision of the persons responsible for raising the child and who possess the means, knowledge and opportunities necessary to meet those needs and refrain from carrying them out.<sup>8</sup> It is important to mention that the states have the obligation to register any child born on its territories without any form of discrimination as per article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

<sup>7</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 13 (2011), The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, [https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.GC.13\\_en.pdf](https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.GC.13_en.pdf)

## Exploitation

The use of children to serve or satisfy another person's interest. Often, the child is treated unfairly, harshly, and harmfully. These practices come at the expense of the child's physical and mental health, education, morale, as well as his/her social and emotional development. This includes exploiting children by subjecting them in an unprotected manner to media exposure, with the intention of achieving a journalistic precedent or increasing the number of viewers.

## Economic Exploitation

Reaping material profit or some benefit by using children to produce, distribute, and consume goods, especially when parents or guardians have other means of making profit or when this profit is not used to support the children employed. The economic exploitation of children includes: children working at home, forcing children to work in the streets, recruiting and engaging them in armed conflicts, using them in criminal activities such as selling and distributing narcotic drugs, or engaging them in the worst forms of child labor such as repairing cars or working long hours.<sup>9</sup>

## Sexual Exploitation

Sexual abuse against children becomes sexual exploitation when a second party receives money in exchange for sexual activity with a child. This includes sexual seduction or promotion of sex with a child. Exploitation also includes granting a child to another person, promising a child money or any other form of remuneration and paying for the child's participation in sexual activity, even if the financial allowance is not actually paid.<sup>10</sup>

## Gender-based violence

An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males.<sup>11</sup>

## Witnessing of violence

Exposition of a child to violent scenes, such as witnessing his/her mother being beaten at home.



<sup>9</sup> Minimum Age Convention by the International Labor Organization, 1973, No. 138 [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0:NO:P12100\\_ilo\\_code:C138#:-:text=Article%203-.1..be%20less%20than%2018%20years](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0:NO:P12100_ilo_code:C138#:-:text=Article%203-.1..be%20less%20than%2018%20years).

<sup>10</sup> Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, Council of Europe Treaty Series - No. 201, 2016. <https://rm.coe.int/1680084822>

<sup>11</sup> Gender Equality, Glossary of Terms and Concepts, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, 2017 <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Gender%20glossary%20of%20terms%20and%20concepts%20.pdf>



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## WHY DO WE NEED A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY IN THE MEDIA?

KAFA (enough) Violence and Exploitation and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are committed to providing tools for action aiming to protect children, boys and girls, from violence and other adverse experiences. KAFA and UNICEF have developed this child protection policy in the media in the context of their joint continued efforts to ensure child protection and building on the policy that targeted service providers working with all children in Lebanon.

The child protection policy in the media is a covenant call for the best interests of the child which should be prioritized when directly or indirectly reporting on children and when approaching any issues related to childhood in general. It also sets the basic ethical guidelines that media professionals are invited to adopt when reporting on children.

In Lebanon, media outlets assume a journalistic freedom that must be preserved and promoted to be able to advocate for children's rights and to put forward social and childhood related issues while maintaining an ethical and professional responsibility. While realizing the importance of uncovering taboos, there is an urgent need for minimum ethical standards to:

- Safeguard the child's best interests.
- Prioritize child protection, even if it is perceived to compromise the local perception of competition over rating, winning the audience or increasing the number of followers.



**The child protection policy calls for media professionals to adhere to the following guiding principles:**

1. Encourage children and adolescents, boys and girls, to express their views and opinions freely and safely on matters that concern them.

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2. Refrain voluntarily from conducting direct or indirect interviews with children and adolescents who are still in trauma, specifically children who have experienced severe adverse experiences such as maltreatment and sexual abuse or are in shock under dire circumstances. These children must have the opportunity to heal, through a specialized case management, before exposing their stories to the public.

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3. Conduct direct interviews with survivors of violation only if they want themselves to tell their story and want their voice to be heard, while maintaining child protection policies. Consult with a specialist whether such an activity is helpful to the healing of the child.

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4. Consider thoroughly the safety measures that should be put in place especially when engaging with the survivors of violations (who were able to cross the traumatic experience after receiving appropriate case management).

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5. Encourage conversations and dialogues on child protection and child rights while addressing the stakeholder's responsibility with experts and child protection specialists.

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6. Leverage the cause of children over the scope individual story.

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7. **Do no harm and in case of doubt make sure to prioritize the child's safety over any other concern**

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## THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN ADOPTING THE PRINCIPLES OF CHILD PROTECTION.

**Children's dignity should be respected without any discrimination  
in line with their best interests and safety<sup>12</sup>**

The media has a tremendous potential to play a crucial role in advocating for children's rights and spreading awareness regarding the responsibilities of all stakeholders to implement those rights. The media strategies and tactics are also very effective in shifting the public opinion. These different approaches could be very helpful in amplifying children's voices, mobilizing the public to account for children's opinions and, in turn, empowering the child to partake in matters related to his/her everyday life.

<sup>12</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2019). The minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action. Retrieved from <https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/cpms/#ch001>

In parallel, media carries the responsibility of child protection as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and all related protocols. The Lebanese State ratified the CRC in 1990, therefore binding the Lebanese state to implement its articles:

### **Article 16**

1. No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.
2. The child has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

### **Article 17**

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

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

**The media is a crucial platform to promote children's rights and strengthen children's ability to express themselves, gain confidence, think critically and participate in public life.**

## Goals of the Child Protection Policy in media

**Safeguard** the best interests of each child, boy and girl, and prioritize them over any other consideration, including over advocacy for children's issues and the promotion of child rights.

**Listen** to the views of children and take them into account in accordance with the child's age, sex/gender and maturity.

**Respect** the rights of children with no-discrimination based on sex and gender, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities.

**Respect** the child's dignity and rights in all circumstances.

**Guarantee** the child's right to protection of his/her personal identity, privacy and confidentiality depending on the context and the special circumstances of every child.

**Ensure** the child's right to access information in a manner that is suitable to his/her interests and abilities.

**Encourage** children's participation in making decisions that affect them, especially those related to public exposure in the media.

**Ensure** the child's informed consent and that of those his/her caregivers about dealing (directly or indirectly) with the media and any related consequences.

**Ensure** the child or their legal guardian's right to accept or refuse to be exposed to the media.

**Consult** with those who are closest to the child's situation and are in a better situation to assess the political, social and cultural ramifications of any public exposure.

**Report** any suspicion that a child is at risk or have actually experienced an assault to the concerned organizations.

**Discussing issues related to the girl child especially in the context of Gender-Based Violence, including Child Forced Marriage and Sexual Violence should be seized as an opportunity to increase awareness on GBV through applying a rights-based approach combining sensitive reporting together with advocacy, sensitization and support to girls at risk.**

## Those concerned with this policy - stakeholders

This policy is addressed to all stakeholders who deal directly or indirectly with issues related to children, on all media, audio-visual and print (both offline and online) platforms. The guidelines included in this policy also apply to all individuals and establishments who share news or pictures related to children on all social media and other public platforms.

### **This policy is specifically directed towards:**

- Officials working with audio-visual and print media (both offline and online).
- All individuals working in the media (journalists, photographers, technical staff, archives, or anyone who is in contact with children directly or has access to children's files ...).
- Social workers/ influencers/ public figures addressing topics related to children on social media and other public platforms.
- Designers in charge of promotional campaigns evolving around children.

### **This policy applies to:**

- **Direct media outreach with children:** The physical presence near a child within the media's framework, regardless of the length of that contact. This may include communication with children during field research, photography, reporting, advice, interviews, program production and promotional material.
- **Indirect media outreach with children:** The ability to access information about children such as names, addresses, parents' phone numbers, files and photo exchange. It also extends to archiving, storing information and reusing archives.

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**This policy also applies to all programs that address social issues affecting children, directly or indirectly, especially those discussing women's rights, child custody and general social and economic policies.**

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## FRAMEWORKS

These are international and national conventions and related protocols which constitute an essential reference for defining the children's rights, in general, and the ones related to the media, in particular, in addition to advising on ways for protecting children who are exposed to the media and engaging with it.

- **Ethical Guidelines for Reporting on Children**<sup>13</sup>, developed by UNICEF in 2018. It is a document that highlights the key principles for responsible reporting on children and young people.

- **An ethical charter for media interaction with children in 2014**<sup>15</sup>, issued by the Higher Council for Childhood in Lebanon. The charter sets standards for professional ethics in the media when dealing with children and their affairs.

- **Child-Friendly Media 2016**<sup>14</sup>, issued by the Arab Council for Childhood and Development and the Arab League. It is a document outlining professional principles for Arab media to address child rights issues.

- **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989**, issued by the United Nations General Assembly. The agreement stipulates that the best interests of the child be accorded the utmost importance and guarantees the protection of children and their right to privacy.

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF, "Ethical Guidelines for Reporting on Children", 2018. <https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/ethical-guidelines>

<sup>14</sup> Child-Friendly Media: Document of Professional Principles for Arab Media and Handling of Child Rights Issues (2016). Cairo, Arab Council for Childhood and Development

<sup>15</sup> Code of Ethics for Media Dealing with Children (2013). Beirut, Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs.



**Article 12** highlights that states parties 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.

**Article 13** stipulates that 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.

**Article 17** stipulates that States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media. It also ensures that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

**The Arab Charter on the Rights of the Child 1983** states that the media should direct their efforts and programs to serve childhood issues. It also stressed on the need to refine what is provided by media outlets such as imported programs that contradict Arab values because of their negative impact on children.

**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 1948.**<sup>16</sup> It states the right to freedom of expression and to receive media messages. According to Article 19 of this announcement.

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/en/udhr/documents/udhr\\_translations/eng.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/en/udhr/documents/udhr_translations/eng.pdf)



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## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### The best interests of the child and the right to protection

- Grant the utmost importance to the child's best interests when approaching any subject related to him/her in the media, that could affect his/her situation or expose him/her to any form of risk.
- Refrain from interviewing children during protests, military activities, or during the coverage of a crime scene. In any case, the faces of children should be blurred to protect their privacy.
- Interact with ethical responsibility during direct or indirect media contact with any child when trying to obtain information, clarification, photographs, or hosting a direct or registered program, provided that the main concern is to protect him or her from any form of violence that may result from media exposure during the course of preparation, presentation, and beyond.
- It is advisable to avoid exposing the child to the media, unless it is in his/her best interests.
- Consider every public or media appearance of a child as an ethical and professional responsibility and a potential risk for the child, even if the consent was informed.
- Refuse voluntarily to publish any news story, media story, or picture that could endanger the child, his/her siblings, his/her family or his/her peers.
- Refrain from media coverage of child abuse that includes embarrassing personal private details. These are practices that amount to an additional violation of the child's rights.
- Refrain from subjecting the child, especially the survivors of child protection violations, to showcasing their experience repeatedly, in order to avoid the harm associated with recalling such incidents in an unprotected manner.
- Refrain from asking children to reenact painful events to which they were subjected.

- Ensure the child's right to accept or reject media coverage without intimidation, coercion or threats in the event of rejection.
- Ask for reliable and evidence-based information from the relevant ministries and organizations instead of relying on personal analysis.
- Refrain from using child issues in political conflicts and related disputes.
- Refrain from asking children to present ideas that do not respect their mental capabilities, their age, their present and previous experiences.
- Refrain from stereotyping children as the victims and focus on ways of survival and victory over violation.
- Confirm the accuracy of what the child has to say, either with other children or an adult, preferably with both.
- Report on the general situation of children rather than on an individual child.

## The right to privacy

- Respect the child's privacy when dealing with direct or indirect media especially in terms of the circulation of personal information, their story, the development of media materials and their publication. This extends to the child's right to privacy via social media, with an emphasis on hiding any information that might reveal the identity of the child (name, place of residence, age, school...).
- Obtain the child and the guardian's permission to use images and information in media material.
- Refrain from asking children to do or speak in a way that sounds not respectful.
- Avoid publicly disclosing names of the children, especially when the situation relates to sensitive aspects of their lives.
- Speak about general phenomena that are specific to children rather than referring to individual cases (children living on streets, child labor...).

In certain situations, 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:<sup>17</sup>**

- a. When a child initiates contact with the reporter, wanting to exercise their right to freedom of expression and their right to have their opinion heard.
- b. When a child is part of a sustained programme of activism or social mobilization and wants to be so identified.
- c. When a child is engaged in a psychosocial programme and claiming their name and identity is part of their healthy development.
- d. Confirm the accuracy of what the child has to say, either with other children or an adult, preferably with both.

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

## The right to confidentiality

- Make sure to change the names of children and to hide their faces and alter their voices, especially when the child is<sup>18</sup>:
  - a victim of sexual abuse or exploitation
  - a perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse
  - HIV positive, or living with AIDS, unless the child, a parent or a guardian gives fully informed consent
  - charged or convicted of a crime.
  - a child with different sexual orientation or identity

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 current or former child combatant
- an asylum seeker, a refugee or an internally displaced person.

- Maintain confidentiality, especially if the journalist has access to information that may harm the child or expose him/her to risk, even when the child's identity is changed, hidden or not used.

<sup>17</sup> UNICEF, "Ethical Guidelines for Reporting on Children", 2018

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

- Ensure that their story is not identifiable.
- Refrain from providing details that could put the child at risk, such as: mentioning their address of residence, phone numbers, and workplaces.
- Preserve information about children and only allow exchange of information about them when the aim is to protect them from harm and ensure their best interests.
- Keep all information about children (recorded, registered and photographed) in a safe and locked place.
- Ensure that archives are not reused without the consent of the child and legal guardians.

**The Lebanese Juveniles Act No. 422/2002 also prohibits the publication of the juvenile picture and the proceedings of the investigation and trial and imposes penalties on violators.**

### **The right to proper case management and a specialist's intervention**

- When a child is suspected of being at risk, journalists must inform relevant authorities and specialized associations to intervene and support the child. Those parties have the ability of taking appropriate procedural steps in a manner that is in the child's best interests and within the legitimacy of the Lebanese law.
- Journalists must refrain from acting or socially interacting with children at risk outside the professional premises because a proper case management requires a professional training and experience. It is important to realize that intervention by non-specialists, even in good faith, may cause additional harm to the child in both short and the long run,

**Refrain from making judgments about children (or their caregivers) or taking actions related to children (or their caregivers) directly on live reporting.**

## REMEMBER

- Voluntarily refrain from publishing information materials that incite hatred, violence, or discrimination between children on the basis of language, race, religion, nationality, gender, gender identity, or social status.

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- Voluntarily refrain from publishing any image or situation that does not respect the child or exposes him/her in an inappropriate or degrading manner, even if the purpose of the publication is to advocate and indicate a violation to which the child is exposed.

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- Do not circulate pictures of children taken without their knowledge and without prior consent, in particular in situations that may expose them to harm. This is especially applicable to children in dangerous situations such as when begging, or when unaccompanied by adults on the roads or public places, even if the aim is to illuminate the dangerous situation.

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- Announce the source of the information when discussing a topic related to children to allow the verification the validity of the news that is circulated on social media, or websites in general.

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- Adopt reliable references such as international and civil organizations specialized in everything related to issues affecting children.

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- Notify the specialized authorities and inform the concerned organizations when a child is suspected of being exposed to abuse or his or her rights are violated, and refrain from direct intervention because this may expose the child to mismanagement of the situation. Also, direct intervention may endanger the interventionist.



## ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN: PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURES

Based on the mentioned guidelines, special protocols must be adopted with the direct and indirect engagement of children in the media and all its forms. These are professional tools that contribute to the protection of the child and respect the media profession by considering it an advocacy tool that places the best interests of the child above any other element, such as getting a scoop, seeking increase of viewership, and political employment.

### Ethical questions

These are preliminary questions that will help media professionals to assess the risks of children's direct exposure when reporting on child related issues. Answers may vary depending on the specific situation, but they must conform to the guidelines specified above. These questions constitute ethical guidelines in dealing with childhood issues, and they provide a commitment to approaches that respect child rights and ensure their implementation.

What is the direct goal of media work with children and what are its objectives?

Is there a need to disclose the child's identity? Will that help the child?

Is it necessary to fully expose the child to media?

Should one hide the child's face? Show it? Alter his/her voice?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of showcasing a child in the media?

What are the main risks that should be avoided?

Is there enough knowledge about the addressed topic?

Is the media staff trained to deal with issues affecting children?

Is there a need for social/psychological assistance?

What if we discover that a colleague is putting a child at risk?

What are the responsibilities involved in reporting?

What is the response mechanism to direct risk?

What is the policy of the station, newspaper, or media page regarding child protection?

How will the child feel when he/she grows up and sees the report?

Will the child's relatives or friends bully him/her when they read the report?

Is there any risk of the information to be misled or put the child in trouble or at risk of being disturbed by others?

Is there a risk for the child to be stigmatized?

Would you do this if the child was your daughter or son?

Would showing the child impact any change in the community?

## Planning and preparation

- Assess the situation and help in determining whether the child's exposure in the media is in his/her best interests or not.
- Request a specialist opinion to obtain credible information and build on it. The specialist could be a well-established organization, a concerned government entity, or a psychologist.
- Involve children in making the decisions that affect their lives, especially when it comes to their exposure to the media.
- Encourage children's participation in decision-making that is sensitive to their maturity and age.

**Refrain from engaging directly with a child who was recently abused and refer the case to concerned organizations for proper case management.**

## Informed consent and assent

- The child or legal guardians should be given information about the purpose of the media coverage and how to use image, sound or video for when media appearance approval is solicited.
- The child or legal guardians have the right to refuse and to withdraw at any moment.
- The child or legal guardians are given the freedom to delete recorded material.
- If the child is asked to provide information during direct contact with the media, the journalist should inform the child about the time period required, his/her role and responsibilities, what is included in this process, and how the child's image will appear. Only then can the child or legal guardians give informed consent.
- Ensured that the child / or legal guardians are not under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Ensure that the child or legal guardians do not have a mental illness. If this is the case, a specialist should be called to deal with the situation.

**Consult a trusted adult when engaging with a girl forced into marriage. Even though the informed consent is considered legal, it will still be considered an assent.**

## Interview

- Introduce yourself, the media outlet and the purpose of the interview.
- Prepare your guiding questions in advance
- Inform the child and their legal guardians about the objective of the interview and the general flow of the questions
- Avoid asking complex questions that do not respect the child's maturity
- Avoid asking sudden questions that might be embarrassing, sensitive, or that would make the child remember painful details.
- Seek the support of a social worker when interviewing survivors of painful accidents.
- Conduct the interview in a safe place for the child.
- Make sure that children are comfortable and able to tell their story without outside pressure, including from the interviewer
- Respect and safeguard the child's dignity during the interview
- Respect the child's right to refrain from answering some questions.
- Give equal opportunities for children to express their views and do not discriminate based on their sex, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities.
- No staging: do not ask children to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own history.

**- Do no harm to any child**

**- Avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are judgmental, insensitive to cultural values, place a child in danger, humiliate the child, or reactivate the pain of traumatic events**

**- 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.**

## Photography and Videos

- The child should be accompanied by a caregiver or a trusted adult during the filming process, and he/she should not be left alone with the media technical staff.
- In case of a recent severe assault such as maltreatment and sexual abuse, the face of the child should be hidden and the voice needs to be altered to protect the child's identity
- Show the child in a respectful manner that showcases every human's dignity regardless his/her condition.
- Do not ask the child to re-enact embarrassing or harmful situations.
- Do not confront the child with an aggressor.



## Archiving

- Keep information about children recorded, registered, and photographed, in a closed place.
- Disallow the exchange of stored information, except if the aim is to protect the child from harm and to ensure his/her best interests.
- Ensure that the archive is not reused without the consent of the child and his/her legal guardians.

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## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MANDATORY REPORTING

Protection of Children in Violation of the Law or Exposed to Danger (Law 422<sup>19</sup>) states that it is necessary to report/notify if a child is at risk.

Article 25 of Law 422 defines risk as follows:

1. If the child is found in an environment that exploits or threatens his/her health, safety, morals and the conditions of his /her upbringing.
2. If the child is subjected to sexual assault or physical violence that exceeds the limits of non-harmful disciplinary ways.
3. If the child is found begging or homeless.

Article 26 of Law 422 calls for the necessity of reporting in the event of suspicion that a child is at risk by notifying a public prosecutor or organizations concerned with child protection.

Such reporting is not considered as a disclosure of professional secrecy and does not fall under the provisions of the penal law.

It is the duty of the journalists to report back such a risk to the concerned authorities, as specified in Article 25 of this law.

NOTE: The child can resort directly to the Judge of Urgent Matters in the event of exposure to domestic violence without a representative or guardian. The child can call directly 1745 to report exposure to domestic violence.

<sup>19</sup> Law for the Protection of Juveniles in Conflict with the Law and/or at Risk in Lebanon (Law 422). 2002, Ministry of Defense, Lebanese Republic.

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# ANNEX

## Proposed Training Module on Child Protection Policy in the Media<sup>20</sup>

### **Participants:**

This workshop is addressed to media professionals including journalists, reporters, video recorders, audio technicians, editors and all staff who might have a direct or indirect contact with children. More specifically, the ethical guidelines apply to:

- Media policy makers
- All media professionals/workers in the media field (TV, newspaper, web pages)
- Everyone who deals with issues related to children on social media accounts.
- Communication officers in Non-Governmental Organizations

### **Objectives:**

#### 1. At a knowledge level:

- Identify forms of violence against children.
- Define terms and concepts related to child rights in the media.
- List the risks associated with a child's unsafe exposure to the media.

#### 2. At a skill level:

- Assess risks associated with unsafe exposure to media
- Identify processes to safeguard the best interests of children when being exposed to media
- Outline the individual's responsibility of implementing the child protection policy in the media

#### 3. At a behavior level:

- Identify the personal professional goals
- Connect the professional goals to the child protection policy in the media

<sup>20</sup> The trainer can make adjustments that suit the target group, the duration of the workshop, and the number of participants.

## AGENDA DAY 1

## TITLE OF SESSION

## GOALS

9:00-9:30

Introduction to the workshop:  
- Objectives  
- Setting the expectations

Establish an atmosphere of trust among the participants, which allows for more in-depth and open discussions.  
The Expectations Exercise aims to explore the topics that the participants hope to address during the workshop. This session forms the primary baseline for evaluating the workshop.

9:30-11:00

Why do we need a child protection policy in the media?

This session aims to emphasize the reasons for child protection policy in the media. It also covers essential definitions and introduces child protection issues.

11:00-11:15

Break

11:15-1:00

Risks of exposure of child violence victims to the media (Case Study and Role Playing)

This session aims to explore the risks to which children may be exposed to when engaged with the media.  
A case study will be analyzed.

1:00-2:00

Lunch Break

2:00-4:00

How to safeguard children when engaging with the media (working groups)

This session aims to deepen the discussion about the risks associated with children's exposure to the media in an unsafe manner and proposing protection measures

## AGENDA DAY 2

## TITLE OF SESSION

## GOALS

9:00-9:30

Trust building exercises

9:30-11:00

Presentation of group work on how to safeguard children when engaging with the media Public

This session aims to present the results of the groups' work by creating a consensus on a list of these risks. The outcome would pave the road for identifying approaches to protect children in the media.

The facilitator can capture the main ideas and synthesis them at the end of the session.

11:00-11:15

Break

11:15-1:00

What is my role in implementing the child protection policy in media?

This session aims to emphasize on the commitment of the participants at the individual level and as a collective to protect children in the media

1:00-2:00

Lunch Break

2:00-4:00

Roadmap  
Workshop evaluation  
Conclusion

This session aims to solicit opinions of the participants on ways to promote the policy and enhance its implementation.

The evaluation aims to assess the extent to which the workshop answered the expectations set by the participants.