

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

8.0 Discrimination

- 8.1 Do not discriminate your choice of children to interview because of sex, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities.
- 8.2 In reporting include as many perspectives as possible on children, economic, cultural and social backgrounds.

9.0 Stereotyping

- 9.1 Avoid the use of stereotypes and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children;

10.0 Stigma/Trauma

- 10.1 Consider the consequences of publication of any material concerning children and minimise harm to them;
- 10.2 Always change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as a victim of sexual abuse or exploitation, perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse, charged or convicted of a crime.
- 10.3 Do no harm to any child; avoid questions, attitude statements, opinions or comments that are judgmental and 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.

11.0 Identification

- 11.1 Ensure that the child and the guardian

- know they are talking with a reporter.
- 11.2 In a situation where the parent or the guardian is the child abuser, identify yourself to the immediate government authorities around and seek their help
- 11.3 Verify the credentials of any organisation purporting to speak for or to represent the interests of children;
- 11.4 Explain the purpose of the interview and its intended use
- 11.5 In certain cases, using a child's identity – his or her name and/or recognisable image – is in the child's best interests. Take note, that when the child's identity is used, the child must still be protected against harm and supported through any stigmatisation or reprisals.
- Some examples of these special cases are:
- a. When a child initiates contact with the reporter, wanting to exercise his/her right to freedom of expression and his/her right to have their opinion heard.
 - b. When a child is part of a sustained programme of activism or social mobilisation and wants to be so identified.
 - c. When a child is engaged in a psychosocial programme and claiming his/her name and identity is part of his/her healthy development.

12.0 Harm Mitigation

- 12.1 In case the child has a sad story to tell, do not show your sympathy vividly while she/he narrates her/his story as it may revive her/his bitter feelings of the past.
- 12.2 Before publishing or broadcasting story ensure it meets the highest journalistic standards of balance, objectivity and accuracy such that no child or the parents/guardians should regret for having shared their story.



MEDIA GUIDELINES ON REPORTING CHILDREN



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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 media practitioners is particularly felt in coverage of children and their rights. According to the National Constitution, the Law of the Child Act, 2009 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments, a child is a person below the age of eighteen years.

Because of their vulnerability, children need special care and protection and in some instances the act of reporting on children places them or other children at risk of retribution or stigmatisation.

Therefore, in their daily activities, journalists must be fully aware of the need to protect children and to enhance their rights without in any way restricting their freedom of expression with adherence to objective, factual and sensitive reporting.

In creating a conducive environment for this kind of reporting, the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) has drawn up guidelines to raise media awareness of children's rights issues among media practitioners thus enabling them report on issues affecting children in an age appropriate and sensitive manner.

The following guidelines are meant to support the best intentions of ethical journalists; serving the public interest while striving for standards of excellence in terms of objectivity, accuracy and sensitivity without compromising the rights of children.

1.0 Truth

- 1.1 Focus on facts. Distortion of facts in any manner to make the story salacious and, therefore, more saleable is unacceptable.

No staging; Do not ask children to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own story. Confirm the accuracy of what the child has to say, either with other children or an adult, preferably with both.

2.0 Accuracy

- 2.1 Ensure independent verification of information provided by children and take special care to ensure that verification takes place without putting child informants at risk;
- 2.2 Report as accurate as possible given the time allotted to story preparation and the space available, and to seek reliable sources.
- 2.3 Honestly collect, interpret and report children issues and take all reasonable steps to respect the rights of the child as guaranteed by the National Constitution, the Law of the Child ACT, 2009 and international human rights instruments.

3.0 Fairness

- 3.1 Use fair, open, honest, straight forward and user-friendly methods to obtain news, photographs and documents, and obtain them with the knowledge and consent of children or of a responsible adult, guardian or carer
- 3.2 Afford the child's guardian/parents a right of reply before reporting or to correct any media reporting inaccuracies and to respond to the criticism made against her or him
- 3.3 Refrain from reporting news that shall negatively affect the life of a child
- 3.4 Immediately correct any inaccurate, misleading or distorted reporting on children issues
- 3.5 Give children, where possible, the right of access to media to express their own opinions without inducement of any kind.

4.0 Objectivity

- 4.1 Let a child speak freely on what had happened.
 - 4.2 Ask simple and straightforward questions for better understanding
 - 4.3 News on children tragedies should not contain sensational language, overstatements, propaganda or vague words
- Give voice to a child; facilitate and encourage children to articulate their views affecting their lives.

5.0 Privacy and Confidentiality

- 5.1 Obtain permission from the child and his/her guardian for all interviews, Video-taping and, when possible, for documentary photographs. When possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing.
- 5.2 Obtain permission in all circumstances to ensure that the child and the guardian are



not unduly influenced in any way and that they understand and agree that they are part of a story that might be disseminated. Use child's language for best understanding with the child.

5.3 Publication without consent of material about a child's private life can not be

justified solely by the fame, notoriety or position of his or her parents

- 5.4 Before the interview discuss and assure the child that you will keep secret his/her name and obscure his/her visual identity in reporting in order to ensure comfort and friendly atmosphere to the said child

6.0 Transparency and Accountability

- 6.1 Establish and uphold transparency and accountability culture particularly in the receipt, management and dissemination of information on a child
- 6.2 Do not report news that shall negatively affect the life of a child
- 6.3 Undue influence should not be deployed to secure interview with either the child or the guardian, they should willingly agree that they are part of a story that might be disseminated.
- 6.4 Avoid interviewing or photographing a child under the age of 18 in the absence of, or without the consent of a parent or other adult responsible for the child
- 6.5 Don't interview or photograph a child under the age of 18 at school in the absence of, or without the consent of the school authorities
- 6.6 Don't cover children living in difficult circumstances without their consent/permission
- 6.7 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.

7.0 Security

- 7.1 Discuss and assure the child/parents/guardian about his/her security before the interview
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 Ensure that the child would not be endangered or adversely affected by showing their home, community or general whereabouts.
- 7.4 Guard against visually or otherwise identifying children unless it is demonstrably in the public interests.
- 7.5 Do not publish a story or an image which might place the child, siblings or peers at risk – even when identities are changed, obscured or unused.
- 7.6 Pay attention to where and how the child is interviewed. Limit the number of interviewers and photographers.