



**HANDBOOK**

# **Ethical Reporting on and for Children**



# Ethical Reporting on and for Children



# Acknowledgement

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# Introduction

In partnership with the Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI), UNICEF has undertaken a project to promote ethical journalism in regard to reporting on children and accommodating for the perspectives of child readers. This handbook has been published as part of that project.

A reporter cannot ensure that they practice ethical journalism for children without being familiar with comprehensive guidelines on ethical practices. With a particular emphasis on child reporting, this handbook presents a holistic overview of journalistic ethics.

The UNICEF/MRDI project started with a baseline survey on the existing state of the Bangladesh media in regard to ethical considerations for children. The project has also provided training on ethical reporting to journalists all over the country. The results of that baseline survey - and training module - have informed the contents of this handbook.

This English version of the handbook has been adapted from the original version in Bangla.

United Nations Children’s Fund – UNICEF has provided overall support to this project. We extend our heartfelt thanks to UNICEF and all personnel of MRDI involved with the project.



# Why are ethics essential?

Why do you practice journalism? Is it merely to make a living? The profession involves challenges and requires motivation for finding the truth. It also comes with a capacity to influence the social agenda. Journalism provides a service - it can be useful to people. Is that what draws you to this career?

Probably, a combination of many factors brings you to this profession. If you do not follow ethics in journalism then you will not be able to fulfill the demands of these motivating factors. If that is the case, then journalism will become a mechanical, aimless job which - rather than being a force for good - may well be harmful to people.

A clear set of ethics are essential for ensuring the professionalism of journalists; ensuring that they fulfill their moral responsibility to people and to truth. Ethics are essential for journalists who really love their job and want to practice good journalism.

In this handbook some ethical guidelines for journalists have been defined - key elements which are essential for reporting on issues involving/affecting children. The ethics involved in reporting on children are not isolated from widely recognised general ethics in journalism. Indeed, many globally practiced journalistic ethics are especially applicable in reporting on sensitive issues concerning children.

The code of conduct and guidelines for journalists in this handbook are based on the notion that ethics in journalism is essential. Such guidelines are designed to assist journalists in finding the right track while practicing their profession.

Journalists should keep in mind that the ethics of journalism are not legally binding. Furthermore, legal bindings will never be able to ensure ethical journalism. A journalist's job is to find and disseminate truth

independently, without being influenced by anyone- to search for the truth, and share that truth with others for the betterment of all people. Journalism is multi-dimensional, just like life. Every new situation demands a new approach. A journalist has to take every decision based on the specifics of that particular situation. Therefore, ethics should come from a place of responsibility, conscience, and self-regulation - not a place of legality.

## **WHY DO WE FOLLOW ETHICS?**

***Professional interest*** : This is a major reason. Your job is to find and disseminate truth in a responsible manner; to protect freedom of expression; to resist all outside influences, to work free of restrictions imposed by authorities. By practicing ethical journalism, you can achieve all these things.

***Responsibility towards people*** : The work of journalists touches people's lives in many ways. That is why you are accountable to people. If you maintain journalistic ethics, you will earn people's confidence and support: the biggest safeguard to your freedom of expression.

***Guiding your decisions*** : Ethics can help you in decision-making. Your work requires that you are able to make decisions and justify those decisions. Ethics are your guidelines in this process - what information are you going to disseminate and why?

## **WHO DEVELOPS ETHICAL GUIDELINES?**

Professional organisations like journalists' unions, associations and press clubs

- Editors' associations
- Media owners; sometimes in collaboration with editors
- Media institutions. Many media institutions have their own guidelines, codes of conduct and editorial guidelines.
- Press Council - the institution which receives complaints from citizens about journalism and settles them. Such institutions can be a bridge between citizens and the media. This can be a statutory body - like that in Bangladesh (*See chapter 5 --part b, and 7*)

There are a few instances where Governments can pass laws relating to journalism and impose legally binding rules for journalists. Certain international institutions can also suggest guidelines for journalists. For example:

- The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) - representing journalists from United Kingdom and Ireland.
- The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) - representing journalists from the United States.
- The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) - Representing journalists from more than 100 countries
- The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), UK

Sometimes, other influential groups may be able to force journalists to follow certain rules. But in some cases, rules imposed from the outside can go against the professional practice of journalism.

In the UK, newspapers and magazines follow an "Editors Code of Practice" formulated by editors. Its practice is monitored by the Press Complaints Commission - a self-regulated institution. It receives complaints from citizens about news/editorial content and settles such disputes.

Most of these guidelines set out for UK journalists have separate articles on children. The BBC guidelines, for example, has an entire chapter dedicated to children. In addition to this, UNICEF and the European NGO coalition Children Rights Information Network issue guidelines for journalists on how to report on issues concerning children.

In Bangladesh, there is a limited practice of journalists being bound by codified ethics or codes of conduct. There are very few ethical guidelines set out for those who work in the media, which is why a focus on ethics and morality is even more essential for journalists here.

## **THE FREEDOMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF JOURNALISM: PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE**

The job of a journalist is to work for people (readers and audience); to satisfy people's need for information and provide them with what they need and want to know. People want to know what is happening around them and how that may affect their lives. Responsible journalism helps people make the right decisions, individually and as a society, by providing them with timely, accurate information.

Furthermore, democracy depends on a free flow of information. Journalists can play a principal role in sustaining a healthy democracy by responding to public opinion and facilitating open debate, discussion and an exchange of ideas.

Journalists should claim special privileges in order to seek the truth only when they are driven by a commitment to the people. The work of a journalist can affect the lives of many people, so journalists must take responsibility for those effects.

Journalism should be for the people, and journalistic ethics are based on a journalist's responsibility to people and to society as a whole.

Journalists must carry out their work according to certain values and responsibilities.

### **CORE VALUES**

- Respect for and commitment to life, with a focus on rights and dignity.
- Seeking and disseminating the truth in order to serve the community and individuals in a just manner.
- Avoiding any discrimination against any section of society.

### **MORAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Serving the public interest by disseminating information for the betterment of the people

- Finding and disclosing truth, guided by fairness and a clear conscience
- Playing the role of a watchdog by protecting people's interests and ensuring the accountability of Government
- Working in a way that achieves the outcomes listed above without causing unjust harm to anyone.

Three dimensions of responsibility:

- a) Responsibility towards people featured in the news - acting in fairness to them
- b) Responsibility towards truth, upholding the ideals of the profession and maintaining one's own clear conscience
- c) Responsibility towards readers/audience and the general public

A proper balance between these three dimensions will ensure ethical journalism.

When we talk about reporting on children, the responsibilities become bigger. Journalists must have a broad understanding of the issues faced by children, and special attention is needed when reporting for or about children.

## **REPORTERS AND EDITORS/GATEKEEPERS**

Reporters cannot ensure ethical journalism for children on their own. Copy editors and gatekeepers - those who edit reports, write headlines and decide on the treatment of news and photos - also have a vital role to play. As do policymakers for various media houses. Therefore, this handbook is for all those involved in producing the news - reporters, gatekeepers and policymakers for media houses.

## Journalism and children

Journalists have responsibility towards the betterment of society - both present and future. A reporter should depict what is happening at the present, relate the incident with what has happened in the past and project future scenarios. Thus, reporters play a vital role in the evolution of human life. Children are the future of our society. Therefore, working for children means working for future.

But the general trend in journalism seems to be almost centered on adults. Children are often ignored. Journalists sometimes do not care about the effect of news on children. This is not good for a society. Children are a very important segment of society. They are directly and indirectly affected by media contents. Any careless and irresponsible journalism can harm the lives of children.

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDREN AND JOURNALISM**

Children come into contact with journalism in the following ways:

1. In many instances children are directly involved with the news. In these cases journalists need to think about how they will project children featured in the news and how the news will impact children. Journalists must always work to ensure the best interest of children. Media content involving children and children's issues can also influence others in society - the media has an important role in shaping the mindset of readers/audiences and their attitude towards children.
2. Children are regular viewers of television and readers of newspapers and in this day and age, children also have access to news via the internet. In some cases, an incident may not involve

children directly, but the news of the incident could still affect child audiences. Despite this, journalists too often write and/or circulate news without taking their child audience into account.

3. Children have a right to know and, at the same time, they want to present their own opinions about issues that affect them. Journalists must think about how they can incorporate children's voices into their reports. Children have the right to express their views.

To ensure the wellbeing of children and protect their interests, journalists should always keep in mind that:

- They must uphold the rights and interests of the children
- They must inform their audience of issues involving/affecting children
- They must avoid causing any harm to children through news
- They must not put children at risk of being socially humiliated

Chapter 4 of this handbook contains more details about journalistic ethics in the context of children.

## WHO IS A CHILD?

Debates about the definition of 'childhood' are universal. In Bangladesh, a number of laws, rules and regulations exist that apply the term 'child' in different ways:

- **Majority Act 1875** : This law defines a child as anyone below 18 years of age. It also stipulates that children do not have the right to be a party in any legally binding agreement.
- **Children Act 1974** : This is the highest law of the country in regard to children. This law recognises the responsibility of the state to protect children. It has provisions to protect the children in conflict with law and children in vulnerable situations. As per this law, anyone below 16 years of age is considered a child. However this law is currently under revision.

- **Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 (amended in 2003) :** A child comes under this law mainly as a victim of repression. Under this law, a victim of repression is considered as a child if he or she is below 16 years of age.  
**It is important to note that both the Children Act 1974 and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 prohibit publishing the names and identities of children involved in sensitive issues/incidents.**
- **Bangladesh Penal Code 1860 :** This law says that criminal responsibility cannot be imposed on a child if he or she is below 9 years of age. However, in the cases of children between 9 and 12 years of age, a judge can impose criminal responsibility at his/her discretion. Criminal responsibility is imposed on children aged 12+ unconditionally, however children under 16 are tried under the provisions of the Children Act, ensuring their protection.
- **Labour Law 2006 :** This law defines children as those under 14 years of age. Anyone between 14 and 18 is considered an adolescent. This law prohibits employing children under 12 in any job. A 12 year-old child can only be engaged in work deemed suitable for children. Likewise, adolescents can be employed in non-hazardous jobs under certain conditions.
- **Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 :** As per this law, males under 21 and females under 18 are not allowed to get married.
- **Guardians and Wards Law 1890 :** This law considers 21 year-old males and 18 year-old females to be adults. This law is supplemented by family codes followed by people from different religions.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international treaty ratified by Bangladesh which is legally binding.

**According to the UNCRC, anyone aged below 18 years is a child.**

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee) in its concluding observations (June 2009) recommended to the Government of Bangladesh to harmonize all laws and rules with the UNCRC

definition of a child as any person under 18. It also recommended to make this definition consistent across the various legislations.

When reporting the news, a child's age of criminal responsibility is an important issue. According to section 82 of Penal Code, nobody under the age of 9 years shall be made responsible for a crime. If the child is between 9 and 12 years, the judge will decide whether he or she should be made responsible. The judge has to be sure that the child was aware of the consequences of their actions while committing the crime. If the child is over 12 years, s/he is responsible under the penal laws of the country. But the trial of a child between 12 and 16 years shall be held ensuring adequate protection and wellbeing of the child accused as per the Children Act. The UNCRC does not mention a fixed a minimum age of criminal responsibility. The CRC Committee however, suggested to increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12 years in its General Comment # 10.

The experts debate on another issue - the question of a court taking a child's deposition into account. The Evidence Act 1872 says if the judge thinks the deposition of a child witness is acceptable, he can take a child's deposition into account. So there should not be a fixed age for child witness.

The age of a child often creates confusion - especially around the legal age for marriage and for the employment of a child in work. As a journalist, you have to follow the existing laws as best as you can.

## **WHAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE JOURNALISTS ?**

As a journalist, when dealing with a news involving children, you should consider the definition of the child by the UNCRC as anyone under the age of 18.

It should be noted that, during the final preparation of this handbook, the Government produced the final drafts of the National Child Policy 2010 and the Children Act 2010. This draft policy and the amended law both define children as anyone under 18 years of age.

However, when dealing with stories involving crime, trial and other sensitive issues, you need to also consider related country-specific laws.

## Ethics in general

Practicing journalism whilst maintaining ethics/ethical conduct means acting for the betterment of society. As it was made clear in the first chapter, to perform this role you need to:

- Cover issues - you cannot ignore them
- Ensure you adhere to some practices while avoiding others

When it comes to ethics, the 'do's are just as important as the 'don'ts'. 'Omission' (exclusion of children's issues from the news agenda) is a major problem, while 'commission' (doing things that may cause harm to children) can be equally unethical.

There is no scope to see the ethics in an isolated way. While truthfulness is an ethical cornerstone in journalism, this must be considered alongside a sense of responsibility to the people involved in the news (the public as well as the readers/viewers/audience). Thus, ethics in journalism is shaped in accordance with professional judgment, demands of taste and conscience, and humanity and accountability.

First, one has to understand the basics of ethics in journalism. Then, how/when to apply these ethics where children are involved. Scrutiny of various existing codes/guidelines for journalists, reveals that the basic principles are the same:

### **DIGGING UP AND EXPOSING THE TRUTH**

- There is no alternative to accuracy - the complete truth
- Analyse an issue carefully. Present it with evidence and examples.
- In most cases, share the source of your information with your audience.

- Be courageous in providing people with information that they should know about. Don't shy away from truth.
- Avoid being influenced by those with conflicting agendas.

## **PRESENTING IMPORTANT EVENTS AND ISSUES**

- Present events and issues that are important for people to know about. Don't limit your focus to superficial exciting/attractive topics.
- Judge the true news value of an event, keeping in mind the real needs of your audience and the legitimate interests of the people involved.
- Don't leap to superficial judgments in your report. Cover every angle and dig deep into the causes and consequences/impact.
- Identify the people responsible for/involved in an event. Ensure the accountability of these people.
- If necessary, follow up on the event/topic. There is no need to stop after covering it just once.

## **IMPARTIALITY AND FAIRNESS**

- Present statements from all sides involved in an event.
- If there are accusations being made against anyone, then statements from those people are a must.
- Ensure an un-biased tone and present a balanced picture of the event.
- Introduce all relevant opinion/information even if it is unpleasant or unpopular.

## **NEWS IS SACRED**

- Distinguish your news reports from other non-news items such as editorials, opinion pieces and advertisements. There should be no scope for any misunderstandings about what is news and what is not.

## **WORKING WITH HONESTY**

- Gather information in an honest, straightforward and open manner
- Be honest with the people and sources involved in an event - introduce yourself and be open about your objectives.
- Avoid being evasive with people accused of committing a crime as you go about seeking information.
- Unless it is absolutely essential (where information must be made available for the sake of the public good), do not collect information in exchange for money.
- Be honest to your colleagues. Don't plagiarise others' reports or steal others' ideas.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY/SAFETY OF SOURCES**

- It is necessary to attribute your information to a particular source. But, at the same time, it is important to consider any risks to your sources and any conditions given to them at the time they provided the information.
- Sometimes, the name and identity of a source may have to be kept secret or the source may stipulate that his/her identity must not be used.
- You must be cautious in receiving information from sources not willing to be identified. Judge the importance and authenticity of the information.
- If any piece of information is taken from anyone on the condition of anonymity, that condition must be honored.

## **PARTICIPATION/DISSEMINATION OF NEWS**

- News should be disseminated in a way that meets the needs and interests of every section of the community. The important events of every community group should be proportionally reflected.
- All parties should have an opportunity to participate in the media and push their own political agenda.

- Sections of the community who are underprivileged should receive extra attention from journalists, as these people have less capacity to make their voices heard through other means.

## **DISCRIMINATION AND STEREOTYPING**

- Avoid discrimination and stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.
- No group or section of society should be depicted in a discriminatory way. Be careful not to generalize or present stereotypical portrayals in your report. If you see discrimination occurring, you should highlight it.

## **PLAY THE ROLE OF THE WATCHDOG: EXPOSING INJUSTICE AND IRREGULARITIES**

- Unveil crime, financial and other corruption, anti-social activities and behavior, injustice and irregularities, Government's failure or inability to deliver, and other misdeeds by any individual or institution.
- Protect public health and safety.
- Keep an eye on Government officials, public institutions or any authority with public responsibilities.
- Publish information which could assist the public in taking a decision about any important matter.

## **PUBLIC VS INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS/INTERESTS AND PRIVACY**

- Generally, the public/community interest outweighs that of an individual. But if the mass or the society unjustly harms any individual, then the individual demand becomes greater. When dealing with sensitive issues, you have to judge which is more important - the welfare of an individual or the welfare of the community?

- People have a right to know the truth. But this must not come at the cost of causing unjust harm or by pushing anyone into any sort of unwanted risk.
- If truth is revealed, who will be benefited and how? Who will be harmed and how? Is it just/unjust and to what extent?
- If it is inevitable (for the sake of public interest) that someone is harmed, try to reduce that harm as much as possible or compensate for it. If appropriate, keep his/her name and identity secret. Those who face potential risks demand special consideration.
- Never trespass, interfere with or infringe on someone's right to privacy unless it is essential for the public welfare or interest. This principle is also applicable when dealing with the private lives of public figures and celebrities.
- Be sensitive toward people involved in news events. Be aware that talking to a reporter may make them uncomfortable or annoyed and respect their privacy and dignity.

## **SENSITIVITY AND HUMAN DIGNITY AND PRIVACY**

- Be especially sensitive and sympathetic toward people who are suffering and grieving during times of shock and disaster. Ensure they are presented in a dignified way in reports and photographs, even after death. Be also sensitive toward their family members or relatives.
- Avoid unnecessarily damaging someone's reputation.
- Do not report the names and identities of those involved in sensitive news items. For example, victims of sexual harassment or people living with AIDS/HIV.

## **VALUES, BELIEFS AND DECENCY**

- Do not hurt someone's values or beliefs with your report or photograph. However, social norms and societal beliefs which have a damaging impact should be highlighted.

- Avoid glorifying atrocity by publishing gruesome photographs or overly-vivid descriptions of cruelty.
- Be very careful about publishing descriptions and/or photographs that deal with violence, death, injury or sex. Know where to draw the line.

## **DESCRIPTIONS OF CRIME, TERRORISM, VIOLENCE AND ANTI-SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

- Do not present detailed descriptions of criminal behaviors in case others are encouraged to perform 'copycat' activities.
- Be aware of the legal issues (contempt of court, etc) involved in publishing depictions of crime.

## **INDEPENDENCE**

- Ensure you are not influenced by the Government, powerful or influential sections of society, or your own selfish interest.
- Observe and present the events and issues from an independent standpoint.
- Do not accept expensive gifts or money from any individual or organisation in return for reporting the news in a particular way.
- If any of your relatives or friends is involved in a news story, inform your supervisor and withdraw from covering that event.

## **SELF-CENSORSHIP**

- Be aware of self-censorship. Do not back away from revealing the truth for fear of social resentment, but if revealing certain information places you in a position of high risk, practice caution and ensure your own security by assessing the risks with your supervisor.
- Do not suppress information in advance even if you think that it may lead to a difference in opinion with editorial authorities or

conflict with your media organisation's interests. Rather, ensure that you always act in an ethical way and encourage editors/supervisors to do the same.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Be aware of the possible consequences of your work and be ready to claim responsibility.
- If you make a mistake, be accountable. Admit it and correct it.
- Journalists have to take the initiative to ensure that citizens are able to file complaints against journalists and that such complaints are acted upon.
- Practice constructive criticism with yourself and amongst your colleagues.

## Ethics in the context of children

### **CHILDREN NEED SPECIAL ATTENTION**

Children learn from their surroundings and depend on adults to protect them and keep them safe from abuse, exploitation and bad influences. Children must be given adequate scope for physical, psychological and moral development, so they need special attention. This is their right.

Many general ethical considerations involved in the practice of journalism are particularly important when it comes to reporting for/about children. Along with considerations of professionalism and morality, journalists must ensure they do not forget about child readers/viewers/audiences, even in general news stories where children are not present.

Children want to participate and have their opinions heard. Therefore, to practice ethical, objective and professional journalism you need to pay special attention to children's rights, views and opinions, and treat them with enormous sensitivity. When you report about children, imagine that your son, daughter, niece or nephew is a character in the event and think about the potential impact of the news on that child.

Practicing ethical journalism should ensure that the immediate and long-term wellbeing of children is not jeopardised. Maintaining ethical standards is the responsibility of every journalist.

Those in the media should aim to strike a balance between protecting a child from harm and respecting their right to know.

Taking into account the specific needs of children, we will first look at some general precautions valid for any type of news, then we will consider more particularly the news directly related to children.

## **A. GENERAL PRECAUTIONS FOR ANY TYPE OF NEWS**

Basic considerations of professionalism as well as morality are very important with regard to children's needs. You should not forget the child readers/viewers/audience in the general news, even where children are not present. The issues which demand special focus and care include:

### **— ACCURATE AND ESSENTIAL INFORMATION: COMPREHENSIBILITY**

Children learn about the reality from news, so it is important that all news items be accurate and comprehensible. False information, rumors, distorted truth, and discriminatory or biased information can be harmful to children. It is especially important to keep facts separate from opinions/comments when dealing with children as they may be less able than adult readers to make this distinction by themselves. Words and language should be clear and appropriate and overly complex/technical language avoided.

### **— GOOD TASTE AND DECENCY**

Presentations of vulgarity, atrocity, cruelty, and violence may be harmful for children in variety of ways. Even a single depiction of this kind has the potential to cause permanent psychological damage.

#### **✓ Murders, deaths and dead bodies**

Killing scenes or frightening descriptions of death can be harmful to children. Photos of dead bodies that are disrespectful to the dead should always be avoided to protect the interests of your child audience.

#### **✓ Physical injuries, loss of limbs, deformity**

Vulgar, bloody displays or detailed descriptions of overly cruel acts can frighten the children and cause their sense of security to be compromised.

#### **✓ Violence**

Vivid descriptions of violence can frighten the children. Alternatively, being repeatedly exposed to such imagery through

the media may actually desensitize children to violence. This can lead to a belief that violence is 'normal' and can cause children themselves to behave in a cruel and/or violent way.

✓ **Sexuality**

Sexually explicit descriptions or images may normalize such behavior in the mind of a child and lead children to engage in premature sexual activity. In a country like Bangladesh, this may constitute a crime.

— **CRIME, ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND SUICIDE**

The impact of these issues on children can be direct and severe.

✓ ***Sensational, thrilling*** - Children may be attracted to crime and/or anti-social activity if the media presents these issues in a glorified way.

✓ ***Descriptions*** - Detailed descriptions of methods of crime and/or anti-social activity (eg. how to take drugs or where drugs are available) may provide children with the information they need to carry out this crime/activity themselves.

✓ ***Incitement to suicide*** - The same principle is applicable when it comes to detailed descriptions of suicide or self-harm. These stories should be presented with extreme sensitivity and let readers know how to seek help if they are experiencing problems similar to the subject of the news story (eg. sexual harassment, eve teasing etc).

— **DEALING WITH DIFFERENT FAITHS, VALUES AND OPINIONS**

Sensitivity and tolerance for different faiths, values and opinions is a very important lesson for children to learn. By following ethical guidelines, the media can help to instruct children in this regard.

✓ ***Celebrating diversity*** - Diversity should be presented in a positive light. Any disrespect toward particular values or faiths in the media will encourage an attitude of intolerance in the reader/viewer.

- ✓ ***Identifying the unjust*** - It is important that children can identify unjust and discriminatory aspects of the society they live in. The media will help them to do this by highlighting such discrimination in news stories and reports.

## **B. SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEWS CENTERED ON CHILDREN**

Now let's focus on the special considerations journalists should have when dealing with news centered on children.

### **— NEGLECTING CHILDREN RELATED ISSUES IN THE NEWS**

- ✓ ***Reporting appropriately and adequately*** - Take the initiative to seek out important events or news topics that centre on children. These news items should be covered regularly and presented in a comprehensible way.
- ✓ ***Reflecting diversity in a balanced way*** - News about children should take into account the different kinds of children in a society and recognise their differing needs and demands. Ensure that you do not neglect or exclude issues relevant to a particular group of children. Avoid any type of discrimination. Vulnerable and deprived groups of children demand extra attention.
- ✓ ***Monitoring child rights*** - Issues and situations related to child rights should be monitored carefully and reported about on a regular basis. When reporting on these issues, be sure to investigate who is responsible for the violation/deprivation of child rights, and also what the role of Government and other authorities is in this regard.

The UNCRC spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest potentials; to protection from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect; and to participate fully in family and social life. It is the moral responsibility of journalists to contribute to the realization of these rights.

- ✓ ***Broadening the agenda*** - Journalists should seek to broaden the focus of reports on/for children. Aim to 'dig deeper' for issues that could be given more prominence and brought to the attention of society and policymakers.

## — LISTENING TO CHILDREN'S VOICES

- ✓ ***When children are directly involved*** - Always ensure that you highlight children's statements and views in reports on an event or issue where children are directly involved. Always note a child's age when quoting them.
- ✓ ***When children are indirectly involved*** - Often, things that adults do and decisions they make, can have a huge impact on children. Before you cover any event or issue, take the time to think of the possible impacts on children and explore these in your report.

## PRESENTING CHILDREN IN A POSITIVE WAY

The way that children are portrayed in the news is important. "Media portrayal of children has a profound impact on attitudes toward children and childhood, and has an important influence on adult's behavior toward children. Media depictions provide role-models for young people, influencing their attitudes and expectations. The way in which media represent, or even ignore, children can influence decisions taken on their behalf, and how the rest of society regards them. The media often depicts children merely as passive, silent victims." (*Children's Rights and Journalism Practice - A rights-based perspective*, UNICEF CEE/CIS, 2007)

Every child deserves to be treated with honour and dignity.

***Stereotypes*** - Do not make stereotyped portrayals of children in news reports. Studies abroad and in Bangladesh (MRDI/UNICEF, 2009) reveal that some portrayals are universal. For example, portraying children as victims, helpless, unruly or innocent. It has also been documented that girls are more often featured in news items as victims of crime or torture, while boys are more often featured as 'criminals'. Therefore, be vigilant to ensure your report does not perpetuate established stereotypes.

**Generalisations** - Avoid generalisations when portraying a child in the media. Instead, give the readers/viewers specific contextual information relevant to that particular child.

**Discrimination** - Be careful not to discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, etc. Do not mention any such characteristics unless it is a critical component of the story.

## — PROTECTING CHILDREN

There are many aspects to consider when it comes to protecting children from damage (physical and psychological), risk and stigma in both the short and long term. In Bangladesh, various laws exist for the protection of children in the news.

- ✓ **Risk analysis and parental consultation** - In all circumstances, consider children's vulnerability and discuss issues with them and their guardians. Protecting children from harm should always been your primary concern - no story is more important than that.
- ✓ **Dignity and privacy** - Protect children's dignity and respect their privacy always. Think very carefully about publishing/screening any report that presents personal information about a particular child. The question of consent is also very important (we will discuss this topic in more depth in the section about interviewing).
- ✓ **Scandal and harassment** - In the context of Bangladesh, fear of social scandal is an important factor to consider. From street children to the victims of sexual abuse or children whose father has abandoned them, all children demand sensitive, respectful treatment.

## — IDENTIFYING CHILDREN IN THE NEWS

Sometimes identifying children in the news (revealing their names and identities or making them recognizable in images) is a good thing. For example, a child may want to deliver a message to a wide audience, and media coverage may help them to do this. But in other

instances, identifying children in the media can have a dramatically negative impact on the child and his/her family.

UNICEF and the European-based NGO coalition Children's Rights Information Network (CRIN) recommend that the identification of children should be avoided in the following cases: victims of sexual abuse and exploitation (child sex workers also included); physically or sexually abused children; HIV/AIDS infected or affected children; children accused or convicted of criminal acts. These guidelines also warn against publishing photos of child soldiers, refugees or homeless children.

In general, there should be no problem in identifying children in 'positive' news stories when the child and its guardian have given his/her consent.

Do think carefully when you decide to identify children in your report, especially if the child is very young. Reconsider your decision during every step of the process -collecting information, preparing the report, finalizing it- and, if necessary, discuss it with your supervisor/editor.

- ✓ When dealing with sensitive issues, it may be better to change the name of the child, print photos where they are not easily identifiable, and - if you air their voice - distort it. You should also be aware of other identifying information like a child's address, or the name of their village, parents, relatives or school. If, even after taking these precautions, you still feel that the child may be put at risk, then eliminate them from your story and think of an alternative way to present the issue (using more general examples).

Be extra cautious when dealing with cases of abuse as revealing the identity of a victim may put them at further risk.

Likewise, the laws of Bangladesh protect children who are involved in crime from being identified in media.

Suppression of identity may need to be maintained even after death. Do not publish the names/identities of children who die as a result of sexual abuse or involvement in crime. You have a

responsibility to protect their families from stigma (although you may reconsider if their guardians give you permission; It is important to explain to the child and his/her parents about the purpose of the report).

- ✓ When writing your report, do not introduce or identify any child whose parents were involved in a crime.
- ✓ Ultimately, you must make the decision about whether or not to identify a child based on your own judgment about the effects of your report within the social-cultural context.

## — SENSITIVITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

When dealing with children, your responsibility, sensitivity and empathy should increase.

- ✓ Media reports should not cause distress, suffering or unease for children. Be particularly sensitive when reporting about grief or suffering.
- ✓ When interviewing a child, talk to them with empathy.
- ✓ Think about the immediate and long-term consequences/impacts of the story on children and act accordingly.
- ✓ After the report is published, inquire about the condition of the children featured in the news item. Inquire about his/her reaction and - if the reaction is negative - apologise and pledge corrective measures.
- ✓ If asked to provide the information of a child to a third party (such as the police), you should be very cautious and measure potential consequences on the child. Providing such information should only be done after getting the consent of the legal guardian of the child and of the child him/herself.

## — INTERVIEWING CHILDREN AND VERIFYING INFORMATION

You have to interview children if you want to make their views public, but ensure you act with special sensitivity when doing so.

Apart from applying your conscience and good sense, you need to adhere to certain ethical procedures.

- ✓ Before you talk to a child, you must take all reasonable measures to get the consent of the child and child's parent or guardian. The younger the child is, the more important it is to seek such consent. In sensitive cases, consent is a must - ideally, in writing. It is also a legal obligation for photo or video. When seeking consent, identify yourself and the media you are working for, then explain the reasons for the interview, so that all parties can understand the nature of the report and its possible impacts - both immediate and long-term. In instances where you do get parental consent but feel that publishing the information may still harm the child, you should refrain from publishing it. Likewise, if the guardian agrees, but the child is reluctant to speak, do not go ahead with the interview.
- ✓ Children's interests should come above your own interest in collecting a particular news story. Even if you do not publish a child's comments or photo, the process of taking that photograph or information could still hurt the child. In sensitive cases, try to use alternative ways of collecting information.
- ✓ Be careful about relying on a child for information and in case of breaking/developing stories, be very cautious of interviewing children via live telecast - in such situations, a child may not be able to grasp the full consequences of their testimony and the resulting statements may not accurately reflect his/her mind. Do not ask a child for any information which he/she is not supposed to share or is not in a position to give opinion on.
- ✓ Sometimes a group of journalists surround a child asking for an interview, making him/her nervous and frightened. Rather, approach children in a sensitive manner and share information among your fellow journalists. Sometimes it is better to talk to several children together rather than talking to one individually. This approach may make the children feel safer and more at ease.

- ✓ Do not pressure any child into giving you information. Do not pledge to give money in exchange for interview. If you consider that the child is in need of help, then by all means offer it, but be clear that any help provided to the child is not in exchange for the interview.

If the interviewee wants to keep something secret, honour his/her sentiment and do not create unrealistic expectations by pledging something that you cannot deliver.

- ✓ Show respect to a child you are interviewing. Be courteous in asking the interviewee's name and start the conversation with a light issue. Listen patiently and ask questions politely and with empathy. Try to avoid embarrassing the child and let him/her speak their mind. Do not belittle or be judgmental about the interviewee's comments, but - equally - if the child is engaged in a dangerous or criminal act, do not be flippant.
- ✓ In sensitive cases, do not do anything that could increase a child's anguish. Try to talk to a child directly, rather than by phone or email, and in the presence of somebody they know and trust. If necessary, seek advice from a child psychology specialist before the interview.
- ✓ Take special care to verify all information that you receive from a child. When verifying information, be sure not to disclose the identity of the child.
- ✓ If you want to talk to a school student during school hours, you must first get permission from the headmaster of the school. If possible, avoid class time for the interview.
- ✓ Be cautious if you are planning to interview a child who is the victim of a crime or a witness in a trial. There may be court order prohibiting the interview of this child.
- ✓ Use information about a child, his/her views and related photos judiciously and in the right context.
- ✓ Follow up after the interview. Give the child your phone number and address so that he/she can get back in contact you if they desire.

## — DEALING WITH VULNERABLE CHILDREN

### Abused children

- ✓ Dealing with children at risk brings with it a greater level of responsibility. If a child is a victim of abuse, there are risks of harming the child further as a result of your report, so extra care must be taken.
- ✓ Do not identify the child even in the case he/she is dead. Your report may increase his/her suffering and cause social stigma. If the child has been abused by any of his/her family members, do not go into detail about the relations that took place between them.
- ✓ Enquire as to whether the child has been threatened or pressured not to take legal recourse. (Perhaps the child is being harassed and the culprits are receiving indemnity through village arbitration or religious edict...)

### Children engaged in illegal activities

- ✓ Journalists have a responsibility to protect children engaged in any anti-social activities by protecting their identity, even if they are dead. In these cases, you may face some dilemmas: you may think that the child deserves to be exposed for his/her crime. In making your decision, weigh up the interest of the public against the interest of the offending child - you may also have to take into account the interest of any other children who are victims of the same incident.
- ✓ Do not refer to the child as a criminal or attribute all blame to the child. Avoid a trail by media and wait for the legal process.
- ✓ Dig deeper and explore factors that may have lead a child to commit such crime.
- ✓ Existing laws advocate for correction, not conviction, of a child engaged in criminal activities. Monitor the activities of police and other authorities to ensure they are respecting the child's rights in the lead up to, and during, a trial.

There are other situations that put children at risk. Children involved in any conflict, clash, communal or racial tension, natural disaster, or refugee issues are always at risk. Be careful in reporting these incidents. Give special care when you are publishing the photo of a child. Likewise, child victims of trafficking, kidnapping, child sex workers, children of sex workers, children infected with HIV/AIDS, children of HIV/AIDS infected parents, physically or mentally challenged children, child domestic workers, and children from the poorest, most disadvantaged and marginalised sections of society need special care and attention.

### **MEDIA EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN**

- Do not use or exploit children in order to sell your news item.
  - ✓ Do not sensationalise news using children.
  - ✓ Do not portray children as a sex symbol
  - ✓ Do not use children to lay on the emotions of readers/viewers.
  - ✓ *(see chapter-5c)*

## Children and journalism in Bangladesh

The findings of the baseline survey conducted in 2009 by MRDI and UNICEF clearly shows the current gaps in reporting on children in Bangladeshi media. This chapter analyzes these findings and recommends ways to improve the practice of journalists in dealing with children's related news.

### **A. INCREASING THE VOLUME, DEPTH AND QUALITY OF REPORTS ON CHILDREN**

#### **a) THE CURRENT SITUATION**

The MRDI-UNICEF baseline study on children in Bangladesh news media shows that national media generally publishes/broadcasts only major, routine events involving children that are obvious and easily found. Any other reports tend to be very brief.

In most reports, many important things related to a child's life, rights and welfare are overlooked. Newspapers publish mostly negative news stories about children (eg. murder and rape) while television stations mostly broadcast news from seminars and discussions on/for children.

Most of these reports have very little depth (only 13 per cent of the total news stories surveyed involved in-depth reporting on/for children) and are simply concerned with reporting on an event rather than analysing trends or following up leads.

In many of the reports, there are lapses in terms of credibility and clarity.

There is a general lack of effort from reporters in terms of filing reports on children's issues. At the same time, editors, media gatekeepers and policymakers also give less importance to issues concerning children. (Only 0.55 percent of editorials surveyed were about children).

Children's opinions are often ignored and reports do not reflect their views and thinking. Children's views are rarely sought - even in relation to issues directly concerning children.

### **b) WHAT CAN JOURNALISTS DO?**

According to findings of the survey, journalists in Bangladesh must address the following if the Bangladeshi media is to become more ethical in dealing with children's issues:

- Give more importance to children, their opinions and their right to know.
- Increase the volume, depth, coverage and quality of reports involving children, their interests and concerns.
- Broaden the agenda when it comes to news about/for children.
- File in-depth reports and draw the attention of people and policymakers to child rights issues.
- Follow up events and monitor all developments.
- Ensure the accuracy and objectivity of reports. Complete truth is a must.
- Ensure that information sources are strong and credible.
- Do not publish photos of dead bodies. Avoid bloody, gory photos and detailed descriptions of methods of crime, violence and other anti-social activities.
- Do not sensationalise any event that involves children.
- Think about a children's image/reputation in the case of sensitive issues and avoid publishing children's names and if this could have a harmful effect on them.

- Always ensure that the best interest of a child in your report are your first priority.
- Be cautious about language/descriptions used to portray children. Avoid stereotypes and generalisations.
- Be familiar with laws (both local and international, UNCRC in particular) concerning children and follow them in your reporting.
- Make a set of guidelines or code of conduct of your own and refer to it when you find yourself in difficult situations while reporting on children. (In chapters 6 and 7 we will discuss how to overcome dilemmas in maintaining ethics in journalism and how to prepare personal guidelines.)

### **Keep children in mind**

Apart from reporting day-to-day events, you must keep an eye on the overall trends in society where children are concerned. Don't confine yourself to only routine events. Make an effort to file reports which will help ensure children's well-being, protect their rights and interests and fulfill their needs. Increase the volume and scope of quality reports on/for children.

### **Make special/in-depth reports**

Dig deeper into an event and follow up on every issue. When you have to cover particular seminars, discussions, press conferences or other programmes dealing with children, try to add something to your report from beyond the programme. Persuade your editor/supervisor to give you enough time to file in-depth and comprehensive reports on children. Media gatekeepers must support reporters in this regard. For example: when a child dies from an adverse reaction to a drug, you must report the incident. However, you should also use the opportunity to investigate the quality of medicines and issues of quality control. Likewise, when you report on the frequent accidents that kill children, there is also scope to report on the reasons behind the accidents and ways to prevent such accidents.

Examine the context and background of an event and you will find many issues to report on. Find the story behind the story and report about the significance and impact of any given issue/event.

### **Write features**

Try to write features on children. Features can go in-depth and there are many relevant children's issues that could be the focus of such a piece.

### **Utilise special days**

Make a calendar of national and international days and events on children's rights and other issues then utilise special day for special reports. However, don't file boring, conventional reports - use the special day as a gateway to draw your readers/viewers into a more in-depth feature.

### **Find space in all the pages**

Find space for children not only on news pages, but also in other sections, segments and supplements.

### **Finding a subject**

You should always make a special effort to highlight the plight of weak and disadvantaged sections of society in your reports. Children are one such section of society. Your reports can give a voice to children who are unable to speak up for themselves. Report frequently on children who need help, who are at risk and who are vulnerable.

Do not ignore incidents where children are being abused, whether by a teacher using corporal punishment in school or by a business owner forcing children to work in hazardous jobs. Such situations are frequent in our society. They are against children's rights and should be reported as such.

### **Focus on child rights**

Child rights issues - in particular, the UNCRC and its enforcement in Bangladesh - offer a wealth of interesting topics for investigative and in-depth reporting.

## **Report on Government policies**

Read and analyse government policies on children; national and international policies on child labor; major children's welfare projects; national action plans on women and children; policies/practices around trafficking of women and children; and international conventions on children. Filing reports on these policies are a way to keep child rights on the public agenda.

## **Be familiar with children's views and include their opinion in your reports**

Talk to children whenever your story allows. Get to know their opinions about an issue, and try to identify ways in which your report can help them fulfill their needs. If you include children's views and opinions in your report, it will add value and, in right context, it will make your report more interesting.

## **Select focus areas for the coming years**

Select one of two subjects relating to children that can be a focus of reporting over the next one/two years. Build up your knowledge on these subjects. Read all relevant documents and talk to experts and other stakeholders to gather more information. Then, file frequent in-depth reports.

## **Protecting children's interest**

Children often suffer as a result of broader societal changes. For example: the number of playgrounds gradually decreases due to urbanisation. Sometimes Government policies will have a negative impact children. For example: if the Government decided to relax the qualification of primary school students. Similarly, many projects in the national budget and annual development programme are concerned with children. It is a journalist's job to stand up for children's interest by reporting on issues like these.

## **Don't bypass children's issues**

If a minister talks about politics in a programme on children, you have to report on this for readers' interest. But, don't forget to also focus on the

children. Wherever possible, ensure the presence of children in your report.

### **Legal aspects and rights**

When you report on abuse or repression of children, include the legal aspects of the issue. Investigate who is responsible for a lack of legal action.

### **Story angle**

Try to write from a positive angle if the incident/issue carries some positive elements. But remember, most events have both a negative and positive side - try to report in a balanced way and cover both sides. The MRDI-UNICEF survey shows that a large number of stories were published in newspapers on the SSC results. These were mostly positive stories - and rightly so - but reporters did not take the opportunity to also investigate problems regarding the education system in Bangladesh.

### **Stories of life**

The details of people's lives are inherently interesting but are rarely found in reports. Try report about the experiences and struggles of people. This will add a human interest element to your story.

### **Be wary of sensationalism**

It's okay to try to elicit some emotion from your readers/viewers, but tread with caution and always emphasize the problem and its remedy.

### **Be selective about sources**

When reporting on children, you must consult with a variety of credible and trustworthy sources. Avoid relying on a single source of information.

### **Clarity, credibility**

To ensure the credibility and acceptability of your report, make it complete, covering all sides of the argument and verifying all information. Make it readable and clear. Don't leave any scope for confusion or ambiguity in your report.

## **c) STORY PLANNING**

### **Research**

Gather necessary information. Talk to people concerned who know about the subject, its background and context. Collect relevant documents and read them thoroughly. Browse the internet for more information.

### **Make a plan**

Plan how will you gather further information and verify it. Identify all the sides of the issue and all parties involved. Write down questions for possible sources who could be interviewed. If you want to interview a child, plan carefully.

### **Collect and verify information**

Take notes properly noting the date. Ensure the correct spelling of the name of every person involved and every institution concerned. Attribution is very important - use reliable sources. Remember to talk to a variety of people and include people's views and experiences in your report.

### **Ensure privacy and consent**

If sources do not want to be named, or if you think that naming them will put them at risk, keep their identity secret and find alternative ways of attributing the information. If possible, organise written consent to publish the information collected in interviews - if your interviewee is a child, parental consent is also required.

### **Establish themes**

Identify the most important theme in your report. This will be your intro/lead. Try to keep the report as short as possible - don't feel that you have to include all the things you know about the subject, as this may distract from the focus of the story. Keep in mind the demands of children and the things that matter to them. Think about the sorts of questions that your readers/viewers may ask, and try to address these in your report. If you cannot accommodate all the themes in a report, plan for a series of reports.

## **B. UNCRC AND OTHER LEGISLATION**

It is very important for journalists to be familiar with the UNCRC and other relevant legislation dealing with children. You must have an idea of these laws when you report on issues including (but not limited to):

- Child victims of repression, crime, exploitation
- Children forced into the sex trade
- Child trafficking
- Children in conflict with the law
- Child labour, hazardous child labour
- Child marriage
- Child's citizenship
- Children's capacity to be party to an agreement
- Children's guardianship, inheritance

### **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted on 20 November 1989 at the General Assembly of the United Nations. It came into effect on 2 September, 1990. This is a legally binding convention and international law. Two optional protocols were added to the convention on 25 May, 2000.

Bangladesh was among the first 22 countries to ratify the convention. The Government of Bangladesh ratified it on 3 August, 1990. It also ratified the two optional protocols added in 2000. Except for the US and Somalia, all countries have now ratified the convention. However, these two countries are signatories to the convention.

The UNCRC says that every child is an individual. Children have the right to live with dignity, full protection from the society and active participation in life on a family, social and state level. They have the right to develop to their full potential.

The Convention guarantees the rights of the children and calls on Governments to protect those rights. Its 54 articles describe the responsibilities of the parents, families, society and the state for social protection of children. On the other hand, the Convention points out children's responsibilities towards their parents and other members of society.

The rights of children are described in 41 out of 54 articles of the Convention. These articles say that all children have equal rights; all rights are related; and that every right is essential. Marginalised and underprivileged children need special care.

If we analyse the convention, it puts emphasis on four major rights for children:

- 1.Survival (Right to live with adequate food, nutrition, shelter, healthcare, safe water, safe environment etc.)
- 2.Development (Right to education, sports, entertainment facilities, information, freedom of thought, conscience, and religious rights for optimum physical, mental, intellectual, moral and societal growth)
- 3.Protection (Right to legal, family and societal protection from all sorts of abuse, torture, repression, cruelty, discrimination, exploitation and neglect)
- 4.Participation (Right to take part in activities on a family, society and state level that are beneficial for children's development and becoming a responsible citizen)

Article 22 deals with refugee children, article 23 disabled children, and article 30 children from indigenous and other marginalised groups. These articles clearly define the rights of these children within their society.

The optional protocols of the CRC, added in 2000, are related to the protection of children from risky and vulnerable situations. One protocol deals with trafficking in children; child sex workers; and child pornography. The second one deals with the involvement of children in war and conflict.

Four of the articles (2, 3, 6 and 12) are recognised as the base of all child rights and are general principles.

**Article 2** ensures children's rights without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

**Article 3** upholds children's best interest in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies.

**Article 6** says that State parties shall recognise that every child has the inherent right to life, and ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of all children.

**Article 12** calls on State parties to afford to children who are capable of forming their own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with its age and maturity.

Ratifying the Convention means that the state is bound to enforce the rules and provisions under it. The convention says that states must take all legal, administrative and other measures to protect child rights, and if necessary seek international assistance. The state has an obligation to make children and others aware of their rights.

There is a Committee on the Rights of the Child comprising independent experts to monitor the enforcement of the provisions under the convention. Governments have to submit to this committee a regular report on the state of children. The Committee then encourages states to take any measures deemed necessary.

When ratifying the Convention, Bangladesh made reservations to the first section of article 14 that says state parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

It also made reservations to section 21 that deals with the system of adoption of children. Bangladesh pledges to take measures in this regard following existing laws in the country.

To ensure the ethical practice of journalism, journalists must know the UNCRC and take into account its provisions while reporting issues of child rights. Journalists can play a watchdog role in monitoring the enforcement of the Convention by the state. In 2007, Bangladesh submitted to the international child rights committee the country's report on children. You can collect a copy of the report from major NGOs working on child rights or download it from UNICEF Bangladesh website ([www.unicef.org.bd](http://www.unicef.org.bd)).

The report highlights many legal steps taken by the Government in relation to children. In response, the Committee had some suggestions for Bangladesh. You may like to read them in order to identify topics for investigative reports (also available on UNICEF Bangladesh website). The suggestions of the Committee covered issues like budgetary allocation for children, child repression, trafficking, child sex workers, child pornography, hazardous child labour, early marriage, children at risk of poverty and natural disasters, birth registration, HIV/AIDS, child education and health care.

### **Children Act 1974**

This law sets out the state's responsibilities in regards to children's protection. It is often termed as a law for children's welfare in society that covers their protection, security and care. This specifically determines the state's responsibility towards children at risk, destitute children and those who are victims of exploitation, cruelty and repression.

One important section of this law deals with the trial of children involved in crimes and anti-social activities. Like the UNCRC, this law also provides some guidelines for dealing with such children, including:

- The trial of such children should not be done with adults. There should be a separate court for trying children. A probation officer will look after their interests and give them suggestions. Children must not be branded as criminals. There will be no punishment for them, but there should be measures for correction. Children should not be detained in jails. There will be a separate institution for the safe custody of children and the duration for confinement will be as

short as possible. There should be separate considerations for girls and boys. Finally, the state should try to return them to their families as soon as possible.

- This law emphasizes measures to save children from stigma, ensure their safe and sound life and define the responsibilities of their parents. The state, the court and all quarters involved in the trial process should think about the ultimate goal - that is the child's maximum protection and wellbeing. When police detain children, their parents should be informed first. Then a probation officer should be employed. The opinions of the child, his/her parents, family members and social organisations should all be considered to ensure that the child's interests are well protected.
- There is criticism that the law does not have specific guidelines on how to behave with children during the pre-trial process. Likewise, this law does not set provisions for diversion or alternative measures. However, the law is currently under revision.
- The section 17 of Children's Act says journalists must not identify the children and describe details about them when they are under trial for any offences. Publishing their photos is also prohibited. However, it can be done with permission from the Court, if the judge thinks it is right for the best interest of the child. Journalists have to apply for this if he/she thinks it is important to publish the child's identity and it would not harm the child.
- Apart from this law, there is the issue of assigning criminal responsibility to children in conflict with law. Sections 82 and 83 of Penal Code 1860 are applicable here.

### **Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 (amended in 2003)**

This law was formulated for the trying of people who commit offences against women and children. These include:

- Killing or attempting to kill women and children using corrosive/toxic substances; causing deformation of the body by such an act; rape and death from rape; killing for dowry; sexual

repression; trafficking; kidnap; instigating suicide; forcing children to become beggars and for this purpose making them disabled; etc.

- This law will prevail over all existing laws on these issues. The offences will be tried only in the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal. There is scope for a camera trial and trial in absentia of the accused. The maximum punishment under this law is the death penalty or life imprisonment, with a fine of up to BDT 100,000.
- Section 31 of the law says women and child victims can be kept in safe custody if the judge considers it is important. This may be a government-run institution or a private institution/individual's home.
- This law does not have any provision for sexual harassment of girls/children, although Section 10 deals with sexual repression of women and children. The law mentions the forced prostitution of women, but not children. However, there are other laws that deal with such crimes.
- Section 14 of Women and Children Repression Prevention Act says that victims must not be identified in news. The punishment for violation of this provision is maximum 2 years' imprisonment and up to Tk. one lac fine or both. Therefore, journalists must be aware of this law and must not identify children under trial or victim children. This is punishable offence, even if the child is dead. The children should not be termed as "criminal."
- Journalists should monitor trials and report whether the Children's Act is properly enforced or if there is a violation, especially in cases of children's age, appointment of a probation officer, setting up of separate court and keeping the child in safe custody.

## **Bangladesh Penal Code 1869**

Two sections - 499 and 500 - of the Penal Code are very important for journalists. These sections provide for punishment (imprisonment/fine) for defamation. A journalist can be jailed for up to two years or fined for defamation. Besides this, sections 292, 293 and 294 are related to obscenity, vulgar publication and sale of obscene materials to under-20

persons. Section 295 (a) provides for two years jail and/or fine for offending religious sentiments.

## **Labour Act 2006**

Sections 34 and 44 of the Labour Act 2006 are relevant for journalists when reporting on children's issues. According to this law, children under 14 cannot be employed in any type of labour. However, children between 12 and 14 years can be given light work that does not put their health, education or development at risk. If the child goes to school, he or she should be engaged in such light work after school hours.

Children between 14 and 18 years of age are considered adolescents. Children this age can be engaged in work if a registered doctor certifies his/her ability. The employer shall obtain the doctor's certificate on his/her own expense. There is no need for this certificate in case of providing the adolescent with apprenticeship or vocational training.

- The law clearly says that adolescents shall not be engaged in any hazardous or risky job. They must not be asked to go near a rotating wheel or any other dangerous tools for the purposes of cleaning and maintenance.
- The Government has to issue notifications periodically declaring certain jobs as "hazardous" and juveniles should not be engaged in such work.
- If an employer wants to engage an adolescent to handle a Government-declared dangerous tool, he/she must inform the adolescent about the risks and safety measures. The employee has to have adequate training to handle the equipment and he/she must work under the supervision of an experienced and skilled person.
- The law also bars engaging a juvenile in underground or under-water job.
- The working hours of a juvenile worker in a factory or mine must be maximum five hours a day or 30 hours a week. Interestingly, this provision contradicts the earlier provision banning juvenile worker's underground job.

- In other organisations, working hours shall be no more than 7 hours a day or 42 hours a week.
- According to this law, adolescent workers shall not work between 7 in the evening and 7 in the morning.
- The law permits maximum 36 hours a week in a factory or a mine and 48 hours in other organisations if the juvenile worker is engaged in overtime work.

Journalists should be watchful to see if this law is enforced properly or if there are weaknesses in Government's monitoring mechanism. Maybe a job does not have any legal restrictions, yet is still inappropriate for an adolescent... If you find such inconsistencies, report on them. There are many other issues to report on, such as wages and working environment.

### **Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929**

Child marriage remains a major social problem in Bangladesh. A 2007 survey reveals that about half of women between 25 and 49 years were married before reaching 15 years of age. Many of them gave birth to their first baby before age 15.

According to the Child Marriage Restraint Act, the legal age of marriage for males is 21 years and for females is 18 years. There is a provision for light punishment of the guardians in cases of marriage of an under-21 boy or an under-18 girl. Marriage registration is mandatory and the age rules must be considered during registration, but a marriage is socially accepted even without registration.

### **Guardians and Wards Act 1890**

This law deals with the guardianship of a child. The age limits are same as in the Child Marriage Restraint Act.

### **Birth and Death Registration Act 2004**

Journalists must know about this law when reporting the age of a child in the news. Mayor or commissioners of city corporations and municipalities, and chairmen of union parishads have the power to register births and present birth certificates. However, birth registration

in Bangladesh is yet to reach 100 per cent coverage. The births of thousands of children have not been registered, yet there are very few reports on the progress and problems with birth registration. According to the law, birth certificates are needed for applying for passports, admission to school, government jobs, driving licenses, land purchases and to register as a voter.

### **Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2009**

After the amendment to the Citizenship Act in 2009, the children of a Bangladeshi woman married to a foreign national can now receive Bangladeshi citizenship. Earlier, such children only received citizenship of their father's country.

### **The Constitution of Bangladesh**

Article 17 (a) calls for a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children.

Article 18 says that the State shall regard improving the level of nutrition and strengthening public health as its primary duties, and in particular shall adopt effective measures to prevent the consumption, except for medical purposes or for such other purposes as may be prescribed by law, of alcoholic and other intoxicating drinks and drugs which are injurious to health. The State shall adopt effective measures to prevent prostitution and gambling.

Article 28 says the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth....Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making special provisions in favour of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens.

Article 31 (right to protection of law) says that to enjoy the protection of the law, and to be treated in accordance with law, and only in accordance with law, is the inalienable right of every citizen, wherever he/she may be, and of every other person being within Bangladesh, and in particular no action detrimental to the life, liberty, body, reputation or property of any person shall be taken except in accordance with law.

Article 39 deals with freedom of thought and conscience, and of speech. It says that freedom of thought and conscience is guaranteed. It protects the right of every citizen to freedom of speech and expression; and freedom of the press.

### **Majority Act 1875**

This law says that nobody can be party to an agreement before the age of 18 and that nobody can make an agreement with an under-18 person. However, this law is not applicable in marriage, divorce and certain religious matters.

### **Press Council Act 1974**

Any aggrieved person can complain about the media to the Press Council. The Council can summon the editor/owner of the respective media house and hold a hearing, but the Council does not have the power to punish a newspaper (or TV station). It can only reprimand the editor/owner of a media house. The Council publishes a code of conduct for journalists along with an oath for them (See chapter 7).

### **Contempt of Court**

Journalists will face punishment if they ignore a court order or publish anything that tarnishes the image of the judiciary. Even if you tell the truth, your publication will be treated as contempt of court. Be careful about the existence of court orders, if any, when interviewing anybody involved (witness, plaintiff or accused) in a case.

### **Family codes followed by members of different religions**

These family laws are applicable in marriage, divorce, guardianship and custody of children and inheritance. Muslims, Hindus and Christians have their own family laws, but the Buddhists follow the Hindu law. These laws are not uniform in dealing with the rights of children.

These laws contribute to the betterment of children - and this is also the objective of ethical journalism. But it is not possible to ensure children's welfare only by enacting laws. They also need to be enforced. This is why journalists have a role to monitor the enforcement of the laws related to children.

In many cases, it has been found that law enforcement agencies violate the laws. Many of them even do not know these laws. In addition, some provisions of the laws may not always be good for children.

Thus, journalists can perform a watchdog role and report on the loopholes and inadequacies of laws. For example: there is no provision to protect a child from cyber crime in the 2006 law on information and communication technology law. Journalists have to know the laws and read them carefully to perform their responsibility properly.

## **C. SENSITIVITY**

### **WHAT IS SENSITIVITY?**

Imagine a situation: two siblings were playing with a knife. The 7-year-old boy accidentally cut his 3-year-old sister with the knife and she bled to death. Will you report this incident as "brother kills sister?" To do so would be extremely insensitive - this was an accident. Think about the age of the children...

This is sensitivity, and it is very important for a journalist. Generally everyone under 18 years demands special protection and consideration as a child, but a journalist should be sensitive in all aspects of their work.

There are many dimensions of sensitivity:

- Understanding and interpreting an incident considering the particular situation, judging the real news value
- Upholding the truth and at the same time being responsible for all the facts
- Ensuring that every child will get the same consideration/treatment
- Reflecting on the child's best interest, looking at the possible risks and harms to the child
- Understanding the necessity of protecting the children and being aware of legal aspect of children's protection
- Taking into account ethical considerations while talking to children to gather information
- Choosing appropriate photos and words about children

- Being responsible after publishing a news
- Not being influenced by prejudice: often journalists' negative attitude or prejudice against a segment of the society show in their report; journalists should be aware of their own prejudices and be careful about these.
- Respecting the dignity of the child: many reports have elements that belittle a child or affect the dignity and self-esteem of the child.
- Avoiding social stigmatization: words used or negative attitudes reflected in a report on children can reinforce the social stigma, which already affects them.

Many reports demand human interest elements. You have to move the reader and make him react by your description and language. However do not try to create sympathy in readers' mind when it is unnecessary or meaningless. Also do not patronize when it comes to vulnerable or marginalized children.

The findings of MRDI/UNICEF survey show that much more needs to be done to protect children in media reports and to align current journalists' practice with the ethical principles highlighted in Chapter 4.

## **STUDY FINDINGS**

- The MRDI/UNICEF study shows that in one-third of the reports on sexual repression, reporters mentioned the victims' addresses and other information that revealed their identity. In some reports, the reporters even mentioned their names.
- Similarly, in one-third of the reports on children involved in anti-social activities, their names were mentioned clearly. Other information identifying them was also present. In some reports, their photos are even published. In one case, a suspected child offender was identified as the offender and name and address were found in some reports. In cases where a child victim of repression is dead, reporters do not hesitate to identify them. This is very common.
- The study reveals that television reporters do not cover such issues. They ignore the incidents of child repression. There were some

reports on children involved in unlawful activities.

- The MRDI/UNICEF survey shows that stereotypes in the portrayal of children are often used. Some stereotypes are subtle while others are blatant. Many reports contain negative, stereotypical or generalised comments about children, especially street children.
- In most reports, children are portrayed as passive victims and unimportant characters in the story.
- Most of the reports about children are dealing with negative incidents, or about adults' opinions about children in discussions and seminars. Children are not considered as active participants in these events and their views are absent in most of the reports.
- Boys become the subject of news when they are involved in crime. Girls are depicted mostly as victims of repression.
- The survey shows that, often, when reporters find violent/gory elements in a story, they get over-excited and sensationalise the report. They do not consider that many children will read/watch the report. In many reports, there were detailed descriptions of crimes. These types of reports can create panic among child audiences/readers or lead them to commit similar offences.
- Photos of dead bodies are often published in newspapers. Sometimes the photos are gory and terrifying. Some newspapers regularly publish photos of dead bodies recovered after launch accidents. Sometimes they even publish pictures of decomposed and bloodstained bodies. Sometimes the photos of raped and killed girls are published.
- The language and words used in a report carry certain connotations. In many reports, journalists use unnecessary qualifying words and adjectives to describe a child (either victim or offender) and these adjectives are often disrespectful to children (such as Tokai, crippled, destitute, helpless, etc)
- In Bangla newspapers, journalists sometimes use certain words to narrate the gravity of a rape or assault. However, these words create sex appeal and often present the victim in a disgraceful way.

- Reports of an alleged incident of rape by a high official: a number of newspapers published this report with a photo of the accused. The reports were mainly based on allegations and a case filed with the police. There was no proof. Some of the newspapers tried to sensationalise the incident by using certain words. There was enough information present in the reports to identify the alleged victim. Another report claimed that a girl was raped and that the alleged rapist made a pornographic video of the incident and uploaded it on internet. Some newspapers even mentioned the address of the website.
- The survey found many reports on drug addiction with detailed descriptions on how to use the drug, how it feels to take the drug, and where the drug is available. Even there were photos showing children smoking and inhaling glue. The captions identify them as Tokai (street children) giving a stereotyped impression about this section of society.
- In a report on a child sex worker, the reporter tried to create sympathy for the girl but used inappropriate language that could actually put her at risk of further attacks.
- In many reports, street children are described as 'Tokai' (one who collects waste and garbage from the streets). When a child was found involved in conflict with the law, journalists tended to use this word. It gives a negative impression.
- In one report, a 17-year-old boy was described as a "hired killer." Although the report was based on allegations by law enforcers, the reporter presented the boy as a confirmed criminal. The report contained the name of the boy and a photo of him along with his father's profession and detailed address.
- Stalking is a common phenomenon in Bangladeshi society. The accused are branded as "stalkers" in the media and a negative impression is created about them, often in the absence of proof.
- In the case of the suicide of a girl who had been the victim of stalking or harassment, this incident is sometimes reported in the media in such a way that others would think that suicide is the only solution to such a situation.

- Stalking is a common phenomenon in Bangladesh society. The accused are branded as "stalkers" in the media and a negative impression is created about them. This is logical as the media people always tend to protect the interest of the victims. But they should also think about the consequence of such "labelling."

## **SOME TIPS**

### Identifying the victims/accused

- ✓ Don't publish the photo of a sexually abused victim, a child involved in sex work or a child involved in crime. There are many other cases when publishing the photo will put the child at risk, you are the best judge. In some special cases, blurred photos of such children can be used. But that photo should not have any detail that will help readers identify the child.
- ✓ Don't mention his/her name and any information that could identify him/her.

Don't mention detailed address. You can mention the name of the upazila or at best the union. In case of a small town, don't mention the name of the area.

- ✓ Don't mention the names of parents or neighbours.
- ✓ Don't mention the name of the school. Don't say in which class the child reads. Just mention the age of the child.
- ✓ Don't identify the rape victim even if she is dead.

### **Interviewing a victim**

Be extra cautious if you interview a victim child.

- ✓ Think about the immediate and long-term impact of the interview.
- ✓ It is better to have an adult person accompanying the interviewee.
- ✓ Think about the mental stress of a rape victim during interview.
- ✓ Take experts' help, if you need, before interview.

## **Rape**

- ✓ Don't mention the name of the victim but also the person accused of rape if there is no clear information and the case has not yet been brought to justice.
- ✓ If the accused is a child, don't identify him/her.
- ✓ Think about the legal aspects and process.
- ✓ Don't use any word that can stigmatize a rape victim.
- ✓ Never describe an incident of rape in a way that indicates the victim was to some extent responsible for it.
- ✓ Don't use any sexually explicit statement.

## **Children in conflict with law**

- Don't think that the accused children are "criminals."
- Don't say they deserve "punishment."
- You can write "suspect" or "suspected to be involved in crime."
- Don't put all the blame of the crime on him/her.
- While taking interview, don't undermine or scold him/her.
- Don't depend on information given by only law enforcers.
- Be extra-sensitive when the victim and the accused are both children.
- Avoid media trial and contempt of court

## **D. NEWS THROUGH THE EYES OF CHILDREN**

As part of the MRDI/UNICEF study, two groups of children between 12 and 17 took part in focus group discussions (FGD) on media content. One discussion was attended by underprivileged children and another by children with middle class background.

The children discussed media content and expressed their views about the Bangladeshi media in general. The children said they regularly watch television and read newspapers, especially when children and children's issues are featured.

The following is a summary of issues raised by the children in each of these discussions:

### **Underprivileged children**

Ten children who reside in an NGO shelter home for children living on the street took part in this dialogue.

- There are not enough reports in the media on children.
- The press mostly reports negative issues involving children. For example, when a child is involved in mugging or theft, it is publicised by the media. But the journalists do not report how poverty forces children to engage in such anti-social activities. Therefore, the media should investigate the reasons behind such incidents and file more balanced reports.
- Children get depressed watching or reading some news. For example, acid throwing, rape and torture of children, exploitation, child labour, drug addiction and peddling, torture of domestic workers, children denied medical care, etc. Also, the media sometimes conceals such incidents.
- The media should highlight the successes and achievements of children more often. Children want to see more positive stories about themselves so that other children are encouraged. Such reports will also discourage children from wrongdoing.
- Journalists should not use certain words that demean children. For example, the word 'tokai' is widely used in Bangla newspapers to describe children who live in the streets.
- Children feel sad when the media shows the murder and trafficking of children. The media should not show horrifying scenes or publish gory photos. Some participants, however, said that these reports could force child offenders to realise the consequences of crimes.

- Media reports are not always credible. Reporters distort the incidents. There is wide misconception about children in the media reports. Sometimes reports are incomplete. Reporters must talk with more people to build more complete reports. Sometimes reports do identify the real story behind an incident.

### **Middle class children**

Ten children from middle class families in Dhaka and Gazipur took part in this discussion.

- Newspapers and television stations highlight news about prominent persons. Politics dominates media content. Children and their affairs are ignored. This indicates that children are not given enough importance and that adults are not interested in children's issues.
- The children's organisations are mostly inactive. This is one reason why children's issues are not highlighted in the media.
- Children want to know what is happening in society. They should be made aware of the issues that directly or indirectly impact them.
- Media should report more on issues like child marriage, child labour, trafficking, abuse of children, absence of playgrounds, etc.
- Sometimes children are abused in their families. In many families, girl children fall victim to discrimination. Their right to education is often ignored. The media should highlight these issues.
- Children's views are absent in most reports. They want to express their views.
- Many reports are not credible. There are inconsistencies in facts and figures.
- Children get depressed watching horrifying images. If such photos are published on the front page, children do not want to see the inside pages to look for comics or other items of interest. Television programmes on crime are not suitable for child viewers.
- Children are forced by adults to engage in drug peddling or other petty crimes. Children are not at all responsible for this, but the

media reports do not indicate this. The responsibility of the adults should be exposed.

- Media reports sometimes make generalisations about a whole section of children, terming them criminals or drug addicts. Journalists should not do this.
- Child rights should be ensured in light of the UNCRC.

## Dilemmas and decisions

Let's imagine some situation and see how a journalist who is aware of ethical principles will deal with them...

### Situation 1

**One of your friends works with an NGO dealing with HIV/AIDS. He told you that they are currently looking after a teenage sex worker, Hena, who is HIV positive. Hena is now in their custody. Your friend informed you that Hena became a sex worker after her boyfriend cheated her and that it was a very sad story. He also said that you can talk to Hena, but as an NGO worker, not a journalist. Her photo is also available. Your friend said that Hena needs antiretroviral drugs, but she cannot afford them. The price of these drugs is a problem for many people.**

- ✓ Will you talk to Hena hiding your identity? What is the logic behind your decision?
- ✓ Will you report on the story? If yes, from what angle? Which theme will you focus on? What information will you present or not present? What is the logic behind your decisions?

Firstly, however important the report might be, you cannot deceive the girl and talk to her using a fake identity. If she does not give consent, you cannot report on her plight. Without her permission, asking her anything will be an intrusion into her privacy and an unethical practice.

Why do you want to report on her? Is it really essential? Hena's story is definitely interesting, but this cannot be the only justification for your report. The best angle for this report is to focus on the limited availability of antiretroviral for poor HIV/AIDS victims and suggest how the problem might be solved. Solving this problem is important - so

reporting on it is important.

This will be the main theme of the report. If you cite Hena as an example (with her permission) you should concentrate on her plight in regard to her illness. How she had become a sex worker is unnecessary here. Furthermore, if you introduce her as a sex worker, it may give the impression that only sex workers are infected by HIV, so you should talk to several people from different sections of society all living with HIV/AIDS.

Ask your friend to talk to Hena, and if she agrees to have a conversation with you, again seek her consent after explaining to her who you are and what is the objective of this conversation. You will need to hide her real identity in your report and avoid publishing her picture as she could be subject to discrimination and stigmatisation after the report is published. You need to explain this to her so she feels comfortable.

Make her feel at ease and do not ask any questions which may hurt or embarrass her. If she feels uneasy about any topic, don't question her any further on it. Be sympathetic to her but don't be patronising.

See if more people living with HIV/AIDS agree to talk with you. If you can interview several people, you can cite the examples of Hena and others in your report. But don't mention their names, or add photos or other information. If any adult with a clear understanding of the situation agrees to be identified, and if you think there is no risk to him/her, then you may choose to disclose their identity. But by no means identify any children.

Remember also that many people do not realize the power of the media and may not measure the consequences of their identity being revealed to a public audience.

If nobody else with HIV/AIDS agrees to talk to you, you'll have to complete the report by consulting with other relevant people: specialists, doctors, policymakers, etc. If any of these people give you any personal information about their patients, be careful not to use it.

## **Situation 2**

**Ten-year-old Tahrira cannot walk as a result of polio. She uses a wheelchair. She goes to school and is the best student in her class. She has also come first in an international art competition.**

- ✓ If you report on her, will you say she is in a wheelchair? Or will you focus on her talents? Which will get more focus if you want to highlight both sides?
- ✓ Will you seek her permission to mention her wheelchair issue? If she refuses, will you accept her decision?

It is unnecessary to mention someone's physical disability unless it is an essential part of the report. That would be discriminatory. But mentioning Tahrira's disability has some strong logic - it may encourage other disabled children.

You cannot mention her wheelchair without her consent. She is a minor, so her guardian's permission will also be required.

You should be careful that her disability does not become the main theme of the report. The main theme of this report is her achievement, her winning the award. Even if you get permission to mention her disability, focus on her achievements. Write the report with care, and be careful that your report is not patronising in tone.

## **Situation 3**

**Billal and Shamim work in a glass factory. They are under 12 years of age. After having a conversation with them at their house you have learned that 10-12 more children work in the factory. They are involved in melting glass and other hazardous jobs. They have to work 12 to 14 hours a day. Factory owner Rahim Chaklader rebukes and beats them up. Billal's forehead bears scars from a severe beating. They say they have no alternative to doing this job. Both have lost their fathers and their mothers work as domestic help. They tell you that there are more factories like theirs in the area.**

- ✓ How will you write a report on this? Will you try to enter the factory to investigate?
- ✓ Will you take photos? Will you publish photos of Billah and Shamim? How will you take their permission? Justify your decisions.

Firstly, it is important to write a report on this issue, but there is a high risk of danger to Billal and Shamim, so you have to be very careful.

Take your time in preparing this report. You should enquire about other factories in that area, and talk to more child labourers so you can get a complete picture. But be discreet and talk to children away from their workplaces.

Consent is required from all children involved and from their parents. You will have to introduce yourself and explain your objectives.

There is no question of mentioning any child's name in this report. Remember the scar on Billal's forehead? You must be aware of every possible risk to them.

Try to enter the factory. Don't identify any child during conversations with the owner. Don't say anything so that it gives them the impression you were informed by the child labourers. You can take photos from inside of the factory or secretly from the outside, but make sure that no child is identifiable.

Keep an eye on the children's situation after publishing the report. Give them your phone number and tell them to call you if they need.

The complication in this case is the children's obligation to earn some money. Try to arrange for them to go to school while being involved with light work. In your report, talk to organisations/authorities concerned about this issue. It is morally correct that you should take some action to improve the lives of these boys as well as making them the subjects of your report.

Appendix-2 includes a list of more dilemmas.

## **DILEMMAS ARE INHERENT IN ETHICS**

Ethics demand active consideration. There is no 'one size fits all', and each new situation will require you to again consider how to best act ethically. If you face a dilemma you cannot solve, talk to your editor or supervisor and discuss the issues together.

Reporters always have to face ethical dilemmas. It is expected to occur. In that case, a reporter will need to refer to the principles of ethical journalism.

Remember a few considerations regarding dilemmas about news centred on children.

## **PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO KNOW**

Strong dilemmas arise from the question of people's right to know. The priority, according to ethical journalism, is not to harm the child.

It must be the consideration of a very exceptional public interest that can allow a journalist to violate this principle.

Your objective is to reveal the truth without harming the child.

## **CHILDREN'S BEST INTEREST**

To take a decision when facing a dilemma, always consider the best interest of the child.

A child's opinion has to be taken about his/her best interest and that opinion should be given importance according to his/her age, his/her capacity in making a judgement and sense of responsibility.

Opinion of the children's guardians should also be taken into account. But if the children disagree with them, take note of it and exert your sense of responsibility.

## **SENSITIVE CASES**

Dilemmas may often arise when a journalist wants to reveal a fact and at the same time needs to respect privacy and to hide the identity of those involved.

## **TAKING COUNSEL**

If you face a difficult dilemma, discuss it with the editorial team and experienced colleagues instead of taking a decision alone.

## **JUSTIFICATION OF DECISIONS**

Also think about the logic of news related decisions and their consequences. Weigh the pros and cons, the benefit and loss. If the logic of your decision is not clear to you, errors are likely to occur.

## **RESPONSIBILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY**

Remain responsible and accountable. In spite of your carefulness you may unwillingly make mistakes in your work. Admit your mistakes and correct them.

## **COMPETITION AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS**

Sometimes you or your institution may take a decision which goes against journalism ethics in order to make a quick commercial profit. There are real pressures from the market especially when other media houses adopt this type of commercial approach without much respect for ethical principles.

It is important however to remember and to remind others that ethical journalism will eventually gain readers' support in the long term.

## Ethical guidelines

It is you who will write this chapter. You will prepare guidelines for yourself and set out ways to ensure accountability and responsibility. We will only provide some pointers to consider...

### **GUIDELINES: BANGLADESH SITUATION**

The survey conducted by MRDI and UNICEF found that codified guidelines for the practice of ethical journalism are rare in Bangladesh.

State-run television and radio have rules and regulations, but these cannot be termed professional ethical guidelines. Furthermore, nothing is mentioned about children in these regulations.

The survey shows only one (the national daily Prothom Alo) out of 14 private national media houses has formal and complete guidelines for their journalists which focus mainly on reporting procedures. There is some mention of children in a separate section on women and about protecting of the victims of crime.

### **PRESS COUNCIL**

The Bangladesh Press Council is a statutory body assigned to deal with the complaints of the citizens of Bangladesh against journalists. The stipulated objective of the Press Council is to ensure freedom of the media and maintain/improve its quality.

- The Bangladesh Press Council formulated a code of conduct for newspapers, news agencies and journalists in 1993 which was amended in 2002.
- Its 25 rules and regulations were drafted in an authoritative tone. None of these focuses on children. Two of these may seem remotely relevant in the context of children. Rule 13 says vulgar, defaming or

- cruel news or photos cannot be published. Rule 23 says that if anything happens which is harmful to society, it should be highlighted. But that serious consideration is required before publishing news/photos about relations between men and women.
- Two oaths for journalists and publishers have been included in the guidelines. Rule 24 says that journalists are bound to take the oath and sign it before their editor when taking up their duty as a journalist.
- The last rule says that the publisher is legally bound to take the second vow and sign it.

However it seems that media professionals do not give much attention to this institution (or its guidelines). The reason may be that the press council itself does not make its work known to people. The annual report of the Press Council for 2007 was published in November 2008. Contacted by the researchers in 2009, the Press Council gave the same report. It was found that the council heard a total of 15 cases in 2007 and received only 10 complaints from the public.

### **SOME TO-DO'S FOR YOU**

- Discuss with your colleagues whether you think a code of conduct is necessary. Take your decision to your editor/supervisor.
- Read the constitutions of the journalists' unions/ associations /organisations / press clubs if you are involved with one.
- Enquire at your workplace as to whether there is a code of conduct. Propose one if there is not.
- Prepare a code of ethics or guidelines for yourself. It is better if prepared by a group of like-minded journalists/colleagues. Prepare both general guidelines and special rules for children. Because without abiding by overall ethical norms, it is not possible to practice ethical journalism for children. Refer to general guidelines in chapters 3 and 4 of this book.
- If you prepare guidelines for a whole institution, they should be clear and detailed. If prepared for your own personal use, then they may be shorter and only include the main issues.

- To get a clear idea of the structure of guidelines, see the code of ethics/conduct of SPJ, NUJ and IFJ in the websites given in Appendix-4.
- See the guidelines of UNICEF about reporting on child affairs in Appendix-3.

### **LAST BUT NOT LEAST**

But no code can guarantee ethical journalism. This can only be achieved by journalists following their own ethical sense and conscience and taking their responsibility seriously. Self-criticism is crucial among journalists - to improve their own work and for the overall betterment of their profession.

## **Annexure 1**

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### **List: In terms of child related coverage**

(This list was used for identifying child-related coverage for the survey of MRDI/UNICEF, 2009)

#### **A. Abuse and Exploitation**

1. Sexual abuse/assessment
2. Incest
3. Trafficking
4. Kidnapping
5. Physical abuse/harassment
6. Psychological abuse/harassment
7. School Corporal punishment
8. Acid Attack
9. Killing
10. Suicide

#### **B. Vulnerability**

1. Vulnerable children-street
2. Vulnerable children-sex-work
3. Vulnerable children-domestic work

4. Vulnerable Children-Other hazardous labor
5. Vulnerable Children-Child marriage/mothers
6. Disability
7. Other Marginalised Groups-Adivasis/Scheduled Caste/sex worker's children/Gypsies etc.
8. Death by Accident
9. Missing

### **C. Children in Conflict with the Law**

1. Drug abuse and peddling
2. Violence and other 'crime'
3. Police handling/Police Custody/ Custody/Justice
4. Shelter Homes/Correction Centers

### **D. Rights**

1. Rescue/Rehabilitation
2. Education
3. Nutrition- mother and child
4. Health care
5. Death from Health-related Reasons HIV/STDs
6. Reproductive health
7. Child birth registration
8. Recreation/sports/culture
9. Freedom of expression
10. Legal support/Aspects Children associations
11. Survival
12. Lifestyle

## **E. Children and Governance**

1. Govt. Policies related to children/allocations and misuse
2. Announcements by Govt./state dignitaries
3. Govt. Allocations/misuse
4. Govt. special institutions for children

## **F. Success/Achievements**

1. Creativity
2. Innovation
3. Social Contribution
4. Brilliance
5. Positive others

## **Annexure 2**

### **Some Ethical Dilemmas**

The following situations are imaginary. But reporters may face similar dilemmas during the course of their work. You could add to this list from your own experience. The benefit of reflecting on these ethical dilemmas is that it will fine tune a reporter's understanding of ethical practices and help him or her make quick decisions when working on a report.

#### **1.**

Eight-year-old Sohag saw his father Abdur Rashid murder his mother Kamrunnahar. The investigating officer says he will arrange for you to talk to the boy.

- ✓ Will you talk to him? Will you tell your fellow reporters about this? If someone wants to accompany you, will you take them along? If not, why not?
- ✓ You have gone to talk to the boy. Will you first make sure he wants to talk - will you ask for his consent? He seems bewildered. He doesn't give coherent answers to your questions and only responds after repeated questioning. What will you do? What would be the reason for your decision?

#### **2.**

Notorious local criminal 'Side-off' Babul has been killed in RAB crossfire. He earned the nickname after one side of his face was blown off while making a bomb. Journalists have been allowed to photograph his bullet-riddled body. You learn that most newspapers will print the images prominently.

- ✓ What should your newspaper do? What is the logic behind the decision?

### 3.

Several days after the BDR mutiny at its Dhaka HQ, the bodies of senior army officer Colonel Jalil Ahmed and his wife Asheka Ahmed have been raised from the grave. You go to their house and see blood stains on the floor of the bedroom. A torn salwar kamiz lies by the side of the bed. You take photographs of everything. The victims have two young children who were outside the HQ area on the day of the mutiny and are now staying with relatives.

- ✓ Will you write about the scene in the house? What photographs will you use? What will be the ethical considerations? What are the areas where you think you need to be cautious?

### 4.

Four days after a launch sank, rescuers have recovered the bloated body of a child. As the divers drag the body ashore, the child's mother, recognising her from the bangles on one wrist, starts lamenting the death of her daughter. You take photographs of the scene, including close-ups of the grieving mother.

- ✓ Will you ask permission before taking the photographs? What photographs will you use, if any? What about photos of other dead bodies? What is the logic? How will you write the report?

### 5.

Fifteen-year-old Parul Akter has been gang-raped. She was kidnapped while on her way to school by Rafiq, Golam, Alam and Shafiq - four young men from the same area. According to the girl, they confined her to a house and repeatedly violated her. Locals found her naked in a nearby jute field. The accused have absconded. The girl is a student of class nine at the sole non-government high school in the area. She stood first in the annual examination last year. Her sister is a student of class seven at the same school. Her father Shafiqul Islam owns a grocery store in the local market. Their mother is a housewife. The couple has four children. The family lives on the north side of Morolpara in Rasulpur village. Parul is a beautiful girl and physically mature for her age. Some of the neighbours have secretly told you that she used to talk and laugh

with boys in the market or on the road. The girl herself went to the police station and filed the case. She has spoken to you about her ordeal.

- ✓ If she is willing to talk, is it alright to interview her and will the information she gives be acceptable? How will you write this report? What will you investigate, and to whom will you talk? How much of the above information will you use? What would be the reason behind the decisions?

## 6.

Momena Khatun is ten years old. Her father Abdur Rahim is manager of a business concern called Harun Enterprise. He regularly rapes his daughter. Unmochon, an NGO, has revealed this in a report. Their investigation has exposed many such cases. The NGO has made public their report through a press conference without disclosing the names of the victims. But you have discovered the identities of several boys and girls through a source within the organisation. You have received many other case studies from the NGO. The officials of the organisation have told you about the measures they are taking to save children from such abuse.

- ✓ What kind of report will you do? How much information will you use and why? Which side of the story will you stress in your report?

## 7.

Well-known gynecologist Abdul Halim has been sued by his patient Susmita Haldar on charges of sexual abuse during treatment. While researching the story, you come across more such allegations. Dr Abdul Halim has denied the accusations. In private life, he has married three times and his ex-wives have many complaints against him. He has seven children with his three wives. Among them, Moumita, Shilpi, Arun and Tarun are pre-teens.

- ✓ How much of Abdul Halim's family life will you bring out in the report? If this report is published, it may harm his young children. Do you think the effect on his children should be kept in mind while writing the report? Think about the issues.

## 8.

Arifa, Momena and Sharifa - three teenagers hailing from Shibbash village of Dihi Union in Sharsha Upazilla, Jessore have been brought back to the country after being rescued from Sonagachi brothel in Kolkata, India.

- ✓ You have obtained their photographs, their names, father's names and addresses. Will you do the report? How? Will you publish the photographs? What are the reasons behind your decisions?

In another incident, three 10-11 year old girls - Nabila, Kamini and Rashida - have been rescued. Police and the NGO involved with the rescue say they were working as slave labourers at a bangles factory in Delhi. Their parents could not be traced.

- ✓ Will you publish a detailed report with photographs? If so, why?

## 9.

The children of sex workers at Daulatdia brothel are studying at a secure facility run by the NGO KKS. You speak to several girls - Hasnahena, Sumi, Shabana and Abeda. - about their hopes and dreams. You have photographed their everyday activity and class work.

- ✓ Have they agreed to be photographed, and did you ask permission? What should you tell them about your report? Will you use their real names and photos? Will you ask about their mothers?

## 10.

Nurunnahar, a teenage student in the Masterpara area of town, has been the victim of an acid attack. The reason behind the attack is tragic - she rejected the romantic advances of a local man. Her mother and sister, emotionally distraught, tell you the long story. You have taken photographs - gruesome ones. You find out that there is little prospect for proper treatment, with the doctor speaking about many complications.

- ✓ What will be the focus of the report? How will you cover this case? Will you tell the victim's family about the report? What kind of photograph will you choose, if any?

## 11.

The police are investigating some Bangladeshi internet pornography websites. These websites are using girls aged 14-15 years old. You have carried out an independent probe and downloaded some indirect photographs, where the faces are blurred. They do not appear to be hardcore pornography, but the intention is clear from the nature of images that have been used.

- ✓ Will you use the name of the website in your report? Will you publish the photographs as proof? Please give reasons.

## 12.

You are writing a story on crime among street children, locally known as "Tokai". You have been researching the story in the field for a long time and have spoken to many sources. Some of the Tokai have told you about stealing, carrying weapons for local goons and picketing during strikes. The police have given you the photos of three young delinquents Abul, Munir and Rasul, and informed you that they are hired killers. They are under arrest right now and have admitted murdering people for a few hundred Taka. According to the police, they are dangerous killers.

- ✓ When you talk to the Tokai how will you introduce yourself, or would it be better to hide your identity? What reason will you give for talking to them? What information will you use in the report? What photos will you use? What realities will you highlight in your story? Will you use their names in your report? Will you share the information with the police? Please give reasons for your decisions.

## 13.

You have received a tip-off from police detectives regarding Yaba business in the city. You have been given detailed information such as where the drug is available, who imports the ingredients, what kind of equipment is used to manufacture the drug and what the costs are. You have also been told how the addicts obtain the drug and where they meet to get high.

- ✓ Will you report on this? How? What angle will you focus on? What is your logic?

## 14.

Twelve-year-old Niloy was always alone at home after school since both his parents work. He had become friends with two local boys slightly older than himself - 15-year-old Anu and Selim. The three of them used to watch pornographic videos on a VCP after the housemaid left. One day his parents returned to find Niloy's body lying on the floor in a pool of blood - his throat had been slit. The VCP was missing. The police were able to arrest Anu, who admitted that they had killed Niloy for the VCP and Niloy's expensive camera. The sensational case is the talk of town. Some people start saying that the parents were negligent and should take some of the blame.

- ✓ How will you report the story? What will you write about Anu and Selim, and what will you leave out? What are the reasons? Will you write about the sense of responsibility of the parents, and will you question them about it? If so, why?

## 15.

Rabiul Hossain, son of a day labourer, has received a "golden GPA-5" in the SSC examination. The family is extremely poor, and the boy had to struggle to find the means to study. He dreams about a bright future, but lack of financial means may prevent him from going to college.

- ✓ How will you report this story? What aspects will you stress? What should you be careful about?

## 16.

Choton, 10, was playing in the yard with his sister Anjum, 5. Choton had a sharp Da or kitchen machete and while playing, struck his sister with it. Anjum died. The grief-stricken parents are blaming the boy while the neighbours tell you that the boy is very cruel by nature. They give you several examples of his cruelty.

- ✓ How will you report this incident? How will you describe the death of the girl?

## 17.

Sunrise is one of the best and most prestigious English medium schools in the city. Children from some of the best-known families are enrolled here. You find out from Asif Chowdhury, a student of class eight, that many of the students are addicted to Yaba and other drugs. Asif tells you that senior students such as Hasanur Rahman, Abir Mustafa and Rafiqul Bari peddle the drugs inside the school. When you speak to Principal Rehana Parvin, she admits the problem and says they are taking steps to stop it. She requests that you don't publish the report.

- ✓ Will you write the report? If so, what additional information will you look for? Who will you interview? How will you portray them in the report? Think about the issues.

## **Annexure 3**

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### **UNICEF Guidelines for Reporting on Children**

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.

#### **A. 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 needed to ensure 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.

## **B. 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.

## **C. 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,

e. A child combatant, or former child combatant who is holding a weapon or weapons.

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 former child combatant who is not holding a weapon but may be at risk,

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:

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.

6. 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.

## **Annexure 4**

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### Information sources and websites

#### **1. Ethics in journalism: Overall and child-related**

- ***Melvin Mencher's News Reporting and Writing, 11th Edition; P. 555;*** Mencher, Melvin; McGraw-Hill, New York, USA; 2008
- ***Children's Rights and Journalism Practice-A Rights-based Perspective;*** Syllabus commissioned by UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS); UNICEF-Dublin Institute of Technology; 2007  
Web: [http://elearning-events.dit.ie/unicef/html/unit2/2\\_4\\_4.htm](http://elearning-events.dit.ie/unicef/html/unit2/2_4_4.htm)  
Here child rights and 'the responsibilities in journalism' can be found along with the ethics.
- ***Child Rights and the Media/ Putting Children in the Right;*** Guidelines for journalists and media professionals; International Federation of Journalists; IFJ-Brussels, Belgium, 2002  
e-mail: [ifj@ifj.org](mailto:ifj@ifj.org)/ website: [www.ifj.org](http://www.ifj.org); Website of International Federation of journalists. They have separate ethics for children.
- **[www.nuj.org.uk](http://www.nuj.org.uk);**  
The code of conduct of UK and Ireland journalists' union can be found here.
- **[www.spj.org](http://www.spj.org);**  
The code of conduct of UK journalists' association can be found here.
- **[www.pcc.org.uk](http://www.pcc.org.uk);**  
Code of conduct and followings of UK Press complaints commission can be found here.
- **[www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines](http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines);**  
Guidelines of BBC broadcasting, along with required web-tabs can be checked here.

— **www.poynter.org--Poynter;**

Poynter Institute of UK is a journalism training institution. They have their own code of ethics. Also, various discussions related to code of journalist ethics can be found in their blog.

— **<http://www.rjionline.org/mas/codes-of-ethics.php>;**

Journalist Code of conduct and ethics of various countries can be found here in the website of Donald W Rendalls institute in UK Missouri University.

— ***Bangladesh Press Council/Annual Report 2007***—Dhaka, November 2008;

The Press council's code of conduct can be found here

— **<http://presscouncil.nic.in/norms.htm>;**

The Press council's code of conduct of India can be found here

— **www.crin.org;**

Some instructions on child reporting ethics in Europe can be found here

## **2. Children in Bangladesh News Media**

— **Baseline Study: Children in Bangladesh News Media;** Tahmina et al, The facts of Journalism in Bangladesh and children- a Baseline survey, MRDI/UNICEF 2009 .

This survey analyzed coverage on children from 12 vernacular dailies and three TV channels in the period of June-August 2009. Apart from these, questionnaire surveys were done nation-wide among reporters and gatekeepers. Two Focus Group discussions between gatekeepers and the children were organized too.

— Training module Ethical reporting on children abiding by journalistic ethics, MRDI/UNICEF 2010 (unpublished)

### 3. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

- [http://www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_30225](http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30225)
- [http://www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_30229.html.html](http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30229.html.html)
- [http://www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_30160.html](http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30160.html)
- <http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/>; **20 YEARS OF UNCRC**  
Child rights/UN Convention on the Rights of the Child- Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)/Rights Cluster/UNICEF 1998 and UN CRC - Ministry of Social Welfare and UNICEF (year of publication unknown)/ These two publications have the whole convention in easy Bengali.
- [http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/knowledgecentre\\_6251.htm](http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/knowledgecentre_6251.htm);  
The last report by the government on the implementation of the CRC in Bangladesh can be found here. "Third and Fourth Periodic Report of the Government of Bangladesh under the CRC (August, 2007)"
- [http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/knowledgecentre\\_5809.htm](http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/knowledgecentre_5809.htm);  
This document is issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and includes its observations and recommendations after reviewing the third and fourth periodic report on the CRC implementation presented by the Government of Bangladesh. The title is Concluding observations of the CRC Committee to Bangladesh June 2009.
- [http://www.unicef.org/magic/resources/resources\\_for\\_journalists.htm](http://www.unicef.org/magic/resources/resources_for_journalists.htm);  
Many useful links and issues can be found here

### 4. State Laws

- Children Act 1974- Md. Ansar Ali Khan, Bangladesh Book Law Company (Third editon) 2009
- Bangladesh Press Act and guidelines- Abu Naser, Compilation by Gaziul Haq, Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC), University press ltd. (1996)

#### 4. Others

- **<http://www.unicef.org.bd> and [www.unicef.org/bangladesh/knowledgecentre.html](http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/knowledgecentre.html);**  
These UNICEF web links provide various information and publications on women and children situation in Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007- National Institute of Population and Research and Training (NIPORT), Mitra and Associates and ICF Macro International, 2009, Dhaka, Bangladesh and Calverton Maryland, UK
- Bangladesh Population Consensus -2001, National series, first part, analytical report, October 2007. Bangladesh Bureau of statistics, Ministry of planning, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka





Truthfulness and other essential elements of a news report are part of journalism ethics. In addition to this, there are responsibilities towards people involved in the news, the general people, and the readers and audience. Ethics of journalism take shape with a combination of such professional considerations, good taste and conscience, humanity and sense of responsibility.

