



Save the Children

Comprehensive Media Policy to Ensure Children's Right



Air Vice Marshal Mohammed Rafiqul Islam
Member of Parliament

Message

The broadcast media always has a great impact on children's lives, especially to their mental development. Bangladesh is a developing country and we have many difficulties. Even then the government is focusing on 'Digital Bangladesh' which will ensure access to different media for people. The present government also has a mandate to establish children's right in the country and it has been designing and implementing several program in this regard. The Media is also playing an important role to raise awareness, especially on children and women rights.

A specific and child sensitive media policy can be helpful as it will offer guidance for media people to deal with child related issues. Unethical portrayal of children will reduce once there is a guideline. Combined effort from the government and civil society in this regard will bring the ultimate benefit for the children as their right to information and media will be honored.



Michael McGrath
Country Director
Save the Children

Message

Save the Children has recently undertaken a study titled "Analyzing Broadcast Media Policies in the light of Child Rights". We must remember that children have the right to get enough information from media, especially the broadcast media and at the same time they have the right to be protected from any harmful information from media. This is an essential part for their mental and cognitive development. The broadcast media can always play a great role for establishing children's right in the country through documentaries, message dissemination, educational program etc. A comprehensive media policy can be a stepping stone in this regard. I hope that children in Bangladesh will be able to enjoy the benefits of a child sensitive media policy.



Shaheen Akter Dolly
Executive Director
Nari Maitree

Message

Nari Maitree is a women development organization working to improve the condition of the disadvantaged people particularly women, children and adolescent & youth by empowering them for establishing an equitable society. Children are the major component to create that equitable society as they consist half of the population. Children are the future leaders and it is very important that they grow to their full potential. It is necessary for their development that children receive positive information from media and also they can use media to advocate for their own issues like education, protection health and nutrition etc. With the active cooperation from the mainstream media, children and their advocates can do best for the establishment of child rights in Bangladesh.



Birgit Lundbak
Director,
Child Rights
Governance
Save the Children

Message

Save the Children is an organization working for the rights of children. In this endeavor, we consider the civil society, especially the media to be an important factor. Save the Children perceives media as a major stakeholder for establishing children's rights. It also believes in children's right to participate in the mainstream media through which they can raise their voice on the issues related to their lives. I believe that when included, a comprehensive media policy will create scope for children to participate more in the mainstream media. I hope the government will consider the recommendations from children and adults and develop a child sensitive media policy in near future.

SAVE the Children and Nari Maitree jointly organized a roundtable discussion on December 15, 2011 titled "Analyzing Broadcast Media Policies in the light of Child Rights" to disseminate the findings of a study on existing media policies supported by Save the Children. Shameem Reza, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, and Media Policy Analyst presented the Key Note Paper. Air Vice Marshal Mohammed Rafiqul Islam, Member of Parliament was present as chief Guest while Birgit Lundbak, Director, Child Rights Governance (CRG), Save the Children delivered the welcome address. Ms. Shaheen Akter, Executive Director, Nari Maitree provided vote of thanks. The round table also aimed to draw recommendation on the issue. We publish some discussion points and recommendations here.

Children's right to media

Despite government and NGO interventions and certain achievements have been made, there is still long way to go for establishing children's right in Bangladesh. Thousands of children are still facing barriers to healthy and safer lives. Children in Bangladesh continue to be victims of injustice, discrimination, poverty and inaccessibility to basic resources, such as food, shelter, health and education. Accesses to appropriate information as well as participation in the broadcast media are vital for the protection, survival and development of children.

Under the *Fundamental Rights* (Part III) of the Constitution of Bangladesh, "All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law" (Article 27). At the same time, in article 28 (4), the constitution gives special rights to children and women stating "Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making special provision in favour of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizen".

Bangladesh is one of the early signatories of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and ratified the convention in August 1990. It also ratified two Optional Protocols to CRC imposing ban on the sale of children and barring children's involvement in the armed conflict. This reflects the willingness of the country to incorporate child rights approaches in its development planning. At the same time, Bangladesh as a State Party has placed before itself the challenge to implementing CRC.

As Bangladesh ratified UNCRC the government is periodically submitting report on the implementation of the Convention to the committee on CRC. Therefore, it was assumed that there would be due reflection of the rights of the child in the Bangladesh Broadcasting laws, policies, rules and regulations, particularly which became effective and revised after 1990.

The article nos. 12, 13, 16 and 17 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) partially or directly mention about children's right to mass media and appropriate information. It is the obligation of the State Party to ensure the reflection of the rights of the child related to the right to mass media and freedom of expression in the broadcast media rules, regulations and legislations.

Article 12 Children have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously

Article 13 Children have the right to find out things and say what you think, through making art, speaking and writing, unless it breaks the rights of others



Article 16 Children have the right to a private life, honour and reputation. For instance, children can keep a diary that other people are not allowed to see.

Article 17 Children have the right to collect information from the media---radios, newspapers, television, etc---from all around the world. Children should also be protected from information that should harm them.

Save the Children works for children's right to information and media

Save the Children is the leading child rights organization working all over the world. It works in Bangladesh towards a vision where all children realize their rights and grow to their full potential as active, respected citizens. Save the Children in Bangladesh aims to be the leading child rights organization with innovative, quality programs and advocacy, including during emergencies. To maximize impact for children, it use resources efficiently and act with courage, ambition and integrity.

Save the Children has UNCRC as its mandate. All works of Save the Children is based on the convention. It focuses on the rights of children according to the convention and works to uphold them. Save the Children believes in children's right to information and media which is an integral part of their endeavour to claim rights. It has taken different initiatives in this regard. This includes, study on Right to Information Act 2009, Round Table to disseminate and draw recommendations, piloting a child friendly information centre at union level, training and fellowship for journalists etc.

Save the Children perceives media not only as a means of communication or information dissemination but also as a major stakeholder to realize children's right in the country. It found that there is a major dilemma among journalists and news media professionals on ethical issues when it comes to children. Sometimes confusions arise whether to publish or not the name or photograph of a child who has been victimized or accused of criminal offence. While the child rights activists suggest them not to, the legal experts expect them to do so that it can be used as evidence in the court. Broadcast media sensationalize news related to children in order to attract the audience. Absence of a comprehensive media policy, an independent authority to implement policies in favour of children, appropriate guidelines as well as lack of understanding of journalists etc. are responsible for not being able to create a media environment

which could be most beneficial to children.

As this is a vast area, an extensive study is needed to understand the current state of broadcast media policies, environment in which the media operates and identify the limitations in relation to child rights for possible remedies. Therefore, Save the Children organized a study titled "Analyzing Broadcast Media Policies in the light of Child Rights" to find out gaps and draw recommendations.

Nari Maitree, a partner organization of Save the Children was established in 1983 in order to improve the condition of the disadvantaged people particularly women, children and adolescent & youth by empowering them for establishing an equitable society. NM's mission is to empower the helpless, under-privileged and exploited of both rural and urban people of Bangladesh through their direct participation in different intensive and extensive programs in order to bringing about positive changes in the society.

Nari Maitree and Save the Children jointly organized a roundtable to disseminate the findings of the study mentioned before and also to draw recommendation on the issue. Also the study included consultation with children and their recommendations were also disseminated through the key note paper during the round table. In the light of the CRC provisions of children's media rights, the key note paper identified and analyzed reflections of the following aspects and issues, in the most relevant broadcast media laws/policies/ rules/regulations:

- 1) Scopes and provisions for active participation of children in the media scene.
- 2) Obligation for the media to listen to children's views
- 3) Responsibility of the media to provide children the opportunities, adequate space and time to participate
- 4) Children's right and freedom to seek, receive and impart information which is beneficial to their protection, survival and development
- 5) Children can express their ideas either orally, in the form of art, or through any other forms which are suitable for the broadcast media
- 6) Provisions for the media to respect children's privacy and reputations
- 7) Provisions in favour of children so that they are protected from any intrusion; and the law/policy guaranteed for not having a child's name and identity published; and will be portrayed in the media with dignity
- 8) The law/policy encourages the media in ensuring

children's access to information and material from national and international sources, which are aimed at promoting his or her social, cultural, spiritual and moral well-being, and physical and mental health

9) The law/policy encourages the media to broadcast programmes targeting the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous

10) The law/policy contains provisions/directives for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being

Recommendations proposed by children

- Programmes that hampers the mental development of children should not be allowed for broadcasting
- There may be commercial breaks during children's programmes, but the advertisements should be child-friendly
- There should be programmes on issues of children living in street, working children and disable children
- There is a need for more educational and children's health related programmes
- When children under 18 years are arrested by police, broadcast media should investigate as in most cases children are not criminal but become victim
- TV channels should broadcast the rules and regulations regarding child labour. They should also disseminate information of laws or regulations regarding employers' behaviour towards working children

Recommendations

- Broadcast media policies incorporate provisions for active participation of children in the media scene
- Policies make the radio and TV responsible to give children the opportunities, adequate time and space to participate
- Broadcasting policies enable children to seek, receive and impart information which is beneficial to their protection, survival and development
- Special provisions in the media policies to protect children's privacy and reputations. The laws/policies should guarantee the protection from any intrusion and portrayal in the media with dignity
- Policies make it a responsibility of radio and TV to broadcast programmes targeting the linguistic and cultural needs of the child, particularly who belongs to a minority and underprivileged sections of the population
- Broadcast media policies contains provisions/directives for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being
- Existing laws, policies, rules and regulations should be revised in the spirit of child rights; and incorporate provisions in the light of UNCRC Article 12, 13, 16 & 17
- In the context of Bangladesh, future broadcast laws, policies, rules and regulations should reflect children's right to access and participate in the mass media - radio, TV and other forms of broadcasting as well as right to express
- The study paper should be circulated to other organizations.
- Making provisions in the policy for mandatory broadcast of positive and social awareness based programme related with children issues such as Meena cartoon.
- Dissemination of existing media policies for the children to raise public awareness about the children.
- Arrangement of a discussion like roundtable with the management level (owner) of mass media bodies for the implementation of the existing media policies for the children.
- Making mandatory provision to broadcast children related program when a new mass media organization gets permit.