

Call for more action on child reporting

Media Monitoring Africa's fourth report, 'Children's Views not in the News; Portrayal of Children in South African Print Media: June, July and August 2010', was released yesterday, Monday, 6 December 2010. The MMA has been monitoring and analysing print media's performance in terms of how it reports on children since 2003 and has seen that the percentage of articles featuring children has almost doubled.



Author and its specialised children's monitoring project coordinator, Ronell Singh, says that, "While we are seeing gradual progress being made in how the media reports on children, there is still plenty of room for improvement - look at how few features or in-depth analysis articles deal with children for example - just 4%. It is these longer and more in depth articles that can explore children's issues better and put them on the agenda and yet even since last year, we are seeing children appearing in fewer of these articles instead of more."

Violating children's rights

It has also revised and further refined its criteria to assess whether media has violated children's rights and it has found that from June to August 2010, the press perpetuated children's rights abuses in 7% of stories featuring or mentioning children.

George Kalu, its children's project coordinator, says, "Even one report in which a child's rights are violated is one too many, that it happens in 7% of stories that mention children is very worrying indeed. These are cases where children are identified when it is not in their best interests, say for example, when children are victims of abuse or are HIV positive. Naming a child in these circumstances leaves them vulnerable to further trauma and possible stigmatisation."

Media Ratings

However it is clear that some media are performing better than others. In its media ratings for children's coverage, in which newspapers are rated against each other in order to show which cover children the best, *Saturday Star* came in first place.

Press Code

As part of its Press Council review submission, it has recommended that reporting on children be regulated under the Press Code. William Bird, Director of the MMA, says, "Currently children are only mentioned once in the code, under Section 1.7.2 which states that 'child pornography shall not be published.' This is clearly not enough. The inclusion of a dedicated clause on children is essential."

Children lobbying

Children are also lobbying for regulations on how they are reported in the press to be included in the code. Child media monitors, involved in the organisation's project, presented their suggestions on the Redi Thlabi Show on Talk Radio 702 and Cape talk 567 on 30 November 2010.

[View the full report.](#)

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