

New children's media project launches in SA and Zambia

'Children & Media: Championing Best Practice', is a project that launches today, Thursday 24 February 2011, by Media Network on Child's Rights and Development (MNCRD) in Zambia, Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) in South Africa and Save the Children, with the support of the European Union and Sida Sweden.

It aims to work with almost 600 children and 500 journalists to ensure children's rights are respected in media in South Africa and Zambia, and to deliver more representative and ethical journalism.

According to MMA director, William Bird, "We've seen a gradual improvement in how children are reported on in the media since 2003. However in SA, 7% of stories that mention children violate their rights, in Zambia that figure is 18%. This is usually where a child is named where it is clearly it is not in its best interests, frequently stigmatising the child, increasing its vulnerability or even putting its life in danger."

According to the regional director of Save the Children, Timothy Bainbridge, "The media provides a great opportunity for children to present their views and opinions to a wide audience and influence the world around them. I hope this project will give both children and the media the skills to do this"

The project builds on the skills and expertise of all of the partners to improve the representation and participation of children in media. It consists of three elements:

- Ethical guidelines for reporting on children
- Children's News Agency
- Child media monitors

MMA has already worked with media to develop guidelines for reporting on children. These have been adopted by Independent Newspapers and the South African National Editors Forum (SANEF). This project will consult with children and media partners in both South Africa and Zambia to improve these guidelines and secure their endorsement in 15 media houses in SA, and 10 in Zambia.

Zambia follows South Africa

In 2008, MNCRD established a Children's News Agency in Zambia, and has since trained 17 child journalists to produce reports for mainstream media. Last year MNCRD also began training child media monitors. This project will see 540 monitors trained in South Africa (Johannesburg and Cape Town) and in Zambia (Lusaka). These children will provide constructive feedback to editors and journalists and their monitoring will be included in annual reports.

Journalists and editors sit on a CAN Advisory Board, and agreements are being drafted with media houses to secure the regular publication of CNA material. This project is to be replicated by MMA in South Africa. Over three years, 60 child journalists will be trained and produce CNA material for print and broadcast.

MNCRD coordinator, Henry Kabwe, described Children & Media: Championing Best Practice, as a project that "will bring higher levels of commitment and support for child rights in Zambia and South Africa. The children will participate in strategic national and community decision making processes through the media."

While Susanne Martin of European Union Delegation to South Africa described the project as "changing the bulb: It will engage with 25 Zambian and South African print and electronic news media, with a daily audience of at least nine million, to increase media's coverage of children's rights and enhance the space for children to voice their opinions."

Live link

As this is a joint South African and Zambian project this project is being launched simultaneously today at 11am. The live video link between the South Africa and Zambia reflects how all project partners will share their experiences in this project, yielding a strong and effective tool to improve children's representation and participation in media in both countries and hopefully beyond.

Speakers

In the South African event, the speakers are:

- Timothy Bainbridge, regional director, Save the Children
- William Bird, director, Media Monitoring Africa (MMA)
- Felistus Chipako, chairperson from Media Network on Child's Rights and Development (MNCRD) (live from Zambia)
- Brian Phiri, CNA journalist (live from Zambia)
- Sibonginkosi Dera, child media monitor and future CNA journalist
- Susanne Martin, European Commission Delegation in South Africa
- Ray Hartley, *Sunday Times* editor

In Zambia:

- Marc Nosbach, country director, Save the Children
- William Bird, director, Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) (live from South Africa)
- Felistus Chipako, chairperson from Media Network on Child's Rights and Development (MNCRD)
- Brian Phiri, CNA journalist
- Sibonginkosi Dera, child media monitor and future CNA journalist (live from South Africa)
- European Commission Delegation in Zambia
- Teddy Mulonga, permanent secretary at the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development

Go to www.mediamonitoringafrica.org for more information.