

FACT SHEET

CHILDREN AND THE MEDIA

Convention on the Rights of the Child
(Articles 12, 13 and 17)



Children are subjects, users or producers of media. The media are a powerful force in forming, influencing and changing public opinions and perceptions. This powerful force can be used for good.

- **The media can project positive images of children and strengthen acceptance of children's rights.** Children's involvement in the media as young journalists shows children as active citizens with their own views and opinions. This counteracts common media portrayals of children as helpless victims or passive recipients of adult benevolence.
- **Young journalists show what children are capable of doing and what they have to say.** Few social or civic movements can succeed without access to and coverage by the media. The media enable individuals or groups with important messages to engage with society.
- **New media can overcome obstacles to children's participation as active citizens.** Globally, digital media, such as the Internet, are rapidly becoming many children's preferred medium of communication. It is the most efficient tool for national and global participation on a large scale.
- **Harness the digital revolution to support children's rights and civic engagement.** The digital revolution does present challenges. Access to digital media is still low in some developing countries, but growing. Children may be exploited by cyber abusers. Some degree of regulation is necessary to protect children, as long as it is not used by adults to censor children's views.

Why it is important

The power and influence of the media, both mainstream and digital, is growing. Rather than being just a source of entertainment, or reinforcing stereotypes and misconceptions, the media can be used to broaden knowledge, engage children with society and develop their citizenship skills.

SOURCE: Children as active citizens: Commitments and Obligations for Children's Civil Rights and Civic Engagement in East Asia and Pacific



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Benefits to society

- Engagement with the media builds essential competencies, such as learning about citizenship, social issues and politics, life skills and livelihood skills.
- The media can link children with other children from marginalised communities, increasing understanding and solidarity.
- By using digital media, children are obtaining the skills and knowledge they will need in rapidly modernising economies.
- Children's involvement in the media can raise awareness about children's issues and encourage constructive and creative solutions to problems children are facing.

What is needed

- Offer training opportunities for children to develop media skills and critical media literacy.
- Support the creation of space and opportunities for children to use print media, radio and television to communicate their views. Children should be able to hear, see and express themselves, their culture, languages and life experiences through broadcast programs that affirm their sense of self, community and place.
- Actively involve children in media to ensure that media content is relevant and appropriate.
- Increase children's access to and promote safe use of information and communications technologies (Internet, mobile phones).
- Explore ways in which support can be given to media initiatives aimed at providing greater access to children, serving their needs and promoting their rights.
- Recognise that independent media are fundamental to the pursuit of democracy and freedom and that censorship and control are opposed to the best interests of both children and adults.
- Create an effective and secure environment in which the media can work professionally and independently.



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