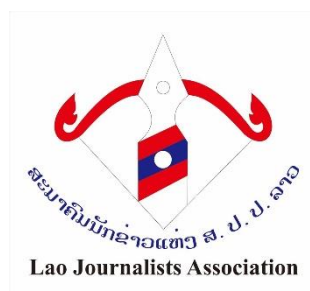


Media and Children's Rights

The Guidelines for Media Reporting on Children



2021



Foreword

Since the national liberation and preservation period, as well as during the national preservation and the development of the country period, the Party and the State have always been working to formulate the policies and paid close attention to the care of mothers and children in policy formulations. After the Government of Lao PDR ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991, all sectors and organizations, both at central and local levels, adopted key principles of the CRC into policies, laws, and regulations and formulated action plans to support children to exercise their fundamental rights, such as the right to survive, the right to development, the right to protection, the right to participation and many more.

In the field of information and media, the Lao PDR Journalists Association under the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism (MICT), in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), published the "Media and Children's Rights" in 2005. The guidelines assisted media professionals in disseminating the CRC, laws and regulations related to children, and reporting on the lives of children in Lao PDR. The guidelines also encouraged Lao children and young people to participate in media work to raise awareness on child rights issues.

With changing domestic and international context and new media technology, there has been a need to revise the guidelines for contemporary media professionals. To commemorate the 32nd anniversary of the CRC and the 30th anniversary of the Lao PDR's ratification to the CRC, the Lao PDR Journalists Association partnered with UNICEF to revise the Guidelines on the Media and Children's Rights: A Practical Introduction for Media Professionals to ensure its relevance, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This revision was possible thanks to the generous support from the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

I hope the guidelines will help the media and Lao children to have the ability and a greater awareness and understanding of child rights issues. The guidelines will also technically support both traditional and new media professionals, scholars, teachers, and the general public who are interested in the work of information and media for children.

The President of the Lao PDR Journalists Association
Mr. Savankhone RAZMOUNTRY

Preface

The Media and Children's Rights Guidelines: A Practical Introduction for Media Professionals summarize the key issues that are in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and related legislation in Lao PDR as guidelines for reporting on children and child rights issues. The Guidelines are to help Lao media professionals to uphold children's rights when reporting on news related to children. It also includes guidelines on generating news stories and features, and a pre-publishing checklist (pre-release warnings) to determine whether the news story aligns with the protection and promotion of children's rights.

The main purpose of the guidelines is to ensure the media professionals report on children responsibly, accurately, and in accordance with the CRC, laws, regulations, principles of protection. It also contributes to the promotion of the rights of the child and the roles of children in the media.

It is hoped that the media, children and the general public will help provide feedback for the further improvement of the guidelines.

Vientiane Capital City, August 2021
The committee responsible for the publication

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Part I

The Roles of the Media and Legislations Related to Children

1. The Media's Roles and Responsibilities

1.1 The Media's Roles

Article 2 of the Law on Media (amended) states that “the media is a platform for information disseminating, including print media, electronic media and media products. These media play the role as the voice of the Party, State and social organizations to propagate and educate on the Party’s direction, laws and regulations of the government, encourage the involvement of the people in national patriotism and provide information about politics, economics, science, technology and entertainment to society. The media also contributes to the prevention of social obstruction and distortion of facts”. Article 9 of this law stipulates that “Lao citizens have the right to comment, give opinions and points of view and be able to access to information about the situation within the country and from other countries, view various sources of knowledge, entertainment, etc. that do not conflict with the laws and regulations and that are beneficial to the nation and the people of all ethnic groups”. In addition, Article 66 on Prohibition for Media Organizations, point 7 prohibits “the advertisement, dissemination of alcoholic products, superstitions, the acts contrary to the good culture and traditions of the nation, images, sounds and actions affecting the lives of mothers and children.”

1.2 The Responsibilities of the Media

The media has the responsibility to report on children in accordance with the laws, regulations, ethics of Lao journalists and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as follows:

- The content and format of media coverage on children must ensure the four characteristics of the Lao media defines under the Law on Media (amended 2016), which include the characteristics of truth, the characteristics of education, the characteristics of advocacy and the characteristics of defenses or protection of justice.
- The media must strictly adhere to the 10 ethics of Lao journalists (Annex 5).
- The media must take into account the four fundamental rights of children: the right to survivor, which refer to the right to life and the right to health care and upbringing by parents, care givers or guardians; the right to development, which refers to the right of a child to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, mentally, morally and socially; the right to protection, which is granted when a child has problems or risk, such as, a discriminated child, abused child, labor exploitered child, neglected child, migrant child, refugee child and child offender; the right to participation, which means that every child has the right to have an opinion on all issues that affect their lives, their opinions must be considered either within the family, at school and in the community.

2. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The preamble of the Convention recalls the basic principles of the United Nations in particular the spirit of peace, freedom, equality and solidarity and the provisions of relevant human rights treaties emphasize that the child needs special care and protection and emphasize that the family must provide basic care and protection to the child, emphasizing the need for legal protection or other forms of protection for the child before and after birth, the importance of respecting the cultural values of children in communities and the important roles of the international cooperation in the protection of children's rights.

No specific mention is made of journalists’ responsibilities under the Convention, but the media professionals have a special role to play in disseminating information on child rights and child

protection and encouraging the government to implement their obligations to implement CRC and ensure that child rights are protected and implemented.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted and opened for ratification by the resolution of the General Assembly on 20 November 1989. Lao PDR ratified the Convention on 7 June 1991. There are four fundamental principles:

- 1) Non-discrimination;
- 2) The best interests of the child;
- 3) The right to life, to survive and to develop; and
- 4) Respecting the child's opinions.

The fundamental rights that a child should have are the right to survival, the right to development, the right to protection and the right to participation.

In 2006, Lao PDR adopted two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child: (1) The Optional Protocol on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict; and (2) The Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

In addition, in 2005, Lao PDR has also ratified the Minimum Age Convention, No. 138 and the Convention on Worst Forms of Child Labour No. 182 of the International Labour Organization.

3. Legislations Related to children of the Lao PDR

After Lao PDR became a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, the government issued the necessary legislations to be used as a basis for the implementation of the works related to child rights activities.

3.1. Law on Protection of Rights and Interests of Children (2006). Article 2 of this law defines a child as any person below 18 years of age in line with the CRC. Article 3 of the same law also stipulates that children have the following rights:

1. The right to have a safe life and suitable physical and moral development;
2. The right to be registered at birth, have a first name and family name and to acquire a nationality;
3. The right to be recognised and cared for by parents, and not to be separated from parents unless it is necessary to protect the child's interests;
4. The right to have access to health care, medical treatment and rehabilitation of health when ill;
5. The right to obtain education so that they can have good attitudes, knowledge, abilities, talents, professional training, labour skills and employment;
6. The right to speech and the expression of their opinions; to socialise and exchange good experiences with other children; to participate in social, artistic, literary, sports and recreational activities that are appropriate for the age of the child;
7. The right to have access to and learn information that is suitable for the age and level of development of the child;
8. The right to be protected from harmful information;
9. The right to be protected from all forms of physical and moral abuse;
10. The right to receive special protection in legal proceedings; and
11. The right to obtain other rights as stipulated in the laws.

The law also stipulates that **the best interest of a child** shall be the primary consideration in making decisions related to them.

3.2 Law on Family (amended 2008) Article 1/1 (new): Family is a cell of the society in which husband; wife, children or other family members have relations and stay together under the registration of the family book. Article 9 (amended) states that men and women who intend to get married should be 18 years old and above.

Article 3: Freedom to Marry

The State protects the freedom of both men and women to marry. Men and women who are 18 years old and above have the freedom to choose their partner according to their wish and love and get married according to the good customs and traditions. The State does not allow any individual, family or organization to force or break the marriage of their son/daughter, other family members, staff members of their organization and government supervisees.

Article 23: Custody of Children

If a husband and wife do not agree on the custody of children after divorce, the court shall decide whether the father or mother should have custody taking into consideration the children's interests.

A divorced couple must care for and educate their children. The court shall decide on the child support to be provided until the children reach the age of 18 years old based on the agreement between the husband and wife or based on the court's decision if an agreement cannot be reached between the husband and wife.

Article 35 (amended): Parents' Obligation on the Care for Children

Parents should care for their minor children and for children who have reached maturity but are unable to work due to disability and mental illness.

Parents' obligations to care for children must be continued regardless of whether the parents are still living together or divorced. The amount of financial support should be defined based on the economic situation in each period by taking half of the amount of minimum monthly salary of government staff as the basis for calculation.

Parents have the right to request the court to reduce child support when they encounter economic difficulties.

3.3. Law on Juvenile Criminal Procedure (2013). Article 7 of this law stipulates that in every stage of the juvenile proceeding, children shall receive legal assistance, the protection of their rights and interests from physical harms, torture, threat, violation of dignity or property and considering cases must consist and comply with the laws.

3.4. Law on Labor (amended 2013). Article 101 defines that employers may accept employees under the age of eighteen years but not younger than fourteen years; however, they are prohibited from working overtime.

When necessary, the employer may accept and use youth employees under the age of fourteen, but not younger than twelve years, and must ensure the work is light work such as:

1. Work that will not negatively impact the body, psychology or brain;
2. Work that will not obstruct attendance of school, professional guidance or vocational training.

Article 102 defines the unauthorized use of youth employees as the follows:

1. Work in activities, duties and locations that are unsafe, dangerous to the health of the body, psychology or mind;
2. Forced labor;

3. Work to repay debts;
4. Human trafficking;
5. Trade or deception into the sex industry or solicitation of prostitution, photography or pornography;
6. Trade or deception into the movement and production, transportation, possession of narcotics or addictive substances.

3.5. Law on Persons with Disabilities (2019), Article 02 defines that persons with disabilities refer to those who have physical, visual, hearing and speaking, cognitive and other impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in daily activities, learning and participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Article 25 of this law stipulates that persons with disabilities have the following fundamental rights:

- 1) The right to live independently, safely and equally in the community;
- 2) The right to receive care, treatment and rehabilitation;
- 3) The right to be protected from physical and emotional violence;
- 4) The right to receive education, vocational training, employment, social welfare, participate in sports activities, arts, literature, culture, access to buildings, public transportation and access to information;
- 5) The right to be encouraged to use their creative minds and talents in scientific research, modern technology and production of materials or equipment for social services;
- 6) The right to provide comments related to their rights and interests, including the interests of the nation and society;
- 7) The right to exemption or reduction of taxes, fees, service charges and other obligations as stipulated in the relevant laws and regulations;
- 8) The right to exercise other rights as stipulated in the law.

3.7. Law on Education (amended 2015). Article 6 (amended): The right of Lao citizens to education stipulates that all citizens in the Lao PDR, regardless of nationality, race, religion, ethnicity, sex, age, physical status or socio-economic status, have the right to equal quality education and lifelong learning in accordance with laws and regulations.

Article 28 (new): Compulsory education stipulates that compulsory education is a necessary education for all Lao citizens who must complete their education. The state designates education from primary to lower secondary education level as compulsory.

3.8. Law on Anti-Trafficking in Persons

Article 2 of this law defines that trafficking in persons means the recruitment, abduction, movement, transportation or transfer or receiving of persons, harbouring using propaganda, giving advice, deceiving, abuse of power, the use of threat, the use of other forms of coercion, putting persons in debt bonded conditions, child adoption or concealed adoption, concealed engagement, concealed marriage, the use of surrogate mothers, beggar the production, showing and distribution of pornographic materials or by other forms for the labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, slavery, prostitution, forced working in prostitution, removal of organs for purpose of trade and other forms of unlawful conducts contradicting to the national fine arts and traditions or for other purposes to gain benefits.

Article 39 stipulates the rights of victims as follows:

- 1) **The right to request assistance from individuals, entities or organizations;**
- 2) **The right to report to the relevant authorities;**
- 3) **The right to testify or be interviewed about the case;**

- 4) **The right to present the evidence;**
- 5) **The right to submit complaints;**
- 6) **The right to request civil compensation;**
- 7) **The right to be exempt from the criminal liability and shall not be detained for prostitution accusation and illegal immigration;**
- 8) **The right to be protected and received the assistance ensuring the safety and security;**
- 9) **The right to be protected from photography, video recording, and publication of portrait pictures could be harmful to the dignity and reputation of the victim.**
- 10) **The right to receive service assistance such as shelter, legal assistance, medical treatment, education and vocational training, economic support, reintegration;**
- 11) **The right to read documents in the case file, request for the copy of documents or take note of important contents of documents in case file after completion of the investigation;**
- 12) **The right to participate in the court hearing;**
- 13) **The right to object to the officers who will undertake criminal proceedings;**
- 14) **The right to appeal against the court's decision or request to cancel the actions or the orders of anti-trafficking in person officers, chief of the prosecutor's office, prosecutors, court president and judges;**
- 15) **The right to request for an interpreter, lawyer or other protectors to defend the case in litigation;**
- 16) **Other rights as provided for in the laws and regulations.**

3.9. Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children (2015)

Article 21 of this law stipulates that promotion of children's rights is a measure carried out by the State to strengthen children's attainment of their rights and protection from violence in the family and other settings through awareness raising on children's rights, the care of children, the provision of education and children's development and the participation of children in a way that is appropriate to their age.

Article 12 of this law defines four types of violence against women and children as follows:

1. Physical violence
2. Psychological violence
3. Sexual violence
4. Property and economic violence

This law also defines physical violence as an intentional act such as abuse, torture, hitting, kicking, pushing, and throwing a child that causes injuries, bruises or in some cases no sign of the use of violence; mental health problems; disability or death.

Psychological violence is an act, negligence or neglect that has an adverse psychological effect on women and children such as having many wives, insults, gossip, defamation, scorn, humiliation, undervaluing, adultery, neglect, bias, discrimination, separation from friends or family, disrespectfulness, defamation, preventing someone from doing something, coercion or threats that harm [a person's] reputation, dignity, shame, self-esteem, [or] cause mental health problems, depression or suicide.

Sexual violence is an act or attempted act that results in harm to the sexual rights of women and children such as rape, forced sex, any act of obscenity, sexually indecent assault, unwanted sexual comments or sexual touching; or the sending of women or children to another person for sexual purposes.

Property and economic violence are an act, negligence or neglect that results in damaging property of the family, property that belongs to a co-owner, property of individual women and children, or results in damaging the opportunity to earn an income or other economic benefits such as destroying [or] burning the house and materials, hiding [materials]; illegal possession, transfer, [and] incorrect use and division [of a person's property or money]; paying unequal wages for labour or applying policies unequally compared to men, preventing [women and children] from participation or operation in any work/activity even when women and children can do it and are in a position to be able to do so.

Article 31. The Rights of the Victim

The victim of violence has the following rights:

- 1) **The right to request or receive assistance from family members, nearby persons, village authorities, the organization to which the victim or offender belongs, the Lao Women's Union, Child Protection Networks or Committee for Protection and Assistance of Children, police officers or other relevant competent authorities;**
- 2) **The right to have his/her rights respected and to be treated in a caring and sensitive/friendly manner;**
- 3) **The right to report the violence to the village authorities, the police, the Lao Women's Union, or Child Protection Networks or Committee for Protection and Assistance of Children to receive protection and assistance, or to take judicial proceedings against the perpetrator;**
- 4) **The right to choose the method to solve the issue of violence as stipulated in Article 47 of this law;**
- 5) **The right to request and receive protection from coercion, threats or all forms of harm including [for] family members or accompanied children;**
- 6) **The right to receive necessary assistance, such as counselling, safe temporary shelter, medical assistance, legal assistance, education, vocational training, and reintegration into the family and society;**
- 7) **The right to receive compensation for the harm and psychological recovery;**
- 8) **The right to have their information be kept confidential;**
- 9) **The right to receive protection and assistance from the State, National Front for Construction, mass organizations and social organizations in accordance with the laws and regulations;**
- 10) **To have other rights as prescribed under the laws and regulations.**

3.10. Decree No. 273 on Subsidy for Delivery and Treatment of Children Under Five, dated 19 August 2014

Article 2: Maternity and Child Care Subsidy Under the age of five:

Maternity allowances are the payment of prenatal, postpartum, treatment, surgery, diagnostic, travel, repatriation, referral, room and board for pregnant women and accompanied person at public health facilities.

The subsidy for the treatment of children under the age of five is the payment of analysis, diagnostic, medical, surgical, bed, transportation and meal expenses to patients and accompanied persons at a public health facility.

Article 5: Conditions for the subsidy:

For pregnant women and children under the age of five who hold Lao nationality, the state shall be responsible for paying all subsidies in accordance with the items specified in Article 6 and Article 7 of this Decree.

3.11. Guideline on The Safe Use of Social Media No. 1561/PTT dated 26 August 2020.

This guideline advises on the safe use of social media for the general public and children, including the do's and don'ts when using social media, the harmful through social media to children and provides channels and contact information to report incidents when there is damage caused by social media. The guidelines also set out penalties for social media offenders, ranging from education, warning, discipline, fines, civil retribution or criminal penalties, depending on the offence, as defined in Article 57 of the Law on the Prevention and Combating Cyber Crimes and Article 168 of the Penal Code.



Part II

Main Topics on Reporting on Children in Lao PDR

The Government of Lao PDR has always been committed to the implementation of the policies on child protection and promotion of child rights, which have enabled the conditions for the comprehensive development of Lao children. Children are involved and have a wide range of relationships with all sections of society, including family, school, sectors and society, both domestically and internationally. The guidelines summarize the main topics for the media to use as information, references, principles, the scope of news coverage, do's and don'ts, and what to check before publishing news on children.

1. Children and Discrimination (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- Is discrimination against children common in the country or not? Explore the types, reasons and effects on children. Give the opportunities to child victims of discrimination to tell their feeling and how it affects them.
- Is there any agency that collects and publishes data on children who are discriminated against? Does the data identify discrimination against boys/girls, rich/poor, rural/urban, non-disabled/disabled, ethnic groups, neglected children, drugs addicted children, street children, orphans, pregnant children, etc.?
- Do the children who are refugees, stateless children and migrant children have equal rights?
- How does the government prioritize, target and take action to reduce discrimination? How are they monitored, and by whom? Report on the work of state agencies implementing non-discrimination policies.
- Report on the measures adopted by the government to ensure that legislations, policies and service delivery are non-discriminatory.
- Report on how the government puts the efforts to help child victims and disadvantaged children. Do children feel such efforts are making a difference? Ask children such as those living in poverty or with HIV/AIDS, street children, pregnant children or children without parental care.

Things to check before publishing

- Reporting should focus on specific issues, but often reporting relies upon generalisations unsupported by evidence. Have you ever done such reporting? Or have you asked the generic questions, such as children of a particular community are entirely responsible for 'crime' or damaging social stability? This type of reporting (generalisations) is often inaccurate and encourages more discrimination. When mentioning a child's race, ethnic origin, religion or disability, are you ensure that it is strictly relevant to the story?
- Have you made sure the terms you used to describe child victims, children of minority groups, or girls and young women are not gratuitously insulting or perpetuating stereotypes?
- Have you made assumptions about a child's cultural, ethnic, or religious background? Check your facts before publishing.
- Have you checked the accuracy of claims made by racist or nationalist groups, and sought to balance views from the people under attack, including the children to not let the news take sides?
- Have you double-checked 'official' allegations about children? Have you sought the views and responses of the children?
- Is your story about HIV-positive children or those living with AIDS medically accurate and substantiated?



2. Children and Families with Vulnerabilities (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- How is 'the family' defined under the law? Is the Law on Family and divorce procedures fair and in the best interests of children? Do children have a say about what happens when the courts or concerned authorities intervene in their lives?
- The survival strategies adopted by single-parent families can make compelling human-interest features if handled sensitively. In addition, they are also a good barometer of the effectiveness of social policies, such as the effectiveness of childcare provision. Reporting on children brought up in a family with difficult circumstances, such as children from a poor family or children whose parents are being prosecuted must ensure that the children who are in the news are not harmed or at risk of disclosing such information.
- In reporting teenage pregnancy as well as parenthood of adolescents, find out how do young mothers cope? How did their families and friends react?
- When reporting on children in the circumstance of domestic violence, neglected children, or gambling, find out relevant policies to improve children's lives.
- What are the policies and how does the government deal with applications from families wishing to enter or leave the country?

Things to check before publishing

- Does your news help people understand how policies are likely to affect children and families? Is your news providing information that will enable society to assist children in need of care and protection?
- Does your news help explain how the family law and protection system works? For example, when reporting divorce proceedings where children are involved, does your story make clear what rights children have when alimony is being set or decisions are being made about which parent they will live with?
- In reporting a custody battle between father and mother, have you tried to check facts and be accurate? Have you avoided naming or using emotionally exploitative pictures of the children? If you are reporting an acrimonious ‘celebrity divorce,’ have you considered the consequences of the coverage for their children? Have you raised this with the parents and lawyers involved?
- When writing about children placed in public care, such as nursery, boarding school, orphanages, foster family or emergency care, have you checked the rules and principles of disclosing details about the child or not?



3. Child Labour

Scope of news coverage

- **Report about the state's efforts, such as disseminating information on regulation and inspection of workplaces, education and training to protect children from economic exploitation. Highlight strengths and areas for improvement.**
- **Report on the government ratification to the Minimum Age Convention, No. 138 and the Convention on Worst Forms of Child Labour No. 182 of the International Labour Organization, in 2005, and measures taken by the government to implement those conventions and the implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor.**
- Check the origin of goods in major stores. Where is the source of the products? Do the stores know where and how they were made? If child labour is involved, find out what customers think.
- **Inspect if there are hidden forms of child labour, such as secret factories, prostitution, bonded labour or work overtime, workplace hazard to health, or girls being kept away from school for domestic work.**
- **Did relevant authorities inspect the working conditions? What did the Labor Administration Agency do?**
- **The child's right to play includes the freedom to explore ideas, use imagination, develop talents and interact with others. In the case of children living in poverty or living away from family and friends, do children have the freedom to live a truly happy life and enjoy their childhood?**
- **Features and images about children participating in cultural activities that are fun and inspirational can be used, but consider the accidents that may occur and emphasize public responsibility for playing safely and caregivers' responsibility to supervise child's play.**

Things to check before publishing

- How important is the official minimum age for work? If some children are excluded from educational opportunities and exploited because of their age, weight, gender or family's economic background, what will be the impact on children and society?
- Have you published any cases of employers who are prosecuted for employing young children, or penalised for hazardous conditions in which they expect young people to work? Have you sought statistics on injuries and fatalities among working children?
- Have you considered safe ways of including the views or voices of working children as part of your news story?
- Have you paid attention to the most obvious forms of child labour, such as street-sellers, car cleaners, messengers, and more? Have you found out why they are working, who they work for, and what they are paid? Who else is coercing or exploiting them?
- Have you asked for information or consulted with the concerned agency on child labour, such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and their partners?



4. Children in Armed Conflicts (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- Report on the effects of armed conflict on children, such as the threats to life, psychological and physical health, personal development; indirect effects on services for children and their families. What are the basic services that children and families should receive?
- **Many children are killed or maimed by unexploded ordnance. Examine the government's perspective on and attitude towards the unexploded ordnance clearance, and the care of the families of the victims, including families of the dead, the injured or the traumatized.**
- **In the aftermath of armed conflict, what is being done by the government to help children, such as treatment of injuries and trauma, building schools and orphanages. Do children get a fair share of resources? When reporting, cover the perspective of the child victims carefully.**

- Does the government provide training and education to the armed forces, police, military and emergency service providers to protect children in the armed conflict situation?
- What measures has the government taken to protect children in the event of war in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 4th Geneva Convention and Protocols, 1997 Cape Town Principles? What are the efforts to limit the recruitment of children under the age of 18 in the military or involved in armed conflict?



Things to check before publishing

- Have you reported on what the country is doing to protect children from the impact of war and post-war (unexploded ordnance), including the provision of health, childcare and educational supports?
- When reporting on armed conflicts, have you reported the facts directly and accurately without prejudice or personal opinion? Or are you creating rumors?
- When reporting the news, have you gathered first-hand evidence rather than relying on secondary information sources? Especially the stories on children playing with unexploded ordnance or collecting scrap metal from weapons for sale.
- Does your story feature an actual experience of a young person involved in the conflict? Giving a child a voice establishes a human link with readers/viewers/listeners, but the child's safety must remain paramount. Be careful in protecting the child's identity.
- Protect the identity of those who have witnessed atrocities, and whose evidence may be required in subsequent war crimes trials.
- Reporting to the public must be based on factual information and should respect the dignity and reputation of the informant. Names and details should not be disclosed when referring to the informant and disseminating information.

5. Children's Health (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- **Keep an eye on official reports and statistics about child health, such as infant mortality rates, under-5 mortality rate, epidemic mortality rate, the levels of severity of preventable childhood diseases such as tuberculosis and diphtheria. Seek explanations from experts to ensure there is no statistically inaccurate information.**
- **Report on childhood epidemics and their causes, including environmental issues, disasters, and COVID-19, as well as the impact on state health services. Are there immunisation programmes? How does the state manage child health care?**
- **Report on maternal and child reproductive health services. What is the maternal and infant mortality rate before and after birth? Is the hospital service effective?**
- **How are children with HIV/AIDS and children with mental health problems treated and assisted? Report on health education and hygiene campaigns to help children make informed decisions about their lives.**
- **Report on the living environment in which children live, learn and play, such as understanding and awareness about healthy lifestyles (food, nutrition, drugs, pollution, recreation, road safety, sexual behaviour, smoking, sport, etc.)**

Things to check before publishing

- Is your news story accurate? Has all the information been checked?
- Have you applied the World Health Organization Guidelines for journalists covering health stories?
- Will your news coverage help people to understand childhood disease, preventative measures, treatment procedures or has medical assistance? Have you identified sources of information in the news?
- Have you obtained sufficient and reliable information from the authorities? Does your reporting make people more interested in child health activities?
- If you are seeking to raise young people's awareness about HIV/AIDS, have you included psychosocial information and contextual examples, as well as clear information on 'safe sex' and other preventative measures in your reporting?

- Do your reporting contents encourage understanding or incite prejudice about diseases and conditions (such as HIV/AIDS)? Balanced, well-informed coverage can put pressure on the authorities to provide the best treatment service possible.
- Be respectful to people with HIV/AIDS and other key populations as well as their families. Protect the identity of those who have HIV/AIDS or other health issues.



6. Children with Disabilities (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- Investigate the Law on Persons with Disabilities. How does the law stipulate the rights and protections of children with disabilities? Do attitudes and opportunities vary according to types of disability? Allow children with disabilities to share their social status with society to eliminate the misconception that they are “different” from others so that there is no discrimination.
- Are children with disabilities provided with support and encouraged to participate in civil affairs? For example, is there access to public buildings, supportive equipment and assistive devices?
- Do parents of children with disabilities get support to care and support for their children? Is the support for children with disabilities free of charge? Report on organizations working on children with disabilities and their families. Sometimes, children with disabilities face practical problems with living, communication and mobility because their special needs are ignored by designers, architects and manufacturers. Journalists should report on services and designs that accommodate children with disabilities. What does the government do to promote facilities that are easily accessible to children with disabilities?
- Report on available services provided by the organization responsible for the care and support for children with disabilities. Report on effective techniques for caring for children with disabilities for a better life of children.

Things to check before publishing

- Is the focus of your story on disabilities? Have you allowed the subjects of your story to speak for themselves? Have you asked the children if they want their disability mentioned? If yes, how do they want their disability mentioned?
- Choose the right and appropriate words to describe the type of disability. Have you used correct, specific terminology, rather than relying upon colloquial terms, such as blindness, deafness, dumbness, limp and so on? These words and expressions may be offensive to children with disabilities. When in doubt, consult with the National Commission for the Persons with Disabilities.
- The language we choose to use to describe people with disabilities can help change attitudes and understanding, or it may perpetuate the existing prejudice and ignorance. Check if you have used language negatively or figuratively, which may be open to misinterpretation, or cause offence to people with disabilities.

If you decide to mention the child's disability, you must make sure that it is strictly relevant to the news story. Ask the children and their parents how they want their disability mentioned. For example, if children with disabilities are campaigning for access to a building, their disabilities may be relevant to the design of facilities and the building's accessibility. The mentioning of children's disabilities should be avoided in fundraising for projects not related to children with disabilities.



7. Protection of the Child's Identity (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- **Report on the Law on Nationality and their impact on children. When and how can children make autonomous decisions about their preferred nationality? How do they get their names? Do their names have special meanings? What official records are kept about their lives, and can children or their parents gain access to such records? Under what circumstances can they correct errors, or change their name?**
- **Report on the adoption and care systems. Does the system protect or discriminate against a child's nationality, ethnicity and religion? Do children have the right to access all available information about their origins?**
- **To what extent can children enjoy their preferred culture? Do the ethnic minority schools and the government provide financial support or not? Do children attend by choice or because of community pressure or because of their identity? Can children move between a public school and an ethnic school?**
- **Report objectively about disadvantaged groups of children, and children in remote areas to promote the fair reporting of information about children and their societal roles.**

Things to check before publishing

- **How have you reported the child's identity in your news coverage? Did you check with the children and their parents on how they want to be described?**
- **Have you been fair and even-handed in coverage of stories about children or their parents who are challenging the state on identity issues, such as the right to practice the religion of their choice, or to protect their cultural values?**
- **Is your news story likely to encourage discrimination or incite hatred, or is it more likely to foster understanding among different ethnicity, culture or religious groups? Is your news promoting the best interests of a child? Have you considered the child's safety and security?**

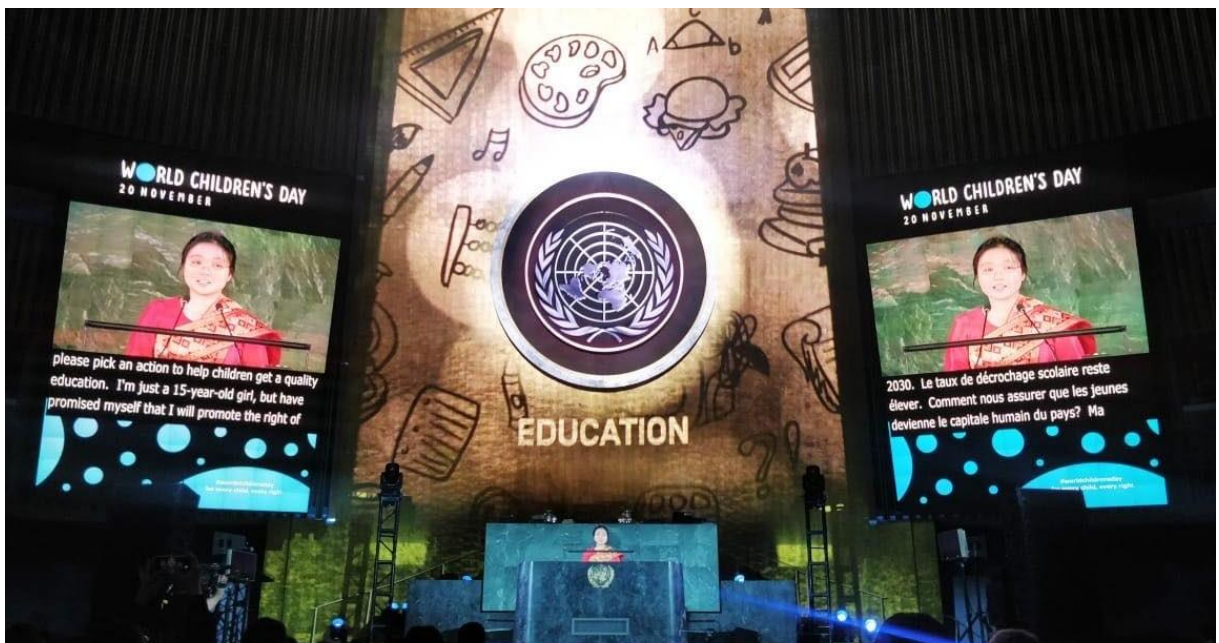
8. Children's Opinions and Civil Freedoms (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- **When reporting on the government policies on children, interview children and young people about their views on welfare, education or infrastructure projects which directly affect them. Encourage them to express their opinions about development plans for the future.**
- **Investigate children's access to information. How easy is it for children to access the media, such as print media and social media? Investigate if the media contains inappropriate content, images, audio and information. Report on how to protect children from the potential dangers of using such media.**
- **What is the child's reaction to the media, such as print, electronic, and online?**
- **Investigate what happens to young people if they refuse to take part in the military or other forms of public service. Can young people under the age of 18 be conscientious objectors?**
- **Report on children's rights to freedom of setting up a club, participating in a youth activity or a children's cultural center, and exercising that right. Can children fully express their feelings?**
- **Report on cultural centers or activities run by the youth. How is it organized, and what are the activities and obstacles?**

Things to check before publishing

- Does your reporting allow children to express their opinions?
- Do your reporting exploit children’s vulnerability or seek to impose upon them values and attitudes which they may not understand?
- Has your reporting considered ways of illustrating cultural diversity among children, such as allowing children to be writers, artists, speakers, presenters at various events, participating in various performance forums?
- Has your reporting given coverage to those children and young people who promote the rights and opinions of children?
- Have you reported on children organising activities for themselves, such as school councils, street children’s groups, or create different movements as well as clubs promoted the arts, sports and leisure?
- Have you reported on the impact of children speaking out? For example, the support they have received, the changes they have managed to achieve.



9. Children and the Media (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- Visit schools and centres to talk with children and listen to their opinions about the media. Investigate the children's use of images and information, technology, the Internet and mobile phones. Do children know how to protect themselves from the dangers of using images and information, technology, the Internet and mobile phones? Report on children's perspectives on issues that directly affect them, such as education, recreation, bullying and other forms of abuse.
- Report on the activities of the ministries, international organizations, associations and authorities' work related to children.
- The media should always be aware that children around the world have said they sometimes dislike the way they are represented in and by the media:
 - Being treated as a joke or depicted as "innocent".
 - Use of 'cute' or distressing images of children just to evoke emotional responses.
 - Being 'shown' as ignorant or spoken down to, or adults speaking for them even when they know about a subject. Sometimes children are forced to follow or interrupt while they are talking.
 - Being treated as a group with "problems".

From the book: Interviewing Children: A Guide for Journalists Author Sarah McCrun and Lotte Hughes, Save the Children UK Second Edition: 1998 ISBN 189920718

Things to check before publishing

- Media professionals, especially the editorial board and journalists, should respect child rights. Is your reporting on children adhering to this view?
- Did you approach your story with a preconception on how you wanted the children to respond? Have you done justice to what the children said? Will they recognise themselves in what you have published?
- When conducting interviews with children did you:
 - Ensure children were comfortable and not under duress?
 - Allow enough time to explain your intentions?
 - Position yourself and ask appropriate questions during the interview?
 - Obtain informed consent from children and their parents for the use of their names and the taking and publication of their image?
 - Make sure they knew how to contact you, and obtain a copy of the final piece?
- Have you considered and assessed the risk to the child of using her or his name or image? Have you discussed it with the children, their parents or guardians and with editorial colleagues on using the real name and image of children?
- Have you applied the same checking procedures as you would with adult informants, before publishing allegations or assertions made to you by children?
- Has your reporting arranged to provide reliable and confidential support for children who responded to issues concerning personal health, physical or sexual abuse, commercial exploitation or other forms of criminal activity?



10.10. Children's Participation in Media (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- Mass media has a pervasive influence all over our lives. Media professionals can contribute to improving 'media literacy' among children, and adults, by explaining how the mass media operates, and how to interpret its messages.
- Stakeholders should make detailed plans for children's involvement in all forms of media production.
- According to the policy on promotion of children's participation in media production, there should be an appointment of a specialist, advisor or correspondent to be an editor for children or to provide training for the 'young journalists', providing advice on how the media works and guidance on building the awareness and understanding on the procedures for the work of the editorial staff of each type of media.
- If children are to be present in the workplace, there must be written consent from their parents and guardians. In addition, there must be adequate facilities for children, such as first aid, food, refreshments, rest periods and safe transport to and from home.
- Introduce young people to basic journalistic techniques and the regulations that affect media production. Stakeholders should inform children of the location, roles, scope of the rights, responsibilities and prohibitions of media work as a basis for children to determine their role in media production.

Things to check before publishing

- Have media organizations established principles, regulations, and monitoring systems to protect children while working in media organizations, such as safety, health, physical and mental health monitoring?
- Are you sure that your project is not exploiting children for commercial purposes?
- Has there been sufficient planning and training of both staff and children to ensure that the children understand what they can and cannot do? Have you disseminated the regulations, location, roles, scope of the rights, responsibilities and prohibitions that apply to the media

and the working principles of the editorial staff to children and whether there is someone to supervise children?

- Are supervisors realistic about what children can achieve, and what they might do next? This is to avoid mistakes that may occur in the future.
- What evaluation systems have been put in place so that young people working in media can obtain feedback on their work? Have they been asked what they think about the work?



11. Children and Social Media (new)

Scope of news coverage

- Report on the use of the Internet and social media. What is the relevant child protection legislation and what measures are in place against the offenders?
- How did the responsible agencies disseminate, advise, educate, raise awareness and understanding of the pros and cons of using social media, such as locations, roles, rights, responsibilities and restrictions on using social media? What measures were taken to

address cases of children being abused, harassed, bullied, using inappropriate images or clips or spreading fake news?

- Report on the proper use of social media and appropriate information for children.
- Report on how children's values are affected by the use of online media, such as online gambling, games, drugs addiction, pornography and more.
- Report on the results of monitoring and inspections of relevant stakeholders in trying to solve problems or prevent, respond to fake news, especially news that violates child rights. Do the relevant agencies neglect to solve this problem or not?

Things to check before publishing

- Does your reporting comply with the relevant legislation, such as the Law on Media, the Law on the Prevention and Combating Cyber Crimes, and other laws and regulations related to the protection and promotion of children?
- Does your reporting provide guidance and education on how to use and verify information from social media accurately? Reporting should specify issues that are directly related to children, such as child abuse and what needs to be addressed to protect and promote children.
- When debunking fake news, has the information been properly verified? And is it a serious violation of child rights?
- You should always bear in mind that social media is something that everyone in society can participate in, both positively and negatively. It is important to ensure that children use social media in a way that is beneficial to their own development, such as education, learning and cultural exchange. There should be a healthy use of all forms of social media, and eliminating content that violates child rights and poses harm and danger to children.

12. Children's Education (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- **Report on the real extent of equal opportunities for all children within the education system, such as girls and boys; rural and urban; those with disabilities and members of the ethnic minority.**
- **Can the students influence the development of the rules and discipline procedures through the school principal or not? Can children choose what lessons they attend? Discover how parents can influence curriculum development and education services, school management.**
- **Compare the different types of educational establishments, such as pre-school, primary and secondary, public and private schools. Do some children miss out because fees for educational services are too high?**
- **Look into teacher/pupil ratios. What difference does class size make? What resources are available to teachers? Do children have access to up-to-date equipment?**
- **Are 'alternative' approaches to education permitted? If compare with the general system, how do teaching methods, attendance, discipline and results?**
- **How do schools deal with 'naughty' children? Are punishments fair or harsh? Is corporal punishment still used by teachers? When excluded or expelled from school do children have a right of appeal? What happens to them next? Is there a problem of violence against teachers and students, and if so, what are the causes?**

Things to check before publishing

- Does the media have a specialised education unit? Who produces the material it publishes (specialist reporters, teachers)? How are children and young people encouraged to contribute to the dissemination of information about education?
- How is the provision of educational services? Have students learned about current education issues and situations?
- Do your education stories include the perspective of the students as well as that of the school principal and managers? Have you obtained comments from parents, school governors, and classroom teachers?
- Have you made sure the children are aware of your story and it won't cause them problems?
- Does your news story help children understand the roles of the media in society? Has your media organization considered or improved on the production of news that is of interest to children, and has this situation helped teachers to teach children better?



13. Children and Juvenile Proceeding (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- According to the law, are children under legal proceedings treated and convicted differently than adults or not? Are children victims or perpetrators? How are child victims of crimes, accused children aged 15 to 18 perceived and convicted? Are children under the age of 15 considered non-perpetrators? How are the rights of the suspected children and accused children protected and monitored?
- How do authorities treat children, especially children under the age of 15, homeless children, and child suspects who are under detention?
- **Reporting on how children in the justice system are treated. Are they treated appropriately? Are there laws to prevent the disclosure of the names of children who are accused of breaking the law?**
- **Does the justice system focus on punishment, rehabilitation or recovery of child offenders? Is punishment, rehabilitation or recovery of child offenders effective?**
- **What is the situation of drug use among children? How do drug addicts receive assistance on therapy and rehabilitation?**

Things to check before publishing

- Violent and anti-social behaviour by children invariably has its roots in adult violence and attitudes towards them. Does your report reflect how child offenders under the age of 15 should be treated legally? Do child-offenders aged 15 to 18 receive less severe punishment than adult offenders?
- Have you avoided the unnecessary use of the names, images and personal information of children who are offenders? Disclosure of children's personal information may put them at extra risks, such as destroying their reputation and reducing their chances of rehabilitation.
- Have you ensured that child subjects of allegations by the public or the authorities are given a chance to respond? Do not assume that children are involved in criminal activity until facts are checked.
- Have you followed up on your report on the arrest or charging of children? Are they safe? Do they have access to appropriate services, such as legal advice and counselling or other types of services?
- Is your reporting on drugs and drug abuse accurate and supported by scientific evidence? Report on the effects of each type of drug and the rehabilitation process in various ways to provide parents and adolescents with accurate, clear information.

14. Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- **Report on sex education and the laws covering sexual activity involving children. Is there any determining the minimum age at which a child can consent to sexual acts and the minimum age for marriage?**
- **Report on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, and the prohibitions that surround them. Draw upon evidence from other countries about the extent of sexual abuse. How do relevant agencies summarize and disseminate information on the work to prevent child abuse and exploitation? Can children safely file a complaint against such abuse?**
- **Is it an offence to produce, disseminate or possess child pornography? What is the implementation of measures to protect children who are victims, especially victims of abuse, prostitution and protection of children from child online pornography?**
- **Report on justice proceedings. Are there any child rights violations or exploitation?**

- **Report on sexual abuse of children with appropriate security and professional support, for both the children and reporters.**
- **If you come across a story of children at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, you must report it immediately to the police and the Lao Women's Union for cases involving girls and women.**

Things to check before publishing

- Is your reporting about sexual abuse or commercial sexual exploitation of children scrupulously accurate and in compliance with the relevant laws and regulations? Is it about a long-hidden crime, or official negligence on the issue?
- Have you portrayed abused or exploited children as victims, criminals or as human beings with rights and dignity? Was it possible or appropriate to give the children a space to speak for themselves? Have you disclosed information about abused children, such as voices, photos and footprints?
- Did the children and parents agree to be photographed? Are images of children to be included in the news report appropriate? Do the images used to illustrate your story appear to sexualise children? What measures were made to ensure that children's images cannot be used improperly?
- Ensure that your story does not glamorise 'sex tourism', or pornography, or any other form of child exploitation. Have you ensured that it will not appear on sexually explicit material or material promoting sexual services?
- **Double-check what is the likely impact of the publication of your story on the children involved. Are there support systems to protect them? Is there a confidential helpline to deal with responses for people wishing to report other examples of abuse or exploitation? What support is there for reporters who may be traumatised by covering such stories?**



15. Children in Residential Care (amened)

Scope of news coverage

- What is being done to improve conditions in places in which children live and learn, such as boarding schools, orphanages, SOS nurseries, temples or daycare centers?
- Are there agencies that monitor, inspect and protect children from abuse as well as corporal punishment in those places?
- How many children are in residential care, and why? How reliable are the figures? What happens to them if the number of children exceeds the state's ability to manage? How many children are adopted or fostered? Are they all orphans and have no relatives to take care of them? Talk to those who have come through the residential care system. Where are they now? How did their experience affect their lives? How do they think things could be improved?
- How is the proceeding of foster care and adoption considered? Are the children's views and the best interest of children taken into account?
- Is the transfer of children to another country for adoption regulated or monitored? What rights do children have? How are children protected from abuse and exploitation?

Things to check before publishing

- Does your reporting help to explain how the residential care system works? Is it clear what legal rights children and their parents have to challenge the system?
- Have you made sufficient enquiries to establish why and how children came to be in residential care? If children have been abandoned and/or taken to crime, it may not be necessarily their fault. Have you clearly explained the cause?
- Have you tried to avoid the risk of alienating abandoned children from the general public? Your report should not perpetuate negative stereotypes of vulnerable children at risk to the extent that will cause society to develop or enhance negative sentiments towards them.
- Have you reported on opportunities for children in residential care to join clubs and socialize with other young people? Positive reporting about inclusive opportunities for children in care to become reintegrated within mainstream society can help to reduce discrimination, ignorance and prejudice. Have you made the most of opportunities to give children in residential care a presence and a voice in the media?
- Have you covered information about organisations that can help young people facing difficulties in institutional care? If yes, have you checked the background and credibility of the organizations?

16. Responsibilities of the State (amended)

Scope of news coverage

- How is the government implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child? Has it complied with the requirement to publicise the Convention's and its Optional Protocol's principles and provisions? Did the government submit its reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva on time? What is the progress of the implementation of the recommendations on the government report?
- Interview those responsible for the implementation of the Convention on the progress made and on addressing specific issues affecting children. Ask questions that children would like to know the answers to.
- How does the government involve non-governmental organisations and children in its efforts to improve the lives of children?

- **Report on campaigns that improve the lives of children. How do children view them? Are there any impacts?**

Things to check before publishing

- Does your news improve public understanding of child rights and the role of the government in promoting and protecting them?
- Does your reporting encourage the government to fulfill its international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child? What channels have been used to raise awareness of child rights to the decision-makers and the public?
- Have you talked to experts, child rights activists and children themselves to know the problems that children are facing?
- Have you sought explanations for the cause of the shortcomings of those responsible for the development and protection of children? Have you made space for the voices of children to be heard by society?
- Have you checked the claims of non-governmental organisations and paid attention to their successes and any shortcomings?



Annex I: Summary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Definition of a child

A child is any person below 18 years of age.

Non-discrimination

All rights apply to all children without exception. The state is obliged to protect children from all forms of discrimination and take action to promote children's rights.

Best interests of the child

All actions concerning the child should take full account of his or her best interests. The state should provide appropriate care when parents or others responsible fail to do so.

Implementation of rights

The state shall do all it can to implement the rights enshrined in the Convention.

Parental guidance and the child's evolving capacities

The state respects the rights and responsibilities of parents or family. The state should provide appropriate direction and guidance to children to exercise their rights.

Survival and development

Every child has an inherent right to life, and the state must ensure the maximum survival and development of the child.

Name and nationality

Every child has the right to have a name from birth and to be granted nationality. Children have the right to know their parents and to receive parental care.

Protection of a child's identity

The state is obliged to protect a child's identity. If necessary, re-establish the basics of a child's identity, such as the name, nationality and family relations.

Separation from parents

Children have the right to live with their parents unless this is incompatible with their best interests.

Family reunification

Families whose members live in different countries should be allowed to move between those countries so that parents and children can stay in contact, or get back together as a family.

Illicit transfer and nonreturn

The state is obliged to try to prevent and address the kidnapping or retention of children in another country by a parent or third party.

The child's opinion

Children have the right to express an opinion and have it taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

Freedom of expression

Children have the right to obtain and make known information and to express their views, unless this would violate the rights of others.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Children have the right and freedom of thought, conscience and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance and national law.

Freedom of association

Children have the right to meet together and to join groups and organisations, as long as it does not stop other people from enjoying their rights. In exercising their rights, children have the responsibility to respect the rights, freedoms and reputations of others.

Protection of privacy

Children have a right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their families and their homes.

Access to appropriate information

The media shall disseminate information to children regarding social, moral, educational and cultural benefits to them, and which respects their cultural background. The state is to take measures to encourage the publication of material of value to children and to protect children from harmful materials.

Parental responsibilities

Both parents jointly have primary responsibility for bringing up their children and the state should support them in this task.

Protection from abuse and neglect

The state is obliged to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence perpetrated by parents or others responsible for their care, and to undertake preventive and treatment programmes in this regard.

Protection of children without families

Children who cannot be looked after by their own family have a right to special care and must be looked after properly, by people who respect their ethnic group, religion, culture and language.

Adoption

In countries where adoption is recognized and/or allowed, it shall only be carried out in the best interests of the child, with all necessary safeguards for a given child and authorisation by the competent authorities. Children have the right to care and protection if they are adopted or in foster care.

Refugee children

Special protection is to be granted to children who are refugees or seeking refugee status. The state is obliged to cooperate with competent organisations providing such protection and assistance.

Children with disabilities

Children with disabilities have the right to special care, education and training designed to help them achieve the greatest possible self-reliance and participation to lead a full and active life in society.

Health and health services

Children have the right to the highest level of health and access to health and medical services, The state is obliged to work towards providing basic health care with a focus on disease prevention and health care, health education and reducing child mortality. States must encourage international cooperation in this area and fight to prevent children from being excluded from effective medical services.

Periodic review of placement

Children placed by the state for reasons of care, protection or treatment, have the right to have all aspects of that placement evaluated regularly.

Social security

Children have the right to benefit from social welfare and social security.

Living standard

Children have the right to a living standard that is appropriate to their physical, emotional, psychological and social development. It is the primary responsibility of parents to provide this appropriate living standard. The state should ensure that parents can fulfil this responsibility, and support families to cover material support to parents and children.

Education

Children have the right to education and the state must ensure that primary education, and free of charge, encouraging all children to attend secondary and higher education in various forms based on ability. School discipline must be consistent with the rights and dignity of the child. States must cooperate with the international community to ensure this right.

Aims of education

The education should aim to develop children's personalities, talents, and the child's full range of cognitive and physical abilities. Education shall aim to prepare children for an active life as an adult in a society with freedom and to educate children to respect their parents, the cultural identity, language and values of the child, as well as to respect the cultural background and values of others.

Ethnic minority children

Ethnic minority children have the right to enjoy their own culture and to practice their own religion and language.

Leisure, recreation and cultural activities

Children have the right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities.

Child labour

Children have the right to protection from engaging in work that constitutes a threat to their health, education or development. The State must set the minimum age for employment, and regulate conditions of employment.

Drug abuse

Children have the right to protection from the use of narcotic and psychotropic drugs and from being involved in their production or distribution.

Sexual exploitation

The state must protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

Sale, trafficking and abduction

The state should make every effort to prevent the sale, trafficking and abduction of children, other types of exploitation.

Torture and deprivation of liberty

No child shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, arrested or illegally deprived of liberty. Capital punishment and life imprisonment without the ability to be released are prohibited for offenders less than 18 years of age. Children deprived of liberty shall be separated from the adult detainee unless the merger is in their best interests. Detained children shall receive legal and other assistance, including contact with their families.

Armed conflicts

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children under the age of 15 do not be recruited by the armed forces. States Parties must ensure the protection and care of children affected by armed conflict, as outlined in relevant international law.

Rehabilitative care

The state is obliged to ensure that children damaged by armed conflict, torture, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation receive appropriate treatment for their recovery and social reintegration.

Administration of juvenile justice

Children alleged or recognised as having committed an offence have the right to respect their human rights. Children have the right to basic legal guarantees or other assistance to protect children. Court proceedings and child custody must be avoided in all cases where possible.

Respect for existing standards

If any standards set in national law or other applicable international instruments are higher than those of this Convention, it is the higher standard that applies.

Publicising and enforcing the Convention

The state is obliged to ensure that the rights enshrined in this Convention are made public to both adults and children. States elect a Committee on the Rights of the Child composed of 18 experts, which considers reports submitted by parties to the Convention two years after ratification and every five years thereafter. The state reports are to be made available to the general public.

The Committee has the authority to propose that special studies be undertaken on specific issues relating to the rights of the child, and make its evaluations known to the State Party concerned as well as to the United Nations General Assembly to foster the implementation of the Convention and encourage international cooperation, bodies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are encouraged to advise the Committee and are permitted to attend its meetings. These organizations can submit pertinent information to the Committee and advise on the optimal implementation of the Convention, together with other bodies recognized as competent, including other United Nations bodies and NGOs which have consultative status with the United Nations.

Annex II: International Federation of Journalists: Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues Involving Children

All journalists and media professionals have duties to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards and should promote within the industry the widest possible dissemination of information about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is to ensure that the news operation goes smoothly.

Media organisations should regard the violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for investigation. Children have an absolute right to privacy, the only exceptions being those explicitly set out in these guidelines.

Journalistic activity which touches on the lives and welfare of children should always be carried out carefully and should be taken into account that children are not in a position to help themselves.

When reporting on children, journalists and media organisations shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct as follows:

- Strive for standards of excellence in terms of accuracy and sensitivity when reporting on children.
- Avoid reporting and publication of images that affect children, as well as information that may be damaging to them.
- Avoid the use of stereotypes and sensational presentations to promote journalistic material involving children.
- Consider carefully the consequences of publication of any material concerning children and shall minimise harm to children.
- Do not post pictures or methods that identify the identity of children unless it is demonstrably in the public interest.
- If possible, give children the right of access to media to express their own opinions without the inducement of any kind.
- Ensure independent verification of information provided by children and take special care to ensure that verification takes place without putting child informants at risk.
- Avoid the use of sexualised images of children.
- Use fair, open and straightforward methods for obtaining pictures and, where possible, obtain them with the knowledge and consent of children or a responsible adult, guardian or carer.
- Verify the credentials of any organisation purporting to speak for or to represent the interests of children.
- Do not make payment to children for material involving the welfare of children or to parents or guardians of children unless it is demonstrably in the interest of the child.

Journalists should put to critical examination the reports submitted and the claims made by governments on the implementation of the UNCRC in their respective countries. Media should not consider and report the conditions of children only as events but should continuously report the process likely to lead or leading to the occurrence of these events.

Launched in Recife, Brazil on May 2, 1998

Annex III: World Health Organization Guidelines for Health Communicators

Guidelines for Professional Health Correspondents were developed by the PressWise and was adopted by the European Region of the World Health Organization, at the conference in Moscow in 1999.

- First, put into consideration the harm that may occur.
- Report the news clearly. Check the facts and sources, even if they will miss the deadlines.
- Do not raise false hopes. Be especially careful when reporting on claims for ‘miracle cures’ or potential ‘health scares.’
- Beware of vested interests. Ask yourself ‘who benefits most from this story?’
- Never disclose the source of information imparted in confidence, unless required by local law to do so.
- When reporting on individuals who may be sick or disable, especially children, be aware of the consequences if this information is published. Remember that individuals have lives to live long and the effects of the news you report will follow them for life.
- Do not try to get information from any individual when they are sad.
- Respect the privacy of the sick person, the person with disabilities, and their families at all times.
- Respect the feelings of the bereaved, especially when dealing with disasters. Close-up photography or television images of victims or their families should be avoided wherever possible. If in doubt, leave it out.

Annex IV: Guidelines for Media Professionals: Responsible Representation and Reporting on Violence against Women and Violence against Children

This guidance was developed by UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women in Asia-Pacific and South Asia region as an output of a joint working group to enhance and prioritise messaging and communications on violence against women and violence against children amid and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The guidelines are intended to promote best practices for responsible, ethical and safe representation and reporting of violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) by media practitioners.

Violence against women and violence against children

The United Nations defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”

Violence against children is defined as all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. It is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against a child, by an

individual or group, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity.

Accurate and sensitive media coverage can help victims and survivors of violence, at-risk individuals and their communities find available resources and services that can help them. It can also shed light and address underlying harmful social/gender norms and practices that enable and cause VAW and VAC.

1. Ethical Considerations for Engaging with Survivors

- The interviewee should understand how the information is used and the method in which it will be published, as well as the risks involved and potential outcomes, and their rights to refuse engagement. Survivors who speak out are often at greater risk of further harm or retribution, so ensure explicit consent before interviewing/interacting with an individual/group. Adults should provide informed consent for themselves or children under the age of 18 for whom they are designated guardians.
- Treat the persons being interviewed with respect, value their views and refrain from trying to influence them. Avoid sharing or publishing specifics of an incident that could lead to easier identification of the survivors and violate their privacy.
- Survivors of violence may present symptoms of post-traumatic stress in recounting the circumstances of their abuse. Allow subjects to interact with you as they deem comfortable. Avoid pressing them to provide information. The interaction should stop if the subject feels uncomfortable or does not wish to continue.
- It is useful to research and make available referrals to access local support services and be able to provide survivors with information about referral services and prevention programmes.
- Place special attention when communicating with survivors to protect their privacy. Closely guard your history of interaction with the interviewee, including call histories, messages and other written documentation reflecting your meeting.
- Provide the option of being interviewed by someone of the same gender, if possible. And keep the media team, including the interviewer, photographer or videographer, as small as possible to enhance the survivor's comfort and for confidentiality reasons.
- Protection service providers should be involved at the outset and throughout communications activities that engage survivors of violence. This will help protect their rights and well-being, including making referrals to other support services if desired by the survivor and addressing any other needs or issues that may arise. No interview with a child about abuse should occur without the presence of a social welfare officer or other professional who is supporting the welfare of the child.
- It is essential to ensure that communications on violence against women and violence against children improve the situation rather than cause further harm, such as re-traumatising survivors or confusing those who urgently need help. This principle is known as 'do no harm.'

2. Key points for reporting on or creating awareness around violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC)

- When developing stories, series or editorials about VAW/VAC issues, reinforce gender-based violence (GBV) guiding principles, including a survivor-centred approach. Check whether your story is aligned to the best interest of the child principle.
- Content should ideally provide calls-to-action, including information about locally available support services.

- Preferably, content should be produced in the languages of the target populations, and alternatives to text should be considered in low-literacy settings.
- Avoid sensationalising violence by depicting violent acts in detail, in all types of content (visual, audio and written). Instead, name the type of violence experienced, such as emotional abuse, and move on with the story.
- Avoid visual representations that portray survivors as victims. Instead, aim to show survivors as empowered people who decided to speak up. Visual representations can also show positive behaviour, and they should avoid reinforcing gender inequalities, biases and stereotypes about gender roles or violence, such as female subordination or that physical violence is the only serious form (equal consideration should be given to other serious forms of violence such as sexual, emotional and economic).
- Highlight the actions of the perpetrator in the description of the violence. Avoid making the perpetrator invisible. For example, avoid “xx women were victims of homicide.” Instead, highlight “xx women were killed by a partner.”
- Avoid “victim-blaming” or suggesting that survivors are responsible for causing or provoking violence. Avoid depictions that pose questions or cast responsibility on the survivor for why the violence has occurred.
- Stories should highlight that situations like COVID-19 can lead to an increase in VAW/VAC, but that it is never a cause or an excuse for violence.
- In discussing issues of VAW/VAC, it is important to keep in mind the drivers of gender-based violence: this includes inequitable gender norms, attitudes, power imbalances, patriarchy and harmful masculinities.

3. Considerations when interviewing children

- In interviewing or interacting with a child below the age of 18 or taking their photos/videos, obtain permission from the child’s guardian, be they parents, teachers, school principals or other authorities.
- Ensure that interviews with children are done in presence of a guardian and in a private space. When interviewing a subject, provide the option of being interviewed by an interviewer of the same gender.
- Avoid actions and behaviour that can seem intimidating or cause the child discomfort.
- Regularly check that the child is comfortable to continue with communication, and ensure the child understands he/she can opt-out of the interview at any time.
- Ensure that a social welfare officer or other professional who is supporting the welfare of the child is present when interviewing children about abuse.
- If during the course of an interaction with a child they disclose any information about abuse, whether recent or in the past, the information must be immediately referred to and checked by a social worker or social welfare officer to ensure the interaction does not cause the child distress and so that the child can receive help from a professional. Media professionals are discouraged to intervene on their own and should act only if ordered by the social worker or social welfare officer.
- Be aware of local laws. Some countries or regions have mandatory reporting requirements for disclosures of child abuse. In Laos, in case of witnessing abuse or receiving news of child abuse, you have a responsibility to report to the police immediately. In case of violence against women and children, report to the Lao Women’s Union.

4. Privacy/confidentiality of interviewees

- While taking photos/videos, it is important to make sure the subject's identity is protected. Ensure that the subject is either facing away from the camera or if they are facing the camera, blur their faces. Ensure that the photos do not show the subject in an uncomfortable or compromising position, and ask for informed, documented consent before taking their photos.
- Do not publish a story, image or video that might put individual children, their siblings or peers at risk, even when their identities are changed, obscured or not used.

5. Objectivity

- Avoid providing incentives to the subject to influence her/his response or other information they are expected to provide. Bribery in any form is unacceptable.
- Avoid stories with stereotypes, including openly sexist interpretations of the characteristics and roles of women and men in society. Avoid making gender-based assumptions, including in the depiction of traditional feminine/masculine characteristics or roles.
- Be sure not to discriminate in choosing subjects based on sex, age, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, educational background or physical and mental abilities. Be unbiased in your selection of interviewees.

6. Language

- Use child-friendly, gender-responsive and gender-sensitive language that can be easily understood by the subject during interviews. Unless the subject has specified their gender and gender is relevant to the context, avoid the use of gender-specific pronouns such as "he" or "she." To be inclusive, use the pronoun "they" in place of "he" or "she."
- Avoid the use of language that could cause stereotypes, demean or offend ethnic groups or other communities. Be sure to provide context about the status of the group as vulnerable or marginalized. Referring to a particular group as vulnerable or marginalized without providing context can indirectly reinforce stereotypes about the group being inherently vulnerable.

In addition, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also sets out the following principles and guidelines for media reporting on children:

General principles for media reporting on children

1. Respect the dignity and rights of every child in every circumstance.
2. In interviewing (and reporting on) children, pay special attention to 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.
3. Protect the best interests of each child over any other consideration, including advocacy for children's issues and the promotion of child rights.
4. When trying to determine the best interests of a child, give due weight to the child's right to have their views taken into account in accordance with their age and maturity.
5. Consult those closest to the child's situation and best able to assess it about the political, social and cultural ramifications of any reportage.
6. **Do not publish a story or an image that might put the child, their siblings or peers at risk, even when their identities are changed, obscured or not used.**

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 the pain of traumatic events.

2. Do not discriminate in choosing children to interview because of their sex, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities.
3. No arrangement: do not ask children to tell a story or do something, which is not their's.
4. Ensure that the child or guardian knows they are talking to 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.
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.

Guidelines for reporting on children

1. Do not further stigmatize any child; avoid categorizations 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 victim of sexual abuse or exploitation
 - A perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse
 - HIV positive, or living with AIDS, unless the child, a parent or a guardian gives fully informed consent
 - Charged or convicted of a crime.
 - A victim of COVID-19
 - An orphan
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 current or former child combatant
 - An asylum seeker, a refugee or an internally 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 in the event of any stigmatization or reprisals.
6. Confirm the accuracy of what the child has to say, either with other children or an adult, preferably with both.
7. **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.**

Child rights: the rights of all children

All children have the right to:

- be born with a name and a nationality.
- have a family that is loving, warm, and caring.
- live in a peaceful community and a good environment.
- have adequate food and a healthy and refreshed body.
- health and medical services.
- a good education and to develop to the best of our ability.
- be given the opportunity to play, to relax.
- be protected from abuse, exploitation, neglect, danger and violence.
- receive protection and assistance by the government.

- express our opinions.

All children must have access to health care, education, equality and protection services, so that humanity can move forward unceasingly.

Annex V'. The Ethics of Lao Journalists

- 1. The ultimate goal of the Lao media is to serve the mission of building and safeguarding the peace, independence, democracy, unity and prosperity of Lao PDR under the leadership of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. No matter where or in what context, journalists are moving towards this ultimate goal.**
- 2. The media exercises the right of citizens to freedom of information. Journalists must be adaptable and, honest and respect the truth. Every statement issued to the public must reflect the truth and reality in its social context. Do not slander or fabricate events. Journalists have the responsibility to provide information to the public based on the facts, accurately to the essence of the evolution of what happened. This is to lead the voice of society.**
- 3. The media is the means for information that is essential to social and cultural life. Journalists respect and exercise the freedom of the media. By being responsible to society, journalists should respect the people's democratic state, the multi-ethnic Lao people, and the freedom of professional activity under the laws. Journalists abide by the rules of the media and should not act in violation of the ultimate goal of the Lao media and the national interest even under the pressure or when forced.**
- 4. Along with the exercise of freedom of the media, the exercise of the right to answer questions and the right to reject, which are the principles that constitute the principle of freedom of the media, journalists have the right to adhere to their correct press statements. However, they must respect the people's right to answer questions and the right to reject in accordance with the law.**
- 5. Journalists must protect the source of information and keep the confidentiality of the person who provides information for the news in accordance with the law.**
- 6. The Lao media promotes the culture of the nation, while respecting the culture and spiritual values of the people, striving to unite the Lao people including all ethnic groups for peace, friendship and understanding between nations and countries in the world.**
- 7. Journalists contribute to promote the interests of the internal and external communities, respect human rights. Do not abuse the press to oppress the dignity of people and do not harm the interests of others, especially children.**
- 8. Journalists should be always transparent. Do not take advantage of opportunities. Do not make a press statement or not make a press statement for personal gain or interest. Journalists do not abuse their profession for profit.**
- 9. Journalists respect the opinions and views of society, the profession of colleagues, solidarity, cooperation and mutual assistance in work and living activities. Fight against all acts that harm the nation and the interests of the people and are contrary to the ethics of journalists.**
- 10. Journalists live a bright and civilized life, study hard, and be humble. Upgrade your own knowledge, skills and professionalism is the lifelong aspiration and endeavor of a Lao journalist.**

(Adopted at the Congress of the Journalists Association of Lao PDR on 4/4/2007)

Annex VI: The Committee Responsible for the Publication

The guidelines were reviewed and edited by:

From the Government of Lao PDR

- H.E. Mr. Savankhone RAZMOUNTRY, Vice Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, President of the Lao PDR Journalists Association
- Mr. Pinprathana PHANTHAMALY, Vice President of the Lao PDR Journalists Association
- Mr. Somsavath PHONGSA, General Director, Media Department, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism
- Mr. Vannasin SIMMAVONG, Head of Information and Internet Division, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism
- Ms. Kongboun SOULIVONG, Deputy Head of Media Management Division, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism
- Mr. Phouvan CHANTHAMIXAY, Technical staff of Information and Internet Division, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism

From UNICEF

- Mr. Tabongphet PHOUTHAVONG, Communication Specialist
- Ms. Khamsay IEMSOUTHI, Child Protection Specialist
- Mr. Saykoson SANOUBANE, Communication officer
- Ms. Young Joo LEE, Child Protection Specialist
- Ms. Karen HO, International Consultant for Child Protection

Comments provided by:

- Ms. Chongchith CHANTHALANONH, Deputy Director, Secretariat Office of the National Commission for Advancement of Women Mothers and Children
- Mr. Somphet AKHAVONG, Head of Association for Children with Disabilities
- Mr. Khamphin PHILAKONE, Head of the UN Socio-Economic Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ms. Bouaphan LATTHIDA, Head of the Advancement of Women Mothers and Children Division, Ministry of Education and Sports
- Ms. Olayvan KEOBOUNNAVONG, Head of the Policies for Disability and Elderly Division, Department of Policies for Disability and Elderly, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
- Ms. Duangchanh NAMMIXAY, Head of Planning Management Division, Media Department, Central Lao Youth Union of Lao PDR
- Mr. Alexxay SIPHONE, Deputy Head of Computer Emergency Prevention and Response Center, Ministry of Post and Telecommunications
- Lieutenant Colonel Souta VONGSOMPHOU, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the Media Department, Ministry of Public Security
- Ms. Somchai PHALIKHAN, Technical Staff, Advancement of Women Mothers and Children Division, Ministry of Health
- Mr. Sonthachak PHIMMASONE, Technical Staff, Convention on the Rights of the Child Division, National Commission for Advancement of Women Mothers and Children
- Mr. Chittakone INTHASONE, Technical Staff, Child Development Division, National Commission for Advancement of Women Mothers and Children

- Mr. Yangser PAMA, Technical Staff, Labor Management Division, Department of Labor Management, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
- Ms. Ommaly PHATVISAY, Technical Staff, Printing Management Division, Department of Literature and Publishing, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism

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in collaboration with



United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
P.O. Box 1080, Vientiane capital, Lao PDR
Telephone: (+856 21) 487500
Facsimile: (+856 21) 314852
e-mail: Vientiane@unicef.org

Mass Media Department, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism (MICT),
P.O. Box 122, Vientiane capital, Lao PDR
Telephone: (+856 21) 212420
Facsimile: (+856 21) 212420
e-mail: medialao@gmail.com

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