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Children in Namibian Newspapers
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Key Findings

1. Out of 594 stories monitored 9% of sources were children and 91% sources were adults.

2. 34% of the stories were clearly in the children’s best interest.

3. 4% of children stories directly/indirectly accessed children.

4. Boys constituted 54% of the monitored stories while girls made 46% of the stories.

5. Media and Arts, Sports and Education topics each constituted 13% of findings. They constituted 39% of topic when combined.

6. 53% of the children were in News Stories. Editorial, opinion piece, feature, brief, photograph and interview shared the remaining 47%.

7. The various roles or identities given to children were marked by “child” as a role constituting 20% in the monitored stories and children as “victim” constituting 10%.

8. 6% of the stories clearly violated children’s rights, either by identifying them directly or indirectly where they should not have been identified.
1. Introduction

"A nation which fails to nurture, protect, educate and advance the rights and interests of its children today will be all poorer for it when they are adults tomorrow. We cannot make a better investment for the future of this nation than the one we make in our children"  
(Hon Justice Peter Chivute)

Reporting on children in the media is of paramount importance around the world, hence Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) and UNICEF embarked on this project to monitor representation of children in Namibian newspapers.

Children coverage in the media should seek to protect children from all possible harm. Journalists should be sensitive and caring when reporting on issues that are on children or involve children, especially when the story is about the wellbeing and the dignity of the child. Their identity should always be protected when necessary. The failure to protect children in the media when there is a need to might contribute to a victimized generation in the future.

Little research has been conducted about the portrayal of children in the media in Africa and even less on children in the media in Namibia. MMA is one amongst a few organisations that has been consistently monitoring the coverage and portrayal of children in the media. Findings show that children’s rights have been violated in South African media by journalists in different mediums, where they failed to adhere to their code of ethics.

This project is key therefore in offering a first step to understanding and improving children’s’ portrayal in the Namibian media. In addition, the assessment looked at issues involving and affecting children and how they are represented in the media. The assessment also tried to establish whether journalists in Namibia adhered to best ethical practice when reporting on children.
2. Methodology

The research sought to analyse the following:

- How children are represented in Namibian print media
- The portrayal of children’s rights and meaningful participation
- Ethics - Outlining ethical practice and the best interests of the child and the concept of minimising harm as powerful tools to produce better, more informative and more interesting stories.

2.1. Selection of Mediums

Eight newspapers, namely, Algemeine Zeitung, Republikein, New Era, Informante, Namibian Sun, The Namibian, The Namibian Economist and Windhoek were monitored over a period of one and half months (10 April 2011 to 23 May 2011) for this project. The newspapers were purposively selected for representativity and accessibility.

2.2. Monitoring Process

The monitoring was done in Namibia by 8 first-language Monitors. The Monitors were trained by MMA using an adopted monitoring methodology from South Africa. The monitoring was sent to South Africa, for checking, capturing and analysis.

Monitors were trained to monitors all stories that made reference to the children’s age, showed a picture of a child/children, and stories that were about adults but made reference to them as a child. Only stories with children who were under the age of 18-years were monitored, as people who are above 18-years-old are not regarded as children.

2.3. Media Rating

The following Media Rating System adopted by MMA was used to highlight the best performing media when reporting on children.
Diversity: The media was rated in terms of whether it represented children in a range of different roles and not just as victims of crime or abuse. In addition, the media was rated in terms of whether it represented children from a diversity of ages, races, gender and regions in a clear and ‘fair’ manner.

Rights Respected: The media was rated in terms of whether the child’s rights were respected and whether it gave additional useful information contributing to the protection of children’s rights.

Issues Covered: The media was rated based on whether it covered diverse issues and included news that is relevant to children.

Voices Heard: The media were rated based on whether the children were accessed directly or indirectly when in their best interest.

Ethics: The media has been rated based on whether the journalists adhered to the code of ethics and relevant laws.

2.4. Limitations of the research

Efforts were made to include as many mediums as possible. However, we only managed to monitor eight of them, due to difficulties accessing them. As a result we conducted our research based on the mediums that were available to our monitors.

The monitoring was for a one month period only, which makes it very difficult to get the best data that one can use to judge with conviction the medium performance in Namibia as the best or worst.

The experience of the monitors was challenging as it was their first time conducting monitoring, which required special attention. However, MMA staff in South Africa, who checked the monitoring, ensured that the monitoring was of the best quality.
3. Media Code of Ethics in Namibia and children

In July 2009 the Editors Forum of Namibia adopted a Code of Ethics for the Namibian media and complaints procedures, by which aggrieved members of the public may make complaints against the media. This Code of Ethics fully complies with the Namibian Constitution.

The Code of Ethics is seen as a cornerstone of self-regulation to which the media has made binding commitments. Broadcaster, editors, journalist and publishers are expected to ensure that the code is adhered to.

The Code of Ethics in Namibia requires that the media observe the basic principles of good journalistic practice: accuracy, fairness, independence, protection of sources, consideration for the rights to privacy and others.

Furthermore, the Code of Ethics in Namibia promotes the interests of children and requires journalists not to identify a victim of a sex crime or a child offender unless it’s in the public interest.

The protection of children in Namibian Media is based on the principles prescribed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child which the country ratified on the 28th September 1990. The Convention on the Rights of the Child requires children’s rights to be protected and respected without any kind of discrimination.

Children’s rights are universal and their vulnerability requires vigorous monitoring to ensure that children’s rights are not violated.¹ These ethics help us determine whether journalists adhered to code of ethics when reporting on children.

¹ See www.mediaombudsmannamibia.org
4. Findings

This chapter focuses on the findings of the monitoring outcome of the research and is divided into different sub-sections to simplify the presentation of the findings. In total, across all mediums 6489 stories were monitored of which 594 were about children.

4.1 Newspapers Rating

The DRIVE Criteria was applied to rate the performance of all the mediums monitored when reporting on children stories. The table below shows the ratings of all mediums (See methodology section on DRIVE Criteria).

Table 1: Newspaper Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Right respected</th>
<th>Voice heard</th>
<th>Issues In Depth</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>Overall Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republikein</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Namibian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibian Sun</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Era</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algemeine Zeitung</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informante</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Namibian Economist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windhoek Observer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 above shows that after the evaluation of all mediums monitored using the DRIVE criterion (used to highlight the best performing medium) the Republikein newspaper ranked first overall and the Windhoek Observer ranked last at number 8. The ratings are shown in the rating column in the above table.
4.2 Sources in the Stories

Sources are important as they indicate whose voices are represented in the media. The media use sources not only as a point of reference but also to build an ideology around the issues being discussed. Hence it is important to analyse who speaks in the media. Children were regarded as sources where they were mentioned, named, accessed and their age given. However, adults were regarded as sources only where they were accessed directly and indirectly. The chart below shows the ratio of children and adult sources.

![Chart 1: Children versus Adult sources](#)

Out of the 594 stories monitored only 9% of the sources were children; whilst an overwhelming 91% of sources were adults. This shows that children sources in the eight mediums monitored were far fewer than the adult sources.

The gap between children and adult sources is resoundingly high which suggests that adult sources are considered to be more credible than children. The same trend is common in South African newspapers where a report on children in the news shows a huge disparity in children and adult sources in the media. The December report by MMA (2010) shows that 12.7% of sources were children compared to 87.3% of adult sources.
4.3  *Children’s Rights in the News*

Children’s rights should always be respected in the media especially in cases where the child is abused, a suspect, a witness, parents involved in a divorce or maintenance dispute. Children should not be named or identified directly or indirectly where their privacy needs to be respected. The chart below shows the results for children’s rights in the newspapers.

When reporting on children, media should not identify a child directly or in directly by name, or give information on where the child lives, the child’s family name or any of the child’s relations, what school the child attends or any other means where a child may be recognised by people who know him/her.

The chart below shows the results for children’s rights in the newspaper.

![Chart 2: Children’s Rights](image)

Out of 594 stories, 6% violated children’s rights whilst the remaining 94% did not violate children’s rights. Children’s rights were violated when stories failed to protect their identity when necessary. The violation of children’s rights in Namibia is lesser when compared to South Africa. According to MMA’s December (2010) report, children’s rights in South Africa were violated in 7% of stories.

For Example: The right of the child was violated when she/he was indirectly named in the story entitled “Praededenz-Urteil beendet Prozes” (Algemwine Zeitug, 19/05/2010, p3). Despite the fact that the suspect was sentenced, it remains the prerogative of the newspaper to continue to protect the victim from the social challenge that he/she may encounter if identified, such as discrimination and humiliation.
However, in 94% of the stories, children’s rights are not violated. In this case the stories have gone beyond what the journalist is expected to do to protect the rights of the children. The stories protected the identity of the children when necessary as required by law.

For example: in the story entitled “Boys in court for rape of mentally challenged girl” (Namibian Sun, 06/05/2011, P3). The story does not name or identify the child victim and it goes beyond by explaining that the child cannot be named because she is underage.

4.4 Children’s voices

It is very important to understand how children were sourced, or how their voices were or weren’t used, as it helps us understand the extent to which children are sourced by different newspapers. The importance of a source is often judged by the manner in which they were accessed; for example an important source will likely be named, accessed and often even photographed. The graph below shows how children were accessed during the monitoring.

**Figure 1: Children Access**

Children were accessed, i.e. they were quoted directly or indirectly in 4% of the 594 children stories that were monitored. Children were predominantly mentioned by means of age or reference but not named, which constituted 46%. In the remaining 50% of stories children were photographed and named at the same time.

It is of concern that only 4% of children were accessed in the stories that involved them. These results show that children’s voices are not recognised or heard in the newspapers.

For Example: The story entitled “Children’s open parliament” on New Era (09/05/2011, P4). The story failed to access the children despite it being the positive story about children but yet it pictures them.
4.5 **Representation by Publication**

The importance of focusing on the representation by publication helps to understand which medium sourced children more than the other. It also gives an idea of where children’s interests are prioritized. The table below shows child representation by the mediums.

**Table 2: Children Stories per Medium**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDIUM</th>
<th># Children stories in period</th>
<th>Average No. of stories per Medium</th>
<th>% of Children’s stories of all news stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algemeine Zeitung</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Era</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>798</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informante</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibian Sun</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Namibian</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republikein</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1197</td>
<td>7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Namibian Economist</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windhoek Observer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The extent to which children stories were covered in various monitored newspapers in Namibia showed significant variation.

Algemeine Zeitung ranked the first on stories that involved children at 15.05% and was followed by New Era at 11.03%. The worst ranked is Windhoek Observer with 3.16% of children stories.

These results clearly indicate that the tabloid newspapers in Namibia reported more children stories during the monitoring period either by naming, access, picturing or making reference to children. The two broadsheet newspapers with the lowest results were Windhoek Observer and the Namibian Economist. The reason the broadsheets scored the lowest when compared to the tabloid might be that they are weekly newspapers, but these aspects need to be interrogated further.

4.6 **Types of Stories in which Children Appeared**

The type of story determines the importance of the issue. Usually news stories are event-based, whilst longer and in-depth stories such as feature articles are issue-based. In most cases mediums have more news stories than feature stories because of time and resource constraints. This is understandable however not desirable, hence we encourage mediums especially on issues concerning children to include more feature pieces. Not only does this help raise profile of children but it is also more likely to bring across the complexity required for addressing matters relating to children. The graph below shows the type of children stories.
Fifty-three percent of the monitored stories on children were news stories, whilst 21% were photographs and 10% were feature/news analysis. Sports, briefs, opinion piece, editorial and interview stories were 16%.

The majority of children stories appeared in the news section of the paper. This is interesting as the news section usually constitutes the largest section of the newspaper, regardless of whether it is tabloid or broadsheet. This suggests on some level that the newspapers have not neglected events that involved children.

### 4.7 Topic where children appeared

A topic is regarded the central subject of the story. A topic list was developed and monitors chose only one topic for each relevant story. The topic codes were used to see which issues children were most likely to be featured in. Below is a table that shows the top 10 topics in all children stories.

**Table 3: Children’s Topic (Top 10 i.e. 76% of all stories about children)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Total stories</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media &amp; Arts</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster/Accident</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice System</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality/Profile</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social welfare</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict/ Political Violence</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sports, education, media and arts constitute 39% of the topic that children are involved. These topics share 13% each. However, children featured less in health, crime, disaster and conflict stories which constituted 4% each. Disaster constituted 8% of the stories; the reason might be increased coverage of floods in the country. Both justice system and profile constituted 6% of the stories each. Social welfare constituted 5% of the stories.

The fact that children appeared regularly in sports, education, media and arts demonstrates that they are covered in stories on topics that are perceived as positive, although, this does not necessarily mean that these three topics had stories that were all positive.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that children featured less in topics such as crime, conflict and disasters; this is supported by the relatively low levels of portrayal of children ad victims.

### 4.8 Origin of Stories

The origins of the story in this report help us to understand where the events that involve or include children are happening and which regions are getting more coverage. As with other core issues of national importance it would be expected that children are shown form a diversity of regions within Namibia. The table below show the percentage and ranking of the origins of the stories.

**Table 4: Origin of Children stories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khomas Region</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oshana Region</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erongo Region</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karas Region</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otjozondjupa Region</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omaheke Region</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National and Khomas region constitutes 24% each of the origin of children stories. This means that 24% of children stories were clearly identified as national interest and 24% located and specific to the Khomas region. The stories that are of international interest constitute 18%. These stories focused on children from other continents and 6% of the stories focused on children stories around Africa. Oshana and Erongo had 4% each of children stories. Karas is the only region with 3% of children stories. Regional, Otjozondjupa, Omaheke, Ohangwena, Kunene, Hardap, and Caprivi region shared 2% of children stories in all the newspapers monitored. Other regions such as Omusati, Oshikoto and Kavango region share 1% each on the origin of the children stories. These are the regions with the lowest children stories in the newspapers.

The trend seems that the region where the capital city is found had a lot of children stories. Khomas region, which includes Windhoek, had a high number of stories and the rural areas had the
lowest number of children stories. This is common in the monitoring done in South Africa by Media Monitoring Africa (2010), which showed that Gauteng had a higher number of children stories.

This trend may occur for a variety of reasons including location of news agencies as well as accessibility of children and children’s stories.

4.9 Children’s Roles

It is also important to focus on the roles and identities attributed to children in news stories as it offers some indication of diversity and how they are seen in the media. For example, portraying children in limited roles is not only inaccurate but it may also indicate stereotypes being perpetuated. The research decided to look at how the children are portrayed in the newspapers by focusing on their role in the stories. The graph below shows the top ten roles of the children in stories.

Figure 2: Children’s Role (Top ten roles i.e. 84% of all roles identified)

Children are predominantly sourced as a child, which constituted 20% of the stories monitored, which together with the third most accessed role for children sources as a child as a member of the family unit (14%) indicates that over one third of all roles of children ascribe them little other identity or value other than child or as part of a family unit. Such identification is not unusual for children but it would be most unusual for adults to be similarly identified, only as adults or brother of or sister of. Sports person is the second highest individual role at 16% which is likely to be positive. Learner /Student constituted 11% and victim only constituted 10% of the children’s role. The remaining 42 roles include roles such as suspect, child witness, award winner, entertainer and etc constituted 45% of children role.

In Namibia’s case 10% of the children were sourced as victims which is significantly less compared to the newspapers in South Africa. According to MMA December (2010) report, South African newspaper had 18% of the children sourced as victims. However, the fact that children victims were sourced less in Namibia than in South Africa should not be a justification for portraying
children as victims in Namibian newspapers. Children should only be portrayed as victims when necessary such as when they are abuse either physically or emotionally.

4.10 **Boys Vs Girls representation in the stories**

The sex representation is included in this research to help understand how boys and girls are portrayed in the newspapers. It helps understand which roles boys and girls were given in the stories. The graph below shows the role of the children based on their sex.

**Figure 3: Boys vs. Girls Representation**

Boys are sourced more often when compared to girls; 54% of sources were boys and the remaining 46% were girls. While this is clearly not equal it should be noted that it is significantly higher than the Namibian media general portrayal of women and men which according to the GMMP 2010/2011 was 24% Female and 76% Male.

The biggest discrepancies between sexes were in categories of ‘victim’ and ‘sport person.’ Girls were sourced as victims 18% of the time and boys 6%. Girls were almost half as likely to be sourced as a sport person at 16% versus boys with a significantly high 30%.

Girls are portrayed as a likely victim in the stories when compared to boys. These results sought to cement the socially accepted idea that female children are more likely to be victimized than male children. According to MMA December (2010) report, in South Africa girls were portrayed as victims in 25% of cases compared to 20% for boys.

The same sentiments can be echoed around the sports person as a children’s role. Male children are seen to be more involved in sports activities than female.
4.11  Children representation by Age

Children get different attention in the media. Infants do not receive the same coverage as teenagers. Teenagers are seen to be able to express themselves clearly, unlike infants. The graph below gives us an idea of which age group is likely to be shown more than others.

*Graph 2: Children Representation by age*

Children’s age is not always specified. In most cases, children’s ages were either not specified or children were identified as a members of a group where the age could not be determined.

Where the age was specified results show that children between the ages of 13 and 18 dominated the coverage in the children’s stories. They constituted 25% of the sources. While the children between the ages of 1 to 2 constituted 1% of the coverage in children stories.

4.12  Children’s Best Interests

When monitoring stories in newspapers it is important to always look at the headlines, image and article to determine whether they are clearly in the best interests of the child. It also helps us understand how children and children’s rights are portrayed. The graph below shows how frequently children are portrayed in a manner in which their best interests are clearly promoted and or protected in headlines, images and articles.
The Namibian newspapers monitored found that 15% of the headlines in the stories monitored were clearly in the best interests of the children or clearly portrayed children in a positive way. While 4% of images were clearly in the best interests of children and 30% of articles were in the best interests of the children. The findings in this regard are indicative of broader awareness and respect for children and children’s rights in coverage.

For example: The story entitled "Boy in court for rape of mentally challenged girl" on Namibian Sun (06/05/2011, P4). The story is about the arrest of the boy who allegedly raped a mentally challenged 13-year-old. The story is in the child’s best interests because it has protected the identity of both the child suspect and child victim and yet reports on an important matter. By protecting the children’s identities, and by not offering graphic detail the story avoids further exposing the children to potential harm.

When focusing on the best interest of a child, in addition to the headline, image and article being considered in making an assessment of that particular story, any relevant ethical principles, whether the child was accessed or whether the child was identified or identity protected was also taken into consideration.

4.13 Ethical Principles

The ethical principle guidelines help us understand whether the story clearly promotes respect of human rights and best practice or clearly violates them. The stories were assessed using internationally accepted ethical standards of journalism. The stories were assessed on whether the principles were clearly supported or clearly violated. The graph below shows the clearly violated and clearly supported principles.
Table 4: Origin of Children stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Principle</th>
<th>Clearly Supported</th>
<th>Clearly Violated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Story seeks and express the truth</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Story is independent and objective</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Story minimises harm</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are afforded special protection</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes are Avoided</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s interests are taken into account</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from the table above, 25% of the stories monitored clearly sought to express the “truth” in their reporting by accessing sources to validate the assertions made in the stories. The 3% of stories monitored that failed to seek to express the “truth” failed to access sources to prove the credibility of the story or used unnamed sources which raises questions around the credibility of those sources and consequently the story.

Furthermore, 5% of the stories clearly took children’s best interests into account by giving them a voice. But equally so, children’s interests were neglected in some of the stories by failing to give children a voice to express their feelings when it was necessary. For example, in the story entitled “Boy 12 wears a skirt to school,” the story failed to give the boy an opportunity to speak his view in his self-initiated protest yet it names and photographs him. The story should have accessed the boy to understand the reasons and intended outcome of his protest.

4.14 Story Quality

The research also looked at aspects that speak to the quality of reporting. In this regard MMA looked at whether the story has the necessary information to help the reader understand the story in terms of where the story is happening, who is involved and what is happening. Several aspects are considered to help establish the quality of the story, such as whether the story explains the possible consequences, solutions, necessary legislation and provides the reader with necessary information on where to get help if needed. The graph below shows the results of the quality indicators used.

Graph 5: Story Quality
All stories monitored have managed to give the context basic in all their stories. The Context basic gives the reader an idea of where the story originates from and what is happening in the story.

Furthermore, 69% of the stories managed to give context in-depth. The context in-depth is important because it helps the reader understand the extent to which the newspapers covered the stories and delved into more complex issues, such as whether the stories are recurring or talk about the broader social consequences. For example, when a child rape story goes beyond the rape incident and looks at the story as a social problem, such a story is categorized as showing context in-depth.

The graph shows that 39% of the stories focused on the causes and 13% on the consequences of the events/issues in the stories. It is likewise disappointing that only 6% of the stories provided a possible solution to the problems in the monitored stories.
5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

The assessment of children’s coverage in the Namibian newspapers during the period April-May 2011 is the first step in a process of improving the overall coverage and portrayal of children in the media. While the percentage of stories about or mentioning children is at 9% there is clearly room to ensure that more children are seen and heard, this is especially the case when it is considered that children’s voices heard in only 4% of the stories on children. It is also of concern that 6% of stories about children violate their rights.

Journalists must get the balance right between protecting children who may be made more vulnerable by media coverage, and accessing them when it’s in their best interests. It’s a difficult balancing act, and there is clearly is room for improvement in both of these aspects of children’s reporting.

Recommendations

Namibia generally has a relatively good regulatory framework when it comes to the protection of children’s in the news. However, we have seen instances where children’s rights are violated by the media in that country. MMA recommends that the press ombudsman carefully examines the existing code for Namibia and also starts to hold those media who violate children’s rights, accountable. This together with the proposed workshop and awareness raising will encourage journalists and the media in general to report on children more fairly and accurately and also to give them a voice. Crucially however it is imperative that the buy-in and support of the media in Namibia is secured so as to impact newsrooms on a practical basis.
In addition journalists and the media as a whole have a critical role to play in improving representation of children. Some ways in which the media can further contribute are outlined below:

• Reporters should be encouraged to generate stories about children - rather than relying on traditional hocking or otherwise “newsworthy” events to happen before covering children’s issues.

• Children are involved in a diversity of exciting and interesting activities. Many of these will make for equally exciting and interesting stories.

• Not only is supporting children in the best interest of a society, but most adults have children and therefore are interested in children’s issues.

• When writing about children, journalists should engage with them as much as possible - and at the same time exercise extreme caution in dealing with children whose rights have been violated.

• Help realise children’s right to participation as guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child by talking to children. Not only will talking and listening to children give them a sense of involvement in their own story, it will also enrich the final story. Moreover, only quoting a child is not likely to expose their identity and there are many creative ways to take anonymous photographs. Ultimately, this will add depth and substance to the story and make it more interesting to read.

• Wherever possible, stories about children should be accompanied with additional information that might educate and empower readers and children in particular.

• Every story on children should be considered an opportunity to raise awareness about children’s rights.

• Encourage news rooms to adopt child focused guidelines on reporting on children that have been developed with children and journalists.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Children access Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Source Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Accessed Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Accessed and Named</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Accessed, Named and Photographed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Accessed and Photographed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Named Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Named and Photographed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Photographed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Author ((thus automatically named and accessed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mentioned by means of age or reference but not named or accessed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2: Quality of Stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CB</th>
<th>Context basic: Does it mention any basic statistics or facts about where it happened, does it show a map, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Context in depth: Is the story given greater context? Does it talk about the broader social consequences? Does it talk about tragic accidents as recurring patterns?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Causes: Does the story explain the causes of the event?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Consequences: Does the story describe the consequences of the accident or disaster or how it impacts on broader society?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Solutions: Does the story offer any possible solutions or means of addressing the problems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Relevant legislation: Does the story mention any relevant legislation or policy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH</td>
<td>Self Help: Does the story provide information to help the reader e.g. in a drug abuse story, does it give information on where to go to get help for drug addiction, in terms of a sexual abuse or child abuse story, where can anyone go or phone to receive help. Does the article provide tool bars (such as columns, graphs or tables) to detect signs of child abuse/sexual abuse/drug abuse etc. Does the story provide information necessary to make an informed self-help story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBI</td>
<td>Child’s Best Interest: Is the story in the child’s best interest? Is the story beneficial to the child or not? Is the child portrayed in a positive light?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 3: Quality of Stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Story does/do not seek and express the truth</td>
<td>Is the story accurate? Or there any glaring inaccuracies? Does the story have more than one source? Are sources (other than people who have been abused) named? Are the principles of the Constitution clearly promoted or violated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Story is/is not independent and objective</td>
<td>Does the story provide context? Does the story respect the rights of those in the story? Does the story present competing perspectives, i.e., is it balanced and fair?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Story does/do not minimise harm</td>
<td>Does the story directly or indirectly protect or promote the best interests of the child? Has an effort been made in the story to minimise harm. Is the story clearly in the best interests of the child? If not, e.g., the child is named and shouldn’t be, then choose principle 4. Have identities/names of children been revealed? Has an effort been named to prevent harm to the child?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Children are afforded special protection</td>
<td>In abuse stories, has the identity of a child been revealed directly or indirectly? Has an effort been made to prevent harm to the child? Has an effort been made in the story to minimise harm? Are the children’s rights to privacy and/or dignity protected? Have identities/names of children abused/violated been given? Is there clear informed consent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Avoid stereotypes</td>
<td>Does the story clearly promote or challenge stereotypes about children? E.g., children are seen as helpless victims. Child victims may be blamed for the crimes perpetrated against them, e.g., short skirts, suggestive behaviour, and claiming to be older than they really are used as a justification to statutory rape and child abuse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Children’s interests are/are no taking into account</td>
<td>Is the story disregarding of children’s feelings? Does it make them feel sad about themselves?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Children Abuse is a Human Right Violation</td>
<td>Does the story clearly represent child abuse as human right violation or does it clearly trivialise child abuse?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Stories do/do not respect and engage with cultural and sexual practices as well as drug awareness</td>
<td>As culture is not fixed, but constantly negotiated, often at the expense of women, there should be debate about cultural practices. Traditions, which may have negative consequences for women, include inheritance laws, bride inheritance, bride kidnaping, virginity testing and female circumcision. Does the story attempt to give voice to the voiceless?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Be aware of the HIV/AIDS dimensions to child abuse stories</td>
<td>Does the story raise HIV as clear issue linked to child abuse? Does the story consider the HIV implications of child abuse?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Be gender proactive and consider the gender angles to all stories</td>
<td>In stories, boys are represented as being active and jovial whereas girls are represented as being passive and quiet, be alert to this kind of stereotyping. Often the gender aspects to a story, including how events, policies, decisions or programmes affect girls are neglected is this evident in your story. Does the story include girls as broader community?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: MMA Profile

The Media Monitoring Africa (Formally Media Monitoring Project) is an independent, non-governmental organisation that has been monitoring media and its representation of human rights since 1993.

Vision
Media Monitoring Africa (MMA)’s vision is a responsible, quality media that enables an engaged and informed citizenry in Africa and across the world.

Mission
MMA aims to promote the development of a free, fair, ethical and critical media culture in South Africa and the rest of the continent. To achieve MMA’s vision, the three key areas that MMA seeks to address through a human rights-based approach are:

- Media Ethics;
- Media Quality; and
- Media Freedom.

Objectives
MMA seeks to realise the following core objectives:

- To be the pre-eminent media “watchdog” in Africa;
- Improved news quality and ethics in reporting in Africa; and
- Robust and effective communication legislation and media codes of conduct in Africa.

Values

- Transparent- Being open and fair about our standards, values and methodologies;
- Credible- Consistently providing quality research and informed opinion based on best-practice;
- Innovative- Demonstrating leadership, creativity and progressive approaches to meet the changing needs of the media environment;
- Informed- In-touch with current media issues impacting on human rights and democracy, and anticipating future trends; and
- Respect for Human Rights- Ensuring that equality, dignity and participation inform all our work practices and methodologies.