

CHILD RIGHTS AND YOU

Ensuring Lasting Change for Children



CHILD RIGHTS AND YOU

www.cry.org

Ensuring lasting change
for children

Children in News

A Tracking Report

CHILD RIGHTS AND YOU

Children in News: A Tracking Report

© Child Rights and You

152, Kalikapur, Gitanjali Park, New No. 8, 2nd Street, Kolkata - 700099

Phone +91-33-24169507 • Email cryinfo.cal@crymail.org

Table of Contents

PEOPLE BEHIND THIS REPORT	2
INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER 1	
The Media in India	6
CHAPTER 2	
The Methodology	9
CHAPTER 3	
The Findings	11
CHAPTER 4	
An Analysis	21
CHAPTER 4	
Recommendations	25

People behind this report

Some of CRY's volunteers are behind the production of this report. The group comes from diverse backgrounds and went through orientation sessions to understand the subject and methodology before starting the newspaper tracking exercise. CRY is grateful and deeply appreciative of their dedication and commitment. They are (in alphabetical order):

Abhishek Chowdhury is a CRY volunteer since November 2009. He is from the 2011 batch of the Bengal College of Engineering and Technology, Durgapur. He tracked The Hindustan Times coverage and also contributed to documentation.

Akshita Gupta interned with CRY during the summer of 2010. She is a student of Warwick University, UK.. She compiled the first draft of this report.

Ansuman Bhattacharjee has been volunteering with CRY since November 2009. He is from the 2011 batch of the Bengal College of Engineering and Technology, Durgapur. He tracked The Hindustan Times coverage and also contributed to documentation.

Chanakya Hridaya interned with CRY during the summer of 2009. He studies engineering at the IIT, Kharagpur. He along with Sophia drafted the first report on print media trends tracking three newspapers and also a sample survey of newspaper reader awareness.

Saptaparna Bhattacharya is a homemaker. She volunteered with CRY between May 2009- Dec 2010. She has a Master's degree in Sociology and has tracked The Telegraph.

Sophia S Mustafa is a student of law at the RML National Law University, Lucknow. She interned with CRY during the summer of 2009. She, along with Chanakya, drafted the first CRY report on print media trends tracking three newspapers and also completed a sample survey of newspaper reader awareness.

Sourav Guha is a CRY volunteer since September 2009. He is a corporate professional working for CTS, Kolkata. He tracked the Bangla newspaper Ananda Bazar Patrika.

Susmita Ghosh is a teacher who volunteered with CRY in the summer of 2010. She worked with Akshita in compiling the first draft of this report.

Introduction

India today is counted among the fastest developing economies in the world, as well as an emerging economic superpower. In every field, from technology to industry and sports, India is on the ascent.

However, large parts of India still struggle with basic needs. An estimated 47% of children in India are undernourished. Public expenditure on schooling falls short for the number of children entering school-going age every year - total allocations from the Central Government for elementary education were raised by only 15.5 per cent to 25066.70 crores.

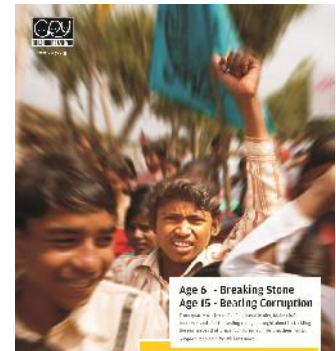
India's public health system is crumbling. In a ranking of 175 countries' public health spending in 2007-08, the World Health Organisation (WHO) ranked India a lowly 171.

For India's 440 million-plus child population – the largest in the world – the impact is disastrous.

Setting the context of the study

As consumers and subjects, the media affects, reaches out to and involves children. Given the huge numbers and formats in media post-globalisation, opportunities to raise issues and encourage interactivity have grown at a never-before rate. But even as children appear more and more in news coverage, their voice finds little or no representation. News reporting that ignores child rights often further exacerbate injustice and inequality.

India ratified the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. As a signatory to the UNCRC and as a liberal democracy, India has the responsibility to protect the interests of children's rights in the media, as well as empower them to participate in their environments through the use of media.



13-year-old Mahendra Rajak and others from a children's group in Uttar Pradesh used the power of the media to get a school in their village

CHILDREN IN NEWS

One of the largest problems regarding the right to expression and communication for children is simply the lack of coverage of children and young people in the news. A frequent criticism of the little coverage that appears is that it too often portrays children in the context of sensationalist issues, e.g., child abuse, exploitation and violence, with little respect for the dignity and privacy of the children and scant opportunity for young people to speak for themselves. Young people around the world feel excluded from or disserved by the media when they are portrayed simplistically as superficial, apathetic, poverty stricken or delinquent.

The Role of the Media

The media, as an instrument, can act as a conscience-keeper of a country, a watchdog and an accountability holder. By highlighting key issues, it can not only help to make people aware, but also make them act in the manner of responsible and well-informed citizens. The media is what can help keep a tab on the authorities of the country, ensuring that they do not overstep their boundaries. It is thus integral to a democracy like India, where every individual is allowed her/his say.

About this Study

Among all forms of the media, it is the print media that has the widest radius of coverage, and is still considered the primary source of credible information in India, with a distinct majority of the Indian population still depending on the newspaper for news of events around the world. It is with this in mind that a group of volunteers at CRY (Child Rights and You) decided to carry out the task of analysing the media's portrayal of the child and children's issues. The group tracked five leading Kolkata-based dailies in the country:

- The Times of India (Kolkata edition)
- The Telegraph (Kolkata edition)
- Ananda Bazar Patrika
- Hindustan Times (Kolkata edition).
- The Hindu, Kolkata Edition (tracked for three months)

Over a period of six months - January to June 2010 - news related to children in these five dailies was checked, monitored and analysed, in order to understand and track how deep and true-to-life the portrayal of children in a particular newspaper is, and how far have these dailies been able to impact their readers.

The Media in India

India has a growing media market, among the largest in the world. India also has among the world's largest child populations. How are children portrayed in the media?

On an average, an Indian spends 2.1 hours a week reading the newspapers or a magazine. By 2007, India had 99 million newspaper buyers – the second largest in the world, after China. Newspapers have become four times more available than they were forty years ago. They have become more accessible in other crucial ways too – newspapers today are attractively designed, most of them in colour, and use easily understood prose.

Despite an almost exponential growth in TV channels, newspapers still continue to affect and change the way people behave politically, socially and economically. The neat, decisive format of the newspaper – and the sense of completeness it conveys – lends the information and opinions it carries credibility. In most cases, newsroom pressures – inadequate or inefficient staffing, pressures to complement the media house's business objectives and the personal biases of editors – gets cleanly ignored, with the view that newspapers themselves, and their readers – often treat news as objective truth.

Anyone who relies completely on mainstream news media may never question what gets into news and what gets left out. What *else* happened yesterday (most mainstream print media are late city editions i.e. published the same night but distributed a day later) does not find its way into mainstream awareness.

Given the fact that newspapers run on circulation figures, the voice of the reader gets very little reflection in a newspaper.

New Trends

In the period following 1990, some hitherto unknown trends have emerged.

First, there is an increasing control of revenue-earning goals and targets over editorial decisions. As the number and variety of media houses grew, each in close competition over advertising, editorial departments were expected to work in tandem with the marketing departments to create a newspaper as the best choice for advertisers (the cost of press advertisements have grown 906% since 1985). A recent Press Council of India report on paid news (published in July 2010) in the Indian media showed how advertisers are paying to get product or service endorsements printed as news. This has resulted in a drastic drop in news space allotment for news that is not in any way linked to gain future advertisements.

Second, the control over large scale media is slowly being consolidated in the hands of a few business families. 70% of the country's newspaper circulation is controlled by 7 families or groups.

The news media is vested with the responsibility of acting as watchdogs, the fourth pillar of democracy. On the basis of this purported role, the print media enjoys wide subsidies in paper costs, a benefit they continue to retain even though the recent Press Council of India report and a range of independent critiques over the last twenty years have pointed out the nexus between advertisers and the media.

The expectation from the media, therefore, is to work in tandem with the UN's Convention of the Rights of the Child, which India signed in 1992, to make sure children's rights are adequately and accurately covered in the media. The other expectation is to make sure children's voices are represented in the media and while reporting, the best interests of the child are kept in the forefront of editorial decisions and journalistic practice.

The Methodology

“Part of the reason why I write about the media is because I’m interested in the whole intellectual culture and the part of it that is easiest to study is the media. It comes out every day. You can do a systematic investigation...There is a lot of evidence about what’s played up and the way things are structured.

- Noam Chomsky, *What Makes mainstream Media Mainstream*, Z Magazine, 2007

After selecting the newspapers to be studied, the assessment was broken into two phases. Initially, The Telegraph, The Hindu and The Times of India were tracked for the period of February to April, 2009. In the following year, The Telegraph, The Times of India, The Hindustan Times, and Ananda Bazar Patrika were tracked for 6 months, from January to June 2010.

The basis for selection was circulation figures. India’s top three English newspapers and the lead Bengali newspaper were selected for study.

Readership figures of newspapers selected for this survey

The Times of India	72.54 lakhs
The Hindustan Times	35.17 lakhs
The Hindu	21.05 lakhs
Ananda Bazar Patrika	62.77 lakhs
The Telegraph	12.04 lakhs

Source: Indian Readership Survey 2010, Quarter 3

Note: All the figures are national, while this study used the Kolkata editions only.

CRY conducted introductory orientations, comprising:

a) Issue analysis: A holistic understanding of children’s issues to ensure a systematic way of understanding the factors that lead to a particular phenomenon.

CHILDREN IN NEWS

- To enable volunteers gain clarity on the distinction between what is but a symptom of an issue and what may be its root cause.
- To identify the range of causal factors located at the micro or the macro levels (including both systemic and structural issues).

b) Interpreting news: In the context of the above, ways to interpret news, analyze then under identified categories.

c) Understanding the working of formats: taking volunteers through how to fill up the formats to how to consolidate entries.

The CRY Volunteers went through online archives of the selected newspapers, coding data using an online form specially created for the study (Refer to Annexure 1). The form enabled instant classification of data into easily viewable spreadsheets.

Parameters for coding, refined over the pilot into the main phase – from the three- month study in 2009 to the six-month study in 2010, included:

- Voices of children reflected or not in the article.
- News written keeping sensibilities in view, sensitive to children’s rights, or not.
 - Use of respectful language while writing about children – especially child victims
 - Children’s organisation recognised or not
 - Whether or not prior permissions were sought for interviewing children
 - Whether confidentiality was maintained
- Voices of other stakeholders reflected or not.
- State’s role highlighted, or not.

Besides the qualitative parameters, other evaluation techniques used included:

- The number, size and positioning of child-related coverage
- The type of coverage – news or feature

The full data sheets can be viewed on <https://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?hl=en&key=tt6zMHJbnwqZpNOXTCLmSmw&hl=en#gid=0>

The Findings

The total number of articles related to children that appeared in the three dailies during the pilot phase – 2009 – were 1004. In the longer phase studied, i.e. six months in 2010, this number drastically reduced to 321. This is because the newspaper *The Hindu* was dropped from the second phase since it is the least circulated in the East and has a reputation for covering development related news, two reasons that make it off-mainstream – for Kolkata.

Thus overall, two per cent of news coverage was related to children in the 3-month study in 2009. This figure dropped to one per cent in the six-month study in 2010.

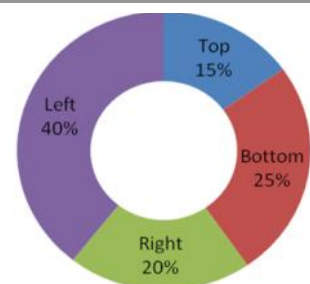
Size and Positioning of Child-Related News

The size of an article and the space in which it is positioned within the newspaper is often considered an indicator of how visible it is. It also shows the probability of people actually reading an article – scientific studies suggest that articles placed upfront on the front page, or that have a larger headline get read more, and by more people.

This study classified articles as small, medium or large, based on a word count.

In the 2009 study, 532 of the 1004 articles tracked - 53% - were medium sized (200-400 words). 368 out

In the 1004 child-related news articles that appeared in *The Telegraph*, *The Hindu*, and *The Times of India* in the period February to April, 2009, the maximum were between 200-400 words



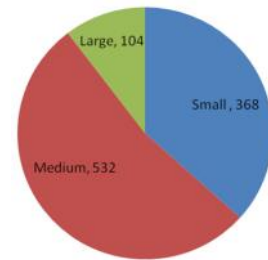
CHILDREN IN NEWS

of 1004 - 37% - were small, less than 200 words, and 104 of 1004 - 10% - were large article – above 450 words.

In contrast, in the six-month study, the majority of articles - 151 out of 321 - - were small, followed by 97 of 321 medium articles and 73 large ones.

This clearly shows that small news items – little more than snippets – are the format of choice for child-related news.

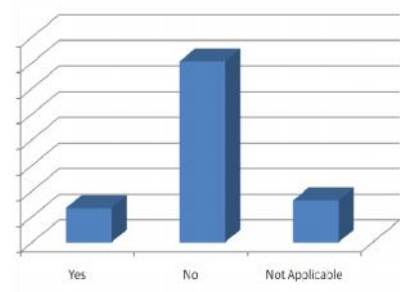
On positioning, the study found that only 12% of the 321 child-related articles i.e. 38 articles over a period of six months, made it to the front page. Most other articles were on pages 6-7, usually in the left hand corner. Studies show that a reader is mostly likely to glance at the top and the right of the newspaper; the left placement *may* push the article into a ‘blind spot’.



Only 15% of child related articles have been placed in a high-visibility area on a page.

The Voice of the Child

Whether the voice of a child is truly reflected in the article or not as against a fact report. As the figure below shows, an overwhelming number of articles did not reflect the voice of children, whether as victims, or peer groups or siblings. The overwhelming reporting technique is to speak to adults, even when the reportage is about a child.



In the 2009 study, 134 – 13.34% of the articles represented the voice of children, and 706 – or 70.3% did not. 164 articles – 16.3% - were coded as not applicable: for instance, an article that

reported water contamination leading to sickness in children did not report who these children were, or mention their right to safe, potable drinking water in homes and at school.

An overwhelming majority of articles tracked did not capture children's voices, in both the 2009 and the 2010 studies.

In the 2010 study, a large majority of the tracked articles were brief reports of news events that did not touch upon human angles at all. This means that readers will fail to register that a violation of rights has taken place.

Case in Point: Tracking News Coverage for Rouvanjit Rawla: A Child Suicide

In February 2010, a 13-year-old boy committed suicide, following which a long history of public humiliation practices and corporal punishment against the child were revealed. In a first of its kind, Rouvanjit's teachers were arrested for a little known and hitherto unused law that bans teachers from beating students. The case captured the nation's attention for various reasons – the obvious defencelessness of the child against adult perpetrators, the fact that his school was among the 'best' in the country, and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights subsequently taking up the case through an independent enquiry.

While most news reports captured all the adult points of view, including the parents of the child, the Police's, the investigating authorities and that of the accused teacher, none of the other children were asked for their point of view, either on the case or on corporal punishment.

This trend followed not just in the initial reporting of the suicide and the subsequent arrests, but even after the Principal was charged with abetment to suicide, more than a year later. In effect, the most widely written about case of abuse against a child did not include a child's point of view.

Unfortunately, by excluding the voice of children from a case that obviously affects them, the media sets the agenda of how society at large treats a case of abuse and mental torture – ultimately, a case where there has been a gross misuse of the power vested in teachers in a classroom situation.

Some questions that the coverage did not cover include - what did Rouvanjit's classmates feel about being beaten or humiliated as a 'disciplinary measure'? Were they aware that corporal punishment is illegal in India, and hence any teacher practising it is breaking the law? Is the corporal punishment culture linked to incompetently trained teachers who are not aware or interested in alternative, better ways to socialise students into acceptable modes of behaviour?

CONTRIBUTORS
The views expressed in this section are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the newspaper.

NEWS DIGEST
Maocist landmine kills 4 securitymen in Malha
The Maoist group, which has been active in the region, used a landmine to kill four securitymen in Malha, a village in the state of Orissa. The group also destroyed a police station and a school in the area.

Football club chief linked with spot-fixing kills self
The chief of a football club in India has committed suicide after being linked with a spot-fixing scandal. The club had been accused of allowing matches to be fixed for betting purposes.

City school principal arrested
The principal of a school in Kolkata has been arrested for his alleged involvement in the suicide of a student. The school was accused of condoning the practice of corporal punishment.

SC on corporal punishment
The Supreme Court has ruled that corporal punishment in schools is unconstitutional. The court said that such practices are inhuman and degrading to the dignity of the child.

For India, CWG bigger than Beijing, Rio Cup
The Commonwealth Games in Delhi are expected to be a major success for India. The country is aiming to win more medals than in previous editions of the games.

Missing Ranthambore tiger spotted in Mathura
A tiger that was reported missing from the Ranthambore National Park in Rajasthan has been spotted in Mathura. The tiger was found in a forest near the city.

A politician may replace Nirmola Akhara
The Nirmola Akhara, a religious organization in India, may be replaced by a politician. The organization has been accused of mismanagement and corruption.

Silver lining for India on Day 1 as Aussies begin to dominate

Lifters Pick Up Two Silvers, Two Bronzes

INDIA'S HAUL ON MONDAY

1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4

INDIA'S HIGHLIGHTS

WRESTLING
Sudhakar Singh (55 kg) won silver, while Anand Singh (55 kg) won bronze.

WRESTLING
Sudhakar Singh (55 kg) won silver, while Anand Singh (55 kg) won bronze.

WRESTLING
Sudhakar Singh (55 kg) won silver, while Anand Singh (55 kg) won bronze.

La Martiniere principal held in suicide case

3 Teachers Also Arrested, Get Bail

Kolkata: In the first arrests of its kind in the country, police in Kolkata on Monday picked up the principal of the city's famous 175-year-old La Martiniere Boys School and three other teachers and booked them for handing out corporal punishment to a student who committed suicide. Sunirmal Chakravarty and the three others were later freed on bail by a city court. Corporal punishment was declared illegal by the Supreme Court in 2000 and the government has repeatedly said beating kids in schools had no place in a teaching system focussed on reducing stress and enhancing analytical skills of the children.

As the government has dithered on enacting a specific law, teachers have continued to lean on the cane to get the lessons through. But few expected premier institutions like La Martiniere for Boys to condone the practice which came to light after Rouvanjit Rawla, a Class VIII student, committed suicide at his home on February 12, four days after he was caned.

The 13-year-old's suicide shocked the city, setting off a clamour for action against the school which initially refused to even allow police officers dealing with the suicide to meet teachers.

On Monday, detectives rounded up Principal Chakravarty, head of the middle school LG Gunion and two other teachers, David Ryan and Partha Datta, before daybreak and produced them at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrates court in the afternoon. The cops wanted to book them for abetting suicide but the court disallowed that charge for lack of evidence.

Rouvanjit Rawla, a Class VIII student, committed suicide at his home on February 12, four days after he was caned

HC notice to state on corporal punishment

Attorney General

The High Court has issued a notice to the state government regarding the practice of corporal punishment in schools. The court is concerned about the health and safety of children and has asked the government to take steps to eliminate such practices.

Missing Ranthambore tiger spotted in Mathura

The tiger was spotted in a forest near Mathura, about 100 km from its home in Rajasthan.

The tiger was reported missing from the Ranthambore National Park in Rajasthan. It was spotted in a forest near Mathura, about 100 km from its home in Rajasthan. The tiger was found in a forest near the city.

A politician may replace Nirmola Akhara

The Nirmola Akhara, a religious organization in India, may be replaced by a politician.

The organization has been accused of mismanagement and corruption.

La Martiniere principal held in suicide case

3 Teachers Also Arrested, Get Bail

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: In the first arrests of its kind in the country, police in Kolkata on Monday picked up the principal of the city's famous 175-year-old La Martiniere Boys School and three other teachers and booked them for handing out corporal punishment to a student who committed suicide. Sunirmal Chakravarty and the three others were later freed on bail by a city court. Corporal punishment was declared illegal by the Supreme Court in 2000 and the government has repeatedly said beating kids in schools had no place in a teaching system focussed on reducing stress and enhancing analytical skills of the children.

As the government has dithered on enacting a specific law, teachers have continued to lean on the cane to get the lessons through. But few expected premier institutions like La Martiniere for Boys to condone the practice which came to light after Rouvanjit Rawla, a Class VIII student, committed suicide at his home on February 12, four days after he was caned.

The 13-year-old's suicide shocked the city, setting off a clamour for action against the school which initially refused to even allow police officers dealing with the suicide to meet teachers.

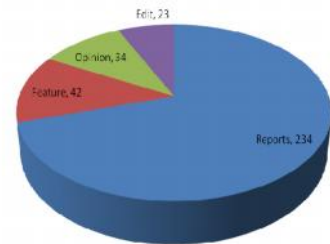
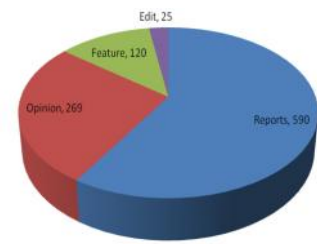
On Monday, detectives rounded up Principal Chakravarty, head of the middle school LG Gunion and two other teachers, David Ryan and Partha Datta, before daybreak and produced them at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrates court in the afternoon. The cops wanted to book them for abetting suicide but the court disallowed that charge for lack of evidence.

Rouvanjit Rawla, a Class VIII student, committed suicide at his home on February 12, four days after he was caned

Type of Article

The articles included in the study were divided into four categories – reports, features, edits, opinion pieces.

As against news reports, feature articles deal with a topic in depth. A feature story differs from a straight news story in one important respect – its intent. A news story provides information about an event, idea or situation. The feature does a bit more – it may also interpret news, add depth and colour to a story, instruct or entertain. In many cases, they focus on human interest. Besides informing, they persuade, observe, evaluate, or evoke emotion.



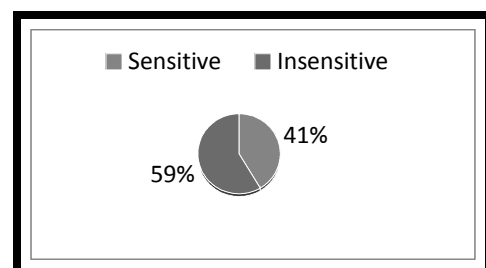
A very large majority of articles related to children are news reports

In the 2009 study, 59% of the reports were news reports. 27% were opinion articles and only 12% were feature articles. A meagre 3% of child-related articles found their way into editorials. In the 2010 study though, the proportion of news-based reports jumps to 73%, with opinion-based articles falling to 9% and 13% as features. Editorials saw a minor increase to 6%.

Sensitivity to Children

Did the coverage that appeared treat children and their issues with empathy? Or did the language and tone tend towards the charity or sympathy mode? Although not an easy call to take, we defined this parameter through three definers:

- Does the article maintain confidentiality and privacy?
- Is the tone respectful and aware of the sensitivities that are cultural, social or gender-based in nature?



- Are preventive measures outlined or mentioned?

In the 2009 study, only 41.3 percent of the articles could be said to be sensitive, the rest, not.

The Telegraph

Issue Date: Sunday , February 1 , 2009

5 infants burnt alive

GAJINDER SINGH



Chandigarh, Jan. 31: Five newborn babies were burnt alive in a state-run Punjab hospital when the incubators they had been kept in caught fire early this morning minutes after their mothers had fed them.

The two girls and three boys, all between three and seven days and under treatment for jaundice, were among 10 infants admitted to Patiala's Rajindra Hospital.

"Two of the babies were injured while three are safe. One injured infant has been referred to the PGI in Chandigarh," hospital superintendent Surinder Singh said.

Patiala police chief Gurmeet Singh said initial investigations pointed to a short-circuit.

Police sources said they were looking into the haphazard electrical wiring inside the unit and whether the incubators were being maintained properly.

The door to the room was also believed to have been locked from outside, leading to a delay in rescuing the infants.

Hospital authorities said the fire broke out around 3 when very few employees were on duty. Relatives of patients admitted to the hospital helped rescue the other infants by breaking open the incubators and taking the babies out wrapped in blankets.

"It was just five minutes earlier that my wife had fed our daughter," said Manjit Singh.

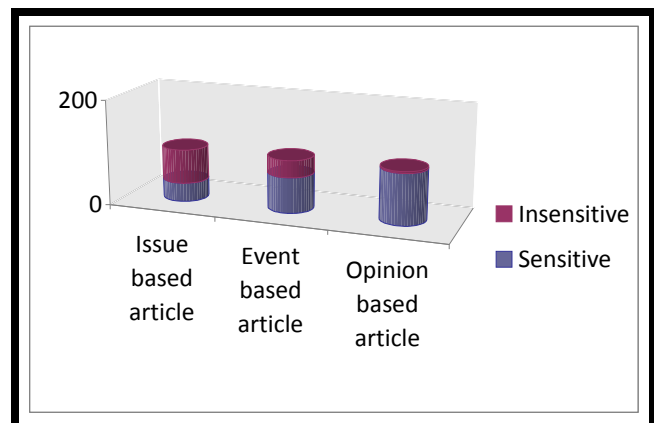
"There were some noises like crackers bursting. By the time we could reach the room, five children, including my daughter, had perished."

Sanjay, an eyewitness, said flames were leaping out of the incubator room. "At first, no one went inside. But when someone shouted there were infants inside, some of us rushed in and broke the glasses of the

incubators to get the infants out. Getting inside the room was frightening with flames touching the roof. Even breathing was difficult."

Some of the rescued infants "had glass splinters on them", Sanjay added.

Chief minister Parkash Singh Badal has ordered a magisterial probe. The government has announced a compensation of Rs 1 lakh for the families of the dead infants.



In the example above, responsibility is not fixed on the duty holders, neither are the survivor's families spoken to for their view on the matter. In fact, this

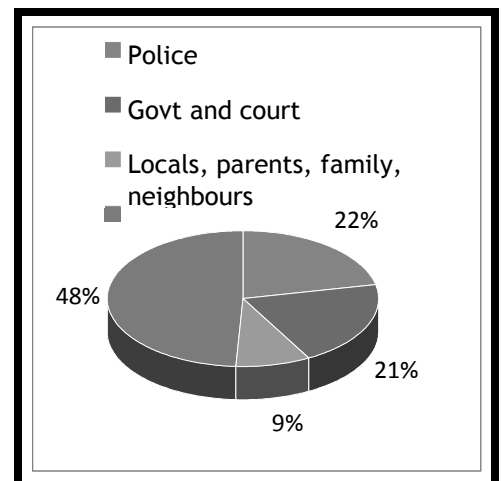
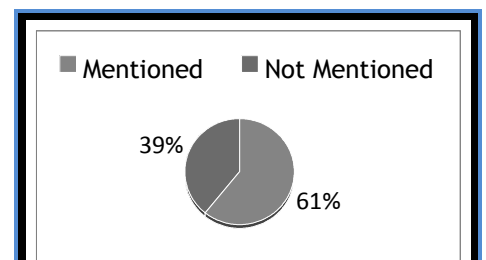
case led to an uproar in the State legislature later (which was reported separately) precisely because it was not an accident, but due to gross negligence by the government hospital. But from the report, it reads as an accident, which by definition is not something anyone can control.

If we take this criteria of segregation to the different types of coverage, a clear picture emerges – opinion pieces are clearly the most sensitive – 96.5 percent of the total coverage. Issue based articles – which have the scope of exploring the issue or event in depth, paradoxically, come out the least sensitive. Even news coverage is more sensitive towards children, with 67.5 per cent of the total news coverage showing this.

On the positive side, 261 of 321 articles used respectful language, however only 19 ensured confidentiality.

Research

Reporting requires identifying and discovering sometimes enormously complex events and representing them responsibly, in summary form. Of primary importance in this process is the role of research. Journalists get trained in neutral, yet thorough investigations, where all relevant facets of the event to be reported are considered while filing the final article. We evaluated all the coverage in the study on whether or not they were thus researched, and found an almost equal division – 49% of the articles studied in 2009 were researched in the necessary manner while 51% were not.

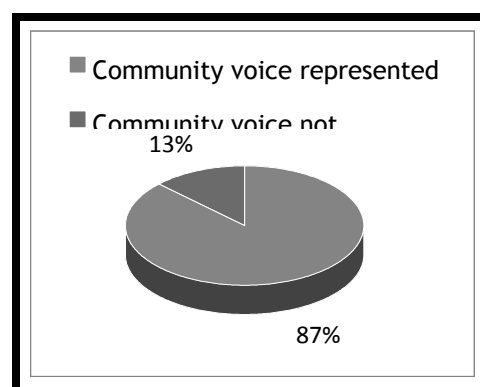


Responsibility of the State

The role of the State as protector of child rights, implementer of laws and holder of the common good cannot be emphasised enough. In India, where legal protection of children's rights is a relatively new phenomenon, it is all the more important that awareness be spread about the ideal role of the State in cases of violations. The study looked at all the tracked articles to see whether or not the role of the State was mentioned and found that in 2009, 31% of the articles tracked mentioned the role of the State, while 69% did not. In the 2010 study, 57% of the articles failed to highlight the role of the State, while 43% did. In most cases – 48% - others (including passers-by, hospitals, institutions, NGOs) are mentioned as sources – with the Police quoted in 21.53% of the articles.

The government and courts contribute to 21.51% of the articles, while the family, neighbours and local people are quoted in 8.71% of the articles.

Overall, the community's voice finds representation in 87% of the articles in the 2010 study - a positive trend.



Children in photographs

Children appear frequently in photographs and other visual media. In fact, the frequency with which they appear in visual media belies the findings of their invisibility in terms of coverage. Most coverage shows children as passive, non participant subjects, or as visual support for stories. In the example below, the children (photographed from a vehicle, the window of which is visible on the left and right frames) are nameless faces of the story on a Supreme Court directive on food distribution in Orissa.



The Hindu A file picture of Children at Amlapalli village in Nuapada District, Orissa. Photo: V.V. Krishnan.

An Analysis

This brief study clearly shows that children's issues are not a priority for the print media studied. The number of articles that gave complete, comprehensive and sensitive coverage to child-related issues were too few to count (and thereby influence public opinion).

A majority of articles were event reports, and the violation of children's rights remains invisible to India's daily news-reading public. They remain hidden in the inner pages and are small in size, escaping the notice of the average reader.

Looking at the trend of under-representation of children's voices, a possible reason behind this may be that journalists themselves may not be aware of children as 'individuals with rights', and not merely as adults-in-the-making or unformed human beings. Which is why it continues to be 'morally' acceptable to beat a child to discipline him or her, as the Rouvanjit case clearly showed - school authorities continued to claim the caning was done for disciplinary purposes, choosing to ignore that in India, beating children is outlawed, whatever the purpose. While the findings of this study are inadequate to make a direct causal link between under-representation of children's voices in these particular newspapers and the larger society's silence on children's rights, it is clear that common adult attitudes about children find expression in the way news is reported.

On the positive side, numerous examples from independent groups and children's groups show that when children's right to expression is given some scope to develop, it can and does report issues in new light, often hitherto unknown. Children can and do meaningfully express themselves on issues and decisions that affect them. A growing number of media houses and interest groups have started creating opportunities for young people to participate in the media, through developing content, writing video and photography.

Good Practices

However, it is not that good practices do not exist at all in India. From the same industry where child related news and views are often one-sided and incomplete comes a range of good practices that the industry could easily adapt.

The Hindu, Deccan Herald and *The New Indian Express* all have special supplements for children – *Young World*, *Open Sesame* and *School Magazine* respectively. Besides the staples: cartoon strips, jokes and activity corners (quizzes, word games), these supplements provide some space for children's creative expression by inviting reader contributions in the form of poems, essays, letters, stories and artwork.

They also feature various kinds of information that can be broadly categorised as general knowledge, listings and reviews of children's books (the July 22nd edition of *Young World* called for children's comments on the latest *Harry Potter* book), as well as brief articles on a range of subjects, including events and issues of current interest and concern (for instance, on global warming, the 2012 Olympics to be held in London and road safety).

The Hindu's Young World for eight years in the 1990s ("Spaced Out"), dealt with a wide range of issues triggered by current affairs, child labour, education, gender, discrimination, environmental degradation, poverty, justice, war, social conflict and caring for the sick and the elderly.

Good practices also come up from non-mainstream independent initiatives which are often led by children. *Bhima*, a wallpaper for street and working children produced by The Concerned for Working Children, continues to be a popular medium of communication which is avidly read, discussed and contributed to by both urban and rural children. The only disadvantage of such an initiative is that it has very limited reach. But on this account, it addresses the particular concerns and issues of its readership.

According to a report in *The Financial Express*, members of Bal Panchayat - a forum for children's self-expression - analysed the coverage of children's issues by major English newspapers over a fortnight in the aftermath of the tsunami and concluded that the media did not pay adequate attention to children affected by the calamity or to issues concerning their safety, nutrition and post-trauma care and rehabilitation.

In 2003 children from two slums in Delhi, Madangir and Khanpur, launched their own newspaper, *Udayachal*, in order to highlight the concerns and problems of their communities. In a similar initiative, children from some other colonies in Delhi launched another newspaper, *The Yamuna -- Creating Waves*.

In Mumbai, the website jalebiink.com runs a free newspaper of, for and by children, where a group of child reporters report on issues and stories they find interesting and newsworthy.

The most successful youth participation programmes are usually those that incorporate the twin ideals of genuine and effective participation, that is, an environment in which young people are involved every step of the way from planning to production and evaluation. Challenges include getting adults to let go, creating an environment at home and school where participation is encouraged, not tokenistic and overcoming the cultural norms about children being ‘owned and governed by their adult guardians including parents and teachers.



FIGURE 1.1 A children’s group in Bolangir, Orissa, makes use of Participatory Rural Appraisals to know and understand their village and it’s problems better. In the absence of dedicated children’s mass media with rural reach, CRY finds communication works better and is effective in building cohesive groups that seek innovative solutions to often complex problems, such as teacher absenteeism and discrimination against dalits.

Recommendations

Children's participation in the media generates highly positive outcomes for young people themselves, as noted in the UNESCO Clearinghouse 2001 Yearbook, *Outlooks on Children and Media*. It leads to a strengthened sense of pride, power and self-esteem because children feel their voices are worth listening to, that they are part of their community, and that they have achieved an understanding of others and of their own culture. They also experience a strengthened ability and curiosity, and increased critical understanding of the media. Overall, this leads to greater social justice, engendered by allowing young people who do not manage well in traditional, print-based schools to take part in audio-visual media production. There is greater interest and involvement in society on their own terms, which in turn inspires action to improve coverage of youth issues in the media and the situations in their own communities.

- Children's participation in news and views pertaining to them is minimal. This should change with the media giving adequate focus to children's views. This, however, needs a perspective change in the newsroom, something best carried out by a shift in reporting practices.
- The representation of children needs to be with adequate dignity, as is due to an adult. Specifically, rights to privacy should be respected by the media.
- The use of children in advertising needs regulation to prevent abuse. The Advertising Council needs to step into a shared role with the NCPCR to implement this.
- A new set of regulations giving prosecution powers to the NCPCR is needed to curb violations of child protection values endorsed by the UN CRC.
- An ombudsman who will keep a lookout for children's rights in the media may also be discussed.

In the last two decades, media for children and youth have become more of a global issue. Numerous players have begun to realise children's rights through the media—whether to ensure young audiences have access to diversified and high-quality media content, create opportunities for young people's voices to be heard, push for ethical coverage of children and youth, and strive for (self-) regulation of the media and for quality media education.

A broad range of governmental and non-governmental initiatives and activities speak to the growing commitment to realise children's rights through the media. Numerous meetings, conferences and summits have taken place on the subject. Excellent guidelines have been written on how to report on children's issues as well as how to ensure effective communication skills to draw out children's opinions and voices.

Broadcasters and advertisers have adopted voluntary codes to ensure inappropriate material isn't aired during hours when young people watch or listen. One example is the code used in NDTV of not showing child victim's faces.

While these are surely encouraging signs, there still remain serious obstacles to advocating for children and youth through the media. Among them the lack of funding and political will, cultural differences, and the need for far more training for youth and for those producing material about or for young audiences. Such efforts must continue to harness the enormous positive potential of the increasingly powerful global media to make a real difference in children's lives around the world by informing them, listening to them and ultimately empowering them.

References

Who Makes the News? Global media monitoring project 2010. Report may be downloaded from:

http://whomakesthenews.org/images/stories/website/gmmp_reports/2010/global/gmmp_global_report_en.pdf

Gigli, Susan Children, *Youth and Media Around the World: An Overview of Trends and Issues Report* Prepared & Compiled by InterMedia Survey Institute for UNICEF 4th World Summit on Media for Children and Adolescents Rio de Janeiro, Brazil / April 2004

Get with it - A parents' guide to new media: understanding and sharing the new media technologies with your children

The Nielsen Company June 2009 *How Teens Use Media A Nielsen report* on the myths and realities of teen media trends.

