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# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND THE MEDIA.



**UJOSS**  
Policies Version - 2026



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## **FOREWORD:**

The child protection policy and the media; Ethical guidelines to safeguard the best interests of children, Violence and Exploitation aim to safeguard the best interests of children, boys and girls, while reporting on children or when they are directly exposed to media.

The policy is addressed to media professionals including journalists, reporters, video recorders, photographers, audio technicians, editors and all staff who may have a direct or indirect contact with children.

The Union of Journalists of South Sudan (UJOSS), are committed to promote children's participation and ensure their rights to express their views. Both media professionals acknowledge the importance of freedom of expression and recognize the remarkable role of media in advocating for children's rights.

The policy is meant to support media in its endeavor to serve the public interest while prioritizing the best interests of children and protecting them from any possible harm associated with unsafe public exposure, especially for boys and girls who have experienced severe violations such as maltreatment and sexual abuse.

All media outlets are encouraged to adapt to child protection policy in compliance with the ethical guidelines that safeguard the rights and best interests of children. It is also advisable to dedicate a well-trained staff to report on children and engage directly with them. This policy was developed by UJOSS on child protection, in conformity with the Ethical Guidelines for Reporting on Children.



## 1. DEFINITIONS:

- 1.1 **A child;** means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless the age of majority is attained earlier under national legislation.
- 1.2 **Child Protection;** this term includes policies, standards, and procedures that aim to safeguard children from intentional and non-intentional harm.
- 1.3 **The best interests of the child:** The term “best interests” broadly describes the well-being of a child. Such well-being is determined by a variety of individual circumstances, such as the age and level of maturity of the child, the presence or absence of parents, the child’s environment and experiences.
- 1.4 **Informed consent:** refers to the ability to give consent based on relevant information that accounts for the age and capabilities of the child, or his/her legal guardians. A special consideration shall be given in instance of mental disabilities.
- 1.5 **Violence against Children:** Refers to the abuse and neglect that occurs to person under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.
- 1.6 **Gender:** The term gender refers to relationships, social roles, and values that society assigns to both sexes (male and female). These roles, relationships, and values change according to their interaction and interconnectedness with other social relations such as religion, social class, race, etc. Gender is acquired through socialization and responds to changes in the social, political, and cultural environments.

## 2. FORMS OF VIOLENCE:

- 2.1 **Physical violence:** Threat of beating or hitting, shaking, burning, kicking, pinching, slapping, etc. Children may be subjected to physical abuse at home, school, street, social centers, etc. Physical abuse and the use of physical force may cause injury and, in any case, great psychological and moral damage.
- 2.2 **Mental violence:** Humiliation and degrading treatment such as insults, constant criticism, belittlement, prejudice, impeding freedom, and limiting a child's interaction with his/her social environment. This form of abuse is reflected in the child's well-being, and in his/her emotional and psychological development. Discrimination based on color, race, social role, or any other difference is also considered a form of mental violence.
- 2.3 **Sexual Abuse:** All forms of sexual activities, including but not limited to early forced marriage, rape inside or outside the family, pornography, and sexual slavery. Sexual abuse against children may include any contact of sexual nature, appearing naked in front of a child, using sexual language with children and displaying pornographic material to children. By force and violence, by trick and courtship or by intimidation and blackmail.
- 2.4 **Neglect or negligent treatment:** Failure to meet children’s physical and psychological needs, protect them from risk, or obtain medical, birth registration or other services. In these cases, poverty should not be considered as the barrier to providing such services. Neglect usually results from the



decision of the persons responsible for raising the child and who possess the means, knowledge and opportunities necessary to meet those needs and refrain from carrying them out. It is important to mention that the states have the obligation to register any child born on its territories without any form of discrimination as per article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### 3. EXPLOITATION:

Refers to the use of children to serve or satisfy another person's interest. Often, the child is treated unfairly, harshly, and harmfully. These practices come at the expense of the child's physical and mental health, education, morale, as well as his/her social and emotional development. This includes exploiting children by subjecting them in an unprotected manner to media exposure, with the intention of achieving a journalistic precedent or increasing the number of viewers.

- 3.1 **Sexual Exploitation:** Sexual abuse against children becomes sexual exploitation when a second party receives money in exchange for sexual activity with a child. Such as sexual seduction or promotion of sex with a child. Exploitation also includes granting a child to another person, promising a child money or any other form of remuneration and paying for the child's participation in sexual activity, even if the financial allowance is not actually paid.
- 3.2 **Economic Exploitation:** Reaping material Profit or some benefit by using children to produce, distribute, and consume goods, especially when parents or guardians have other means of making profit or when this profit is not used to support the children employed. The economic exploitation of children includes; children working at home, forcing children to work in the streets, recruiting and engaging them in armed conflicts, using them in criminal activities such as selling and distributing narcotic drugs, or engaging them in the worst forms of child labour such as repairing cars or working long hours.
- 3.3 **Gender-based violence:** An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males.
- 3.4 **Witnessing of violence:** Exposition of a child to violent scenes, such as witnessing his/her mother being beaten at home.

### 4. UJOSS COMMITMENT TO CHILD PROTECTION POLICY IN THE MEDIA IN SOUTH SUDAN:

UJOSS shall commit to providing tools for action aiming to protect children, boys and girls, from violence and other adverse experiences. UJOSS have developed this child protection policy in the media in the context of their joint continued efforts to ensure child protection and building on the policy that target service providers working with children in South Sudan.

The child protection policy in the media is a covenant call for the best interests of the child which shall be prioritized when directly or indirectly reporting on children and when approaching any issues related to childhood in general. It also sets the basic ethical guidelines that media professionals are invited to adopt when reporting on children.

In South Sudan, media outlets assume a journalistic freedom that must be well-preserved and promoted to be able to advocate for children's rights and to put forward social and childhood related issues while maintaining an ethical and professional responsibility. While realizing the importance of uncovering taboos, there is an urgent need for minimum ethical standards to:

- Safeguard the child's best interests.



- Prioritize child protection, even if it is perceived to compromise the local perception of competition over rating, winning the audience or increasing the number of followers.

## 5. THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

*The child protection policy calls for media professionals to adhere to the following six guiding principles:*

- 5.1 Encourage children and adolescents, boys and girls, to express their views and opinions freely and safely on matters that concern them.
- 5.2 Refrain voluntarily from conducting direct or indirect interviews with children, and adolescents who are still in trauma, specifically children who have experienced severe hostile experiences such as ill-treatment and sexual abuse or are in shock under dire circumstances.
- 5.3 Conduct direct interviews with survivors of violation only if they want themselves to tell their story and want their voice to be heard, while maintaining child protection policies. Consult with a specialist whether such an activity is helpful to the healing of the child.
- 5.4 Consider thoroughly the safety measures that shall be put in place especially when engaging with the survivors of violations (who were able to cross the traumatic experience after receiving appropriate case management).
- 5.5 Encourage conversations and dialogues on child protection and child rights while addressing the stakeholder's responsibility with experts and child protection specialists.
- 5.6 . "Do no harm", and in case of doubt make sure to prioritize the child's safety over any other concern.

## 6. THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN ADOPTING THE PRINCIPLES OF CHILD PROTECTION.

*Children's dignity should be respected without any discrimination in line with their best interests and safety.*

The media professionals have excellent potential to play a crucial role in advocating for children's rights and spreading awareness regarding the responsibilities of all stakeholders to implement those rights. The media strategies and tactics are also very effective in shifting the public opinion. These different approaches could be very helpful in amplifying children's voices, mobilizing the public to account for children's opinions and, in turn, empowering the child to partake in matters related to his/her everyday life.

In parallel, media carries the responsibility of child protection as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and all related protocols. The South Sudanese State rafted the CRC in 1990, therefore binding the South Sudanese state to implement its articles:

**Article 16;** No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honor and reputation. The child has the right to their protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

**Article 17,** States Parties shall recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

*To this end, States Parties shall:*



- (a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;
- (b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from diversity of cultural, national and international sources;
- (c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;
- (d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is Indigenous;
- (e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles, 6 paragraph 2 & 3 of the convention therein.  
That recognise the media as a crucial platform to promote children's rights and strengthen children's ability to express themselves, gain confidence, think critically and participate in public life.

## 7. THE GOALS OF THE UJOSS ON CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND THE MEDIA.

Discussing issues related to the child especially in the context of Gender-Based Violence, including Child Forced Marriage and Sexual Violence shall be used as an opportunity to increase awareness on GBV through applying a rights-based approach combining sensitive reporting together with advocacy, sensitization and support to girls at risk, **and shall**;

- 7.1 Safeguard the best interests of each child, boy and girl, and prioritize them over any other consideration, including over advocacy for children's issues and the promotion of child rights.
- 7.2 Listen to the views of children and take them into account in accordance with the child's age, sex, gender and maturity.
- 7.3 Ensure the child's right to access information in a manner that is suitable to his/her interests and abilities
- 7.4 Encourage children's participation in making decisions that affect them, especially those related to public exposure in the media.
- 7.5 Ensure the child's informed consent and that of those his/her caregivers about dealing (directly or indirectly) with the media and any related consequences.
- 7.6 Ensure the child or their legal guardian's right to accept or refuse to be exposed to the media.
- 7.7 Consult with those who are closest to the child's situation and are in a better situation to assess the political, social and cultural consequences of any public exposure.
- 7.8 Report any suspicion that a child is at risk or have actually experienced an assault to the concerned organizations.

## 8. STAKEHOLDERS: OF THE POLICY:

This policy is addressed to all stakeholders who deal directly or indirectly with issues related to children, on all media, audio-visual and print platforms. The guidelines included in this policy also apply to all individuals and establishments who share news or pictures related to children on all media and other public platforms.

### a) This policy is specifically directed towards:

- ↔ Officials working with audio-visual and print media (both of line and online).
- ↔ All individuals working in the media (journalists, photographers, technical staff, archives, or anyone who is in contact with children directly or has access to children's files ...).
- ↔ Social workers, influencers, public figures addressing topics related to children on social media and other public platforms.
- ↔ Designers in charge of promotional campaigns evolving around children.

### b) This policy applies to:



- ↔ **Direct media outreach with children:** The physical presence near a child within the media's framework, regardless of the length of that contact. This shall include communication with children during field research, photography, reporting, advice, interviews, program production and promotional material.
- ↔ **Indirect media outreach with children:** The ability to access information about children such as names, addresses, parents' phone numbers, files and photo exchange. It also extends to archiving, storing information and reusing archives.

*Similarly, this policy also applies to all working in media programs that address social issues affecting children, directly or indirectly, especially those discussing women's rights, child custody and general social and economic policies.*

## 9. LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

These are international and national conventions and related protocols which constitute an essential reference for defining the children's rights, in general, and the ones related to the media, in particular, in addition to advising on ways for protecting children who are exposed to the media and engaging with it;

- 9.1 **Ethical Guidelines for Reporting on Children**, developed by UNICEF in 2018. It is a document that highlights the key principles for responsible reporting on children and young people.
- 9.2 **Child-Friendly Media 2016**, issued by the Arab Council for Childhood and Development, and the Arab League. It is a document outlining professional principles for Arab media to address child rights issues.
- 9.3 **An ethical charter for media interaction with children in 2014**, issued by the Higher Council for Childhood in Middle East. The charter sets standards for professional ethics in the media when dealing with children and their affairs.
- 9.4 **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989**, issued by the United Nations General Assembly. The treaty stipulates that the best interests of the child shall be accorded the utmost importance and guarantees the protection of children and their right to privacy.
- 9.5 **South Sudan Child Act 2008, Article 17 the right of opinion of the child;**
  - ↔ Every child has the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds; provided that it does not trespass upon rights of others.
  - ↔ Every child has the rights to express his or her opinion freely and to have the opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting him or her.
  - ↔ The opinion of every child shall be given due weight in accordance with age, and his or her maturity.
- 9.6 **The Arab Charter on the Rights of the Child 1983**, states that the media should direct their efforts and programs to serve childhood issues. It also stressed on the need to refine what is provided by media outlets such as imported programs that contradict Arab values because of their negative impact on children.
- 9.7 **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 1948**. It states the right to freedom of expression and to receive media messages. According to Articles announcement as indicated below;



- a) **Article 12**, highlights that states parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matter affecting the child, and the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity.
- b) **Article 13**, stipulates that the child shall have the right to freedom of expression; these rights shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.
- c) **Article 17**, stipulates that States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media. It also ensures that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

## 10. GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

### **The best interests of the child and the right to protection:**

1. Grant the utmost importance to the child's best interests when approaching any subject related to him or her in the media that could affect his or her situation or expose him or her to any form of risk.
2. Refrain from interviewing children during protests, military activities, or during the coverage of a crime scene. In any case, the faces of children shall be blurred to protect their privacy.
3. Interact with ethical responsibility during direct or indirect media contact with any child when trying to obtain information, clarification, photographs, or hosting a direct or registered program, provided that the main concern is to protect him or her from any form of violence that may result from media exposure during the course of preparation, presentation, and beyond.
4. It is advisable to avoid exposing the child to the media, unless it is in his or her best interests.
5. Consider every public or media appearance of a child as an ethical and professional responsibility, and a potential risk for the child, even if the consent was informed.
6. Refuse voluntary to publish any news story, media story, or picture that could endanger the child, his or her siblings, his or her family or, his or her peers.
7. Refrain from media coverage of child abuse that includes embarrassing personal private details. These are practices that amount to an additional violation of the child's rights.
8. Refrain from subjecting the child, especially the survivors of child protection violations, to showcasing their experience repeatedly, in order to avoid the harm associated with recalling such incidents in an unprotected manner.
9. Refrain from asking children to present ideas that do not respect their mental capabilities, their age, their present and previous experiences.
10. Confirm the accuracy of what the child has to say, either with other children or an adult, preferably with both.

## 11. PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURES FOR ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN:

Based on the mentioned guidelines, special protocols must be adopted, with the direct and indirect engagement of children in the media and all its forms. These are professional tools that contribute to the protection of the child and



respect the media profession by considering it an advocacy tool that places the best interests of the child above any other element, such as getting a scoop, seeking increase of viewership, and political employment.

## **12. ETHICAL QUESTIONS**

These are preliminary questions that will help media professionals to assess the risks of children's direct exposure when reporting on child related issues. Answers may vary depending on the specific situation, but they must conform to the guidelines specified above. These questions constitute ethical guidelines in dealing with childhood issues, and shall provide a commitment to approaches that respect child rights, and ensure their implementation.

- a) What is the direct goal of media working with children, and what are its objectives?
- b) Is there a need to disclose the child's identity? Will that help the child?
- c) Is it necessary to fully expose the child to media?
- d) Should one hide the child's face? Show it? Alter his or her voice?
- e) What are the advantages and disadvantages of showcasing a child in the media?
- f) What are the responsibilities involved in reporting?
- g) What is the response mechanism to direct risk? What is the policy of the Staton, newspaper, or media page regarding child protection?
- h) How will the child feel when he or she grows up and sees the report?
- i) Will the child's relatives or friends bully him or her when they read the report?
- j) What are the main risks that should be avoided? Is there enough knowledge
- k) About the addressed topic?
- l) Is the media staff trained to deal with issues affecting children?
- m) Is there a need for social or psychological assistance?
- n) What if we discover that a colleague is putting a child at risk?
- o) Is there any risk of the information to be misled or put the child in trouble or at risk of being disturbed by others?
- p) Is there a risk for the child to be stigmatized? Would you do this if the child was your daughter or son?
- q) Would showing the child impact any change in the community?

## **13. PLANNING AND PREPARATION:**

- a. Assess the situation and help in determining whether the child's exposure in the media is in his or her best interests or not.
- b. Request a specialist opinion to obtain credible information and build on it. The specialist could be a well-established organization, a concerned government entity, or a psychologist.
- c. Involve children in making the decisions that affect their lives, especially when it comes to their exposure to the media.
- d. Encourage children's participation in decision-making that is sensitive to their maturity and age.

## **14. INFORMED CONSENT AND ASSENT:**

- a. The child or legal guardians shall be given information about the purpose of the media coverage and how to use image, sound or video for when media appearance approval is solicited.
- b. The child or legal guardians have the right to refuse, and to withdraw at any moment.
- c. The child or legal guardians are given the freedom to delete recorded material. If the child is asked to provide information during direct contact with the media, the journalist shall inform the child



about the time period required, his or her role and responsibilities, what is included in this process, and how the child's image will appear. Only then can the child or legal guardians give informed consent.

- d. Ensured that the child / or legal guardians are not under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- e. Ensure that the child or legal guardians do not have a mental illness. If this is the case, a specialist shall be called to deal with the situation.

#### **15. DURING INTERVIEW:**

- Introduce yourself, the media outlet and the purpose of the interview.
- Prepare your guiding questions in advance
- Inform the child, and their legal guardians about the objective of the interview and the general flow of the questions.
- Avoid asking complex questions that do not respect the child's maturity
- Avoid asking sudden questions that might be embarrassing, sensitive, or that would make the child remember painful details.
- Seek the support of a social worker when interviewing survivors of painful incidents.
- Conduct the interview in a safe place for the child, where possible consider same sex for the interview.
- Make sure that children are comfortable and able to tell their story without outside pressure, including from the interviewer
- Respect and safeguard the child's dignity during the interview
- Respect the child's right to refrain from answering some questions
- Give equal opportunities for children to express their views and do not discriminate based on their sex, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities.
- No staging: do not ask children to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own history.

#### **16. PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOS:**

- The child shall be accompanied by a caregiver or a trusted adult during the filming process, and he or she shall not be left alone with the media technical staff.
- In case of severe assault such as maltreatment and sexual abuse, the face of the child shall be hidden and the voice needs to be altered to protect the child's identity.
- Show the child in a respectful manner that showcases every human's dignity regardless his or her condition. Do not ask the child to re-enact embarrassing or harmful situations, do not confront the child with an aggressor.

#### **17. ARCHIVING:**

- Keep information about children recorded, registered, and photographed, in closed place.
- Disallow the exchange of stored information, except if the aim is to protect the child from harm and to ensure his or her best interests.
- Ensure that the archive is not reused without the consent of the child and his/her legal guardians.



## **18. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF JOURNALISTS OF MANDATORY REPORTING:**

1. If the child is found in an environment that exploits or threatens his or her health, safety, morals and the conditions of his or her upbringing.
2. If the child is subjected to sexual assault or physical violence that exceeds the limits of non-harmful disciplinary ways.

### **If the child is found begging or homeless;**

3. Article 26 of Law 422 calls for the necessity of reporting in the event of suspicion that a child is at risk by notifying a public prosecutor or organizations concerned with child protection.
4. Article 26 of Law 422 calls for the necessity of reporting in the event of suspicion that a child is at risk by notifying a public prosecutor or organizations concerned with child protection. Such reporting is not considered as a disclosure of professional secrecy and does not fall under the provisions of the penal law.
5. It is the duty of the journalists to report back such a risk to the concerned authorities, as specified in Article 25 of this law.

**NOTE:** The child can resort directly to the Judge of Urgent Matters in the event of exposure to domestic violence without a representative or guardian. The child can call directly 1745 to report exposure to domestic violence