

Media workshop – 22.01.14

3 hours workshop (10.00AM – 1.00PM) at Hotel Shah's Village

PSC staff: Vijay, Thency, Yuvanah, Sheau Ying, Banu and Helene

Objectives of the media workshop

The objectives of the proposed workshop for the journalists were:

- To enhance the understanding on the Rights of Children as chartered under Convention on Rights of the Child
- To sensitize the representatives on child sexual abuse and its effects
- To enhance the role of media in Child protection through presentation of cases and articles
- To brain storm on the issues of children in the context of Child Rights
- To enhance the level of commitment of Media in advocating for Rights of the children
- Gather professional point of views on local and international articles

Expected outcome

At the end of the workshop, the participants were able **to recall the 4 core Rights of the Children** as chartered in CRC and **actively advocate for the Rights of the Children** through media articles and write up.

About the participants¹

Even if there were a few participants, we had a bunch of different Malaysian media representatives², which enhanced more various discussions and debates.

NAME	ORGANIZATION	DESIGNATION
Lei Meili	The Star	Journalist
Victoria Brown	The Star (online)	Journalist
Cecilia Lim Ying Wei	Protect and Save the Children	Intern
Pauline Wong	Sinchew	Journalist
Alyaa Azhar	FMT	Journalist
Vathani	The Sun	Journalist

¹ For more details, please refer to the registration form.

² e.g. Reporters, beginners and mid-levels journalists

10.10AM - Introduction of PSC (Helene)

10.20AM - Activities relating to violations (Thency) // Articles

Participants were divided into two groups. Thency gave instructions and guiding questions such as « *If you were the child reporting on, how would you report the story?* ».

First group's presentation - 10.55AM

➤ Participants presenting articles

1. 17-year-old girl who run away from her home. Her father suspected her to leave with her 21-year-old boyfriend.
2. Norway court jails Indian parents in child abuse case
3. Couple in the UK whose child has serious injuries
4. Parents who have been in charge for abusing their 5 year-old daughter

➤ Participants' inputs

- *What is ok/not ok?*

Three elements considered as unacceptable were identified by participants. First, **pictures, full names and details** of children mentioned might offend them and their parents in case people that they know would recognize them. There are **risks of bullying**. Secondly, **long-term impacts** might affect the child. Lastly, **gruesome details** in articles are not relevant for this type of report.

- *Psychological impacts on children*

Considering these elements, the child might **feel bad**. He/She will **remind bad experiences** during his/her adulthood. For public, it might **create awareness** which is a positive impact.

- *Feelings of the child*

It depends on each individual's reaction.

- #### ➤ Questions to the participants: How did you feel while reading these articles? Did you learn something news?

Participants answered that as a reader, people like to read these kinds of detailed news. As a reporter, journalists know that they are not supposed to write all these things. The main difficulty is to find the **good balance**.

Second group's presentation – 11.05AM

➤ Participants presenting articles

1. A foster mother abused her two children.
2. Abandoned children's case - Article with photos, full names, even very specific details such as where the children were found; basically every private information.
3. Child marriage's case (a minor bride married to a grown-up groom) – Family's details mentioned with their whole life. However, the married girl is **still a minor** so she should be protected.
4. A mother who had abused her 5-year-old daughter until she died. But she has two other children.

3 participants in the group think that her name should not appear in newspapers for **siblings' compliance**.

➤ Participants' inputs

- *What is ok/not ok?*

Compared to the first group, some similar unacceptable elements were identified. Whoever is involved, mention of **names, address and pictures** of the victims should not be used, especially for minors. Besides, some of these articles are **not very balanced** and reflect a bad investigation with untrue information.

- *Psychological impacts on children*

Concerning the case of the 16-year-old girl, she could be **opened to criticism** later on (i.e. if looking for a job), that is why more protection should be required.

Concerning the murderer mother, children might always remember her with this media negative image.

Name of the murderer should not be mentioned, because she still has two children, they will get hurt.

*There are not only **psychological impacts**, but also **social impacts**.*

➤ Thency's inputs – Exposition of the child

Three key words are reminded: **privacy, security and dignity** in the **best interests of the child**.

1. **Security:** i.e. a perpetrator can easily find the child since he has his/her contact details and personal information.
2. **Dignity:** i.e. the girl who had been married, if she is under 16 it is not a marriage but a rape. Calling it a "marriage" makes it less painful and less difficult to read.

To summarize, all participants' inputs were correct. This bunch of articles exposes child to security issues, abuses and other violations. With certain terms used and pictures published, media create a

general perception of reported cases. For instance, children running away from home are often portrayed as terrible adolescent. In reality, it is important to remember that children are already in a **vulnerable position**, reports might make it worse. Children are never responsible, adults are.

11.15AM – Activities // Debates between the two groups

- Instructions: Ten things that you would need to be happy if you were a child – everybody in each group must agree with all of these ten ideas: « *Thinking yourself as a child, what would you want and what would you need?* ».
- Groups' points

Participants identified **love and affection, education, security, basic necessities / food, shelter, health care** (any kind of medication), **freedom of choice, guidance, support** (family, friends), **discipline and rights to be kids** as main needs for a child. So as to make the transition with CRC's topic, Thency questioned both groups about some of their answers:

- **Love and affection**

Thency's question: But are parents protected children in the "right" way? Can children survive only with love and affection?

Participants' answer: It depends on the way they protect them. It is subjective.

Thency's question: What is the nature of the danger?

Participants' answer: Children should feel safe in their environment and be protected from bad people.

- **Rights to be kids**

Participants' answer: e.g. to play around kids

Thency's inputs: Interpretations and opinions vary from a person to another. Thus, adults should first ask themselves: ***do I act in the best interests of the child?***

As a broad text, CRC comes to these basic principles while attempting to prioritize the best interests of the child.

11.35AM – Presentation of Media and Child Rights (Banu³)

Child rights' promotion is one of the most important aspects of PSC's work.

Banu questioned participants about their definitions and ideas of this concept. Child rights might be relating to **success, safety or child happiness**. To sum up, child rights refer to **human rights** for all persons below the age of 18.

These persons can be protected by enforcing the law through two main channels at **international (CRC)** and **domestic (Child Act 2001)** levels. A serial of questions were asked to the participants so as to demonstrate the importance of those legislations:

- *Why child rights are so important?*

Children are **individuals**.

- *Why are they vulnerable to abuse and exploitation?*

They are still developing, and **mentally and physically fragile**. Children are also enormously impacted by social change. For instance, in case family members can't sustain themselves, children might be involved in forced labour. At last, children are **less independent** and require adults' guidance.

- *Why children are more affected by government policy?*

Children are **the future**.

Banu's illustration: What if our government suddenly say "now everything is privatized", how would it affect children?

Participants' answer: As they are already vulnerable, they would have no means to afford it in such case.

- *Why children's voices are least heard?*

Participants' answer: Children's opinions have not given so much credit and might be disrespected. This is hypothetically a cultural matter.

Children are also less heard in the political process because they are **not able to vote**.

Presentation of CRC

Composed of 54 articles and 3 optional protocols, CRC was ratified by many countries across the world except Somalia, South Sudan and the US.

³ For more details, please refer to Banu's PPT.

- Participant's question: What does "optional protocol" mean?
- Vijay's inputs: Malaysia recently lifted a few reservations, but five others raises challenges and have still not been ratified yet (articles 2, 7, 14, 28 (1) and 37).

The 3 optional protocols give more importance on specific issues so that justice can be made for child at global level:

- Involvement of children in armed conflicts' areas – which is a national issue in some countries.
 - Involvement of children in prostitution and pornography.
 - Involvement of children in a communications procedure - Even though it is very new, this optional protocol will be effective within two months.
- Thency's input: If the government doesn't respect this legislation in its country, there is shame but no punishment at international level.

What is in the CRC?

The CRC's main important aspects are **survival, development, protection and participation**. It also provides a **definition of abuse** which is at the very heart of PSC's action.

Child Act 2001 (Act 611)

On the one hand, the Child Act implemented a guideline for child abused which can directly be applied at domestic level. On the other hand, it was made on the basis of CRC in the compliance of the **non-discrimination** principle and the **best interests of the child**.

How can we relate it to media? Why is it relevant?

- Within CRC, **article 16** refers to protection of privacy and **article 17** to the access of appropriate information.
- **Section 15** of Child Act (2001) implements restrictions on media reporting and publication (for radio, broadcast, electronic media, print media and TV).
This section also refers to **the identification of the child**. Thus, publishing a picture of the child and a person who can lead to his/her identification is forbidden. The penalty may be up to 10,000RM.
- The **Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission Content Code (V6)** provides restrictions on content, advertising, broadcasting and audio text hosting.
- At last, the **Malaysian Code of Advertising Practice (2008)** refers to advertising to children, more specifically what elements can be used or not.

12.00PM – Participants' questions

- Question 1: How can we (media) minimize damages for the child while reporting abuse's cases?

Thency's answer: As far as we are concerned, PSC is not allowed to publish pictures of children when conducting trainings with them. As we can't show their faces, it all depends on the angle the photograph will be taken.

Somehow, media aims to feed readers who want more details because it makes it **real**. Although it has a **disturbing** aspect, people can hardly refrain themselves from reading it. The question is not about whether it is acceptable or not, but if it is in the best interests of the child.

Implementing new ideas amongst society or corporations is a **long process**. For instance, BBC now possesses specific policies into their own media in addition to international and national legislations. Thus, **enforcement of law** is essential. Changes take time but are necessary.

- Question 2: Removing details in an abuse case's report might create confusion for readers. They would think it is a fictitious story.

Thency's answer: It depends on the article and the story you are covering. Legally, it is not allowed. In addition, how many people would go to the court and look for the name to ensure it is a real story? It will be a long process to determine within your organization it is acceptable or not.

12.10 Group activity (all participants together)

- Instructions: Thency gave instructions and guiding question such as « *If I were running a media company, what policies would I implement?* ».

Participants listed these following rules:

1. No mention of names for articles that could bring negative impacts on the child/families involved
2. No identifying pictures of children or if so, face should be blurred
3. No mention of address or indicators of victim's localization
4. Balanced report (follow-up story on the other person involved)

It is not only about how the article is written, but also about how children are interviewed and how **journalists behave**.

12.35 – Presentation of Advocate for rights of the children (Vijay⁴)

Introduction

These following legislations provide support for specific targets: CRC, CEDAW, AHRD and DRIP. All of them correlate with the **Human Rights Declaration (HRD)**.

Every Child Every Right – Provisions under the International instruments

Vijay gave detailed explanations of articles 2, 7, 14, 28 (1) and 37 (CRC).

National level instruments that promote positive media reporting

The **section 15 (2)** of Child Act 2001 can be relating to the media workshop since it have a lot of impact on the children.

- Vijay's example: Do you know any recent example of articles where the child was over-reported?
i.e.: A child committed suicide because his picture was released in media and he was bullied.

Role of Media

Media can play an important role if following some of these points: **ethical and pro-active reporting** of child rights violations; **advocate for promoting child rights** at national, regional and global levels (one of the major roles that media can play in the country); **create mass awareness** on child rights on relevant issues.

They can also advocate for rights of the children, through platforms such as:

- UPR
- ASEAN
- And other UN mechanisms

And to promote Child rights in the country on specific agenda:

- Comprehensive ratification of CRC
- Ratification on Optional protocols to CRC
- Issue/theme based advocacy

Every country is supposed to publish report on children's rights and issues.

⁴ For more details, please refer to Vijay's PPT.

Guidelines for Journalist/Media by IFJ (2002)

Vijay presented the *Interviewing Tips for Journalist* that participants can share with their colleagues.

- Vijay's question: Do you think publishing detailed articles is going to enhance your brand at international level? How can you impact your corporate? What best can you do for your media?

Media can improve their **ethical practices**, create **more awareness** and adopt a more **responsible behaviour** while **changing attitudes**.

In connection with this topic, the United Nations recently implemented a new concept about child rights and business sectors, questioning the role of business companies and how they can act in the best interests of the child.

12.55 PM – Conclusion (Vijay and Thency)

Although it is only an **introductory workshop**, media can do a lot to protect children.

If participants are interested in child rights and want to do more to contribute, Thency listed the other upcoming programs of PSC.

Besides, she explained that conducting trainings with children and adults is also possible if committed participants would like to volunteer.