

# **Ethical reporting: How to cover stories without compromising the rights of children**



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**UNICEF has established ethical guidelines for media coverage to assist journalists in sensitively addressing children's issues with respect.**

## Principles

1. Respect the dignity and rights of every child in all circumstances.

2. When interviewing and covering children's situations, give special attention to ensuring privacy, confidentiality, and safe participation.

3. Prioritize the best interests of the child above all else, including supporting their causes.

4. Give adequate weight to children's opinions in determining their best interests based on their age and maturity.

5. Avoid publishing stories or images that may endanger children, even when altering their identities.

6. Consider diversity in coverage and highlight children from all backgrounds.

7. Uphold the children's right to participate in decisions affecting them, consulting close individuals for assessments.

8. Avoid using stereotypical images when portraying children, whether positive or negative.

9. Respect the identities of children in visual presentations.

10. Capture images of children in a manner that respects and preserves their dignity.

## Guidelines for interviewing children

1. Do not harm any child; avoid questions or situations that may endanger them.

2. Do not discriminate in selecting children for interviews based on gender, race, age, religion, or other factors.

3. No fabrications: Do not ask children to narrate a story that is not part of their actual history.

4. Ensure that the child is aware they are speaking with a journalist and explain the purpose of the interview.

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5. Obtain written consent from the child or guardian before interviews and filming, preferably in a language understandable to the child.

6. Pay attention to the location and the conduct of the interview, ensuring the child's comfort and protection.

7. In visual media interviews, consider the visual and audio background that tells the child's story.

8. Ensure the presence of a companion and/or UNICEF staff member in interviews with children.

## Guidelines for reporting on child

1. Do not exacerbate the stigma faced by any child; avoid classifications or descriptions that expose them to negative retaliation.

2. Always provide accurate context for the child's story or image.

3. In cases where the child's identity is disclosed, multimedia should be provided with comprehensive comments and signaling information.

4. Always alter names and block visual elements identifying the specific children in certain cases.

5. In specific situations involving risk, change the child's name and block visual elements.

6. In some cases, using the child's identity may be in their best interest, with a focus on ensuring their protection.

7. Verify the accuracy of the child's statements, cross-checking with multiple sources.

8. When unsure of potential harm, cover the general situation of children without specifying any individual.

9. When selecting images, respect the rights of the child and choose pictures that illustrate essential aspects without compromising their privacy.

# For more information:

# <https://www.unicef.org/media/reporting-guidelines>

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