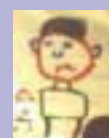


Media Wise: Children make a difference.



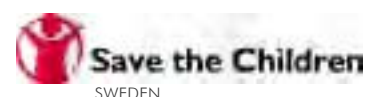
The children's participatory process is an exciting and key component of the Empowering Children & Media (ECM) project, which aims to improve the representation of children and children's rights in the news media. The report focuses exclusively on the methodology used for the children's participatory workshops. The information in this report may be useful for organisations and individuals who plan to promote children's participation in their research, policies and interventions. Children's opinions and contributions are valuable and must be accessed on issues that affect them. This report illustrates both the necessity and the benefits of children's participation

Other publications by the MMP that focus on children's rights are:

- *Children: Dying to Make the News*
An analysis of children's coverage in the South African news media.
- *All sides of the story.*
Reporting on children: A journalist's handbook
- *Children's Views on the News*
A quick reference to some of the ECM project results

The Media Monitoring Project

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Media Wise:

Children make a difference

The Children's Participatory Process

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The Media Monitoring Project

The Media Monitoring Project (MMP) is an independent Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that has been monitoring the South African media since 1993.

Mission

The MMP aims to promote the development of a free, fair, ethical, and critical media culture in South Africa, and the rest of the continent.

Objectives

The core objectives of the organisation are as follows:

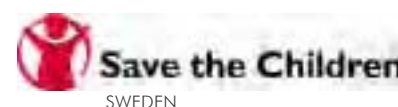
- ✕ To be the pre-eminent media “watchdog” in Africa.
- ✕ To inform and engage media professionals and other key stakeholders to improve the quality and ethics of news reporting in Africa.
- ✕ To influence the development of robust and effective communication legislation and media codes of conduct in Africa.

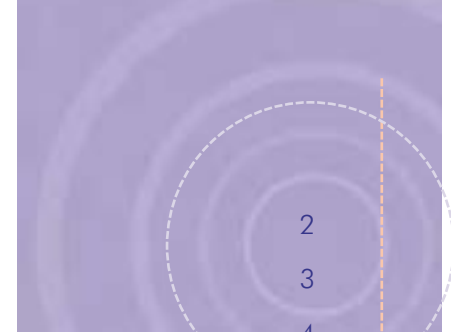
Activities

The MMP offers a wide range of services to Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), media, government and NGOs in South Africa, and other African countries, including:

- ✕ Reviewing and analysing the content, selection process and presentation of news reporting to monitor the quality and ethical practices of broadcast, print and online media.
- ✕ Distributing regular reports on research findings and highlighting infringements to media duties and responsibilities.
- ✕ Conducting in-depth research on specific issues (commissioned reports).
- ✕ Developing training materials, tools and best practices on ethical and fair media reporting.
- ✕ Submitting proposals and other material for the development or amendment of policies and laws.

The MMP applies internationally recognised, state of the art monitoring and research methodologies. The MMP is the only independent NGO in South Africa that monitors the representation of human rights issues in the media, and the only organisation that conducts in-depth qualitative and comparative research in this field. The organisation's expertise is widely acknowledged by media stakeholders, and the MMP is regularly invited to provide comments and presentations on a wide range of subjects within the media.





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1. Introduction

The media has the task of providing information to the public, while also protecting and respecting the rights of those whose stories it depicts. Governed by the laws of the country and various international protocols setting out certain obligatory and voluntary codes of practice, the media has a duty to ensure that the rights of minor children in relation to the media are respected and protected. As the media plays an important role in shaping and influencing perceptions, it is vitally important that the media is monitored for its representation of children and children's rights.

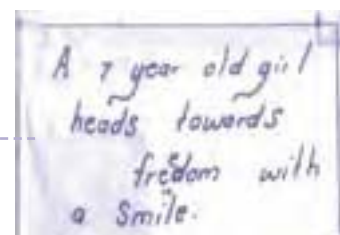
The Media Monitoring Project (MMP) is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that specialises in monitoring the media within a framework of human rights. The MMP has been monitoring the media since 1993 for various social and political issues. Previous research by the MMP showed that children are seriously underrepresented, often poorly represented and in extreme cases, have their basic human rights violated by the media. A systematic investigation was thus necessary to establish the strengths and weaknesses of the ways in which children are represented in the media, and to develop strategies and policies to deal with these appropriately.

Both Save the Children Sweden (SCS) and UNICEF are organisations well known for their commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of children. The comprehensive research study proposed by the MMP, the first of its kind in South Africa, aimed to address the representation of children and children's rights in the news media. The need for such a study was vital, as there was little available information that specifically addressed these issues. Both SCS and UNICEF recognised the importance of protecting children and their rights in relation to the media.

In 2003, the MMP, with the support of SCS and UNICEF, initiated its Empowering Children & Media (ECM) project to investigate, in association with children, the representation of children and children's rights in the South African news media.

The ECM project took place over a three-month period in 2003. A group of monitors reviewed print, radio and television media to identify trends in the portrayal of children in the news. In an exciting and innovative research approach, the MMP also sought the active participation of children, in order to understand their views and perceptions of children's representation in the media. The MMP, together with Clacherty & Associates, an organisation that specialises in participatory work with children¹, co-developed the content and methodology of the participatory workshops. Clacherty & Associates facilitated the workshops, which were run with the children. As part of the process, the children engaged in a parallel monitoring project where they monitored the media for a two-week period. This was done so that the children could express their views directly and see for themselves how they are represented by the media.

Due to the significant interest in the ECM project's specific inclusion of children in all phases of the project, this report provides a detailed overview of the children's component of the project, including the research process and the findings that it generated. Further information on the results of the three-month monitoring period, as well as a handbook for journalists, *All sides of the story*, about reporting on children can be obtained from the MMP.



¹ The methodology used in the workshops drew from the extensive body of international work done with children (Boyden and Ennew 1997, Ivan-Smith E. and Johnson V. 1998). The workshops were developed and facilitated by staff from Clacherty & Associates working from the international examples and their extensive local experience of children's participation (Save the Children, UK, 2001, Save the Children, Sweden, 2002, Acess, 2002, Clacherty et al 2004, Clacherty and Budlender, 2004)

2 Overview of the Participatory Process

The Empowering Children & Media project consisted of two parallel research processes that took place over three months during 2003. One process consisted of a group of adult researchers, who monitored 36 print, television and radio media, recording and analysing the representation of children under 18-years of age. The second process involved 35 children, who monitored the news during a two-week period, and took part in a series of participatory workshops about the media.

The participatory workshops were held in three provinces in South Africa: the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, and KwaZulu- Natal. These provinces were selected as they were identified in government's national plan of action for development. Gauteng was selected because of the concentration of media in this province. The participatory workshops gave the children the opportunity to share their perceptions of the way that they are represented in the media and what they thought was important in the news. Most importantly, the children were able to develop critical media literacy skills. In addition, the children were given the opportunity to make their own newspapers. This exercise illustrated that what makes news and how those items are depicted, is determined by choice, and that the perspectives of journalists and reporters shape the news.

In addition to provincial diversity, children from different backgrounds, and of various ages, races, and sexes, participated in the project. The workshops were conducted in a number of different languages to cater for language diversity amongst the children. The languages used in the participatory workshops included Zulu, Sotho, English and Xhosa. All discussions at the workshops were taped and transcribed.

The methodology used in the workshops drew from an extensive body of international work conducted with children. The MMP and Clacherty & Associates co-developed the content of the workshops, using the MMP's media monitoring expertise, which incorporated media literacy skills and monitoring approaches, and Clacherty & Associates' experience in children's participation.

In order to ensure that the children would be able to continue applying the critical media literacy skills that they had acquired during the project, they were provided with radios from the Freeplay Foundation. As many of the participating children had limited access to resources, it was important that they were not disadvantaged, which was ensured by the selection of the solar- and friction-powered Freeplay radios.

As a key element of the MMP's partnerships with the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) and other media stakeholders, the MMP will conduct specialist journalist training sessions in 2005. This will help to bring a diversity of children's issues into the newsrooms, address strengths and weaknesses in reporting, and help to ensure the participation of children in the media.

The children's participatory process used in the Empowering Children & Media project is a culmination of discussions between the MMP, SCS, UNICEF and Clacherty & Associates, where each of these organisations brought their expertise and experiences working in the field of children's rights. The overall aim of the ECM project is to effect and sustain change in the way children are represented in the news media over the long term using children's voices. The incorporation of children's participation made the project a truly democratic process that was also in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

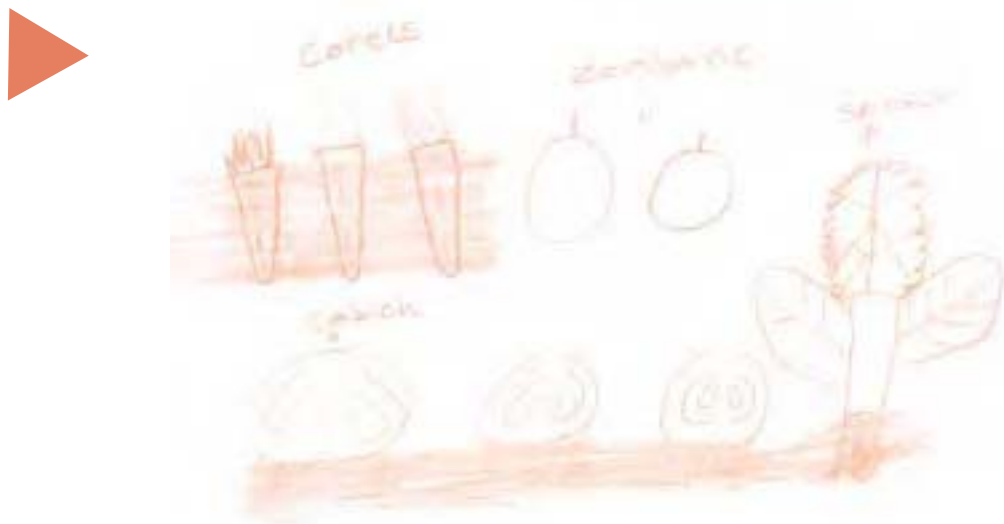


2.1 Ethical concerns and the participation of children.

During the course of the project there were a number of ethical issues involved with regards to the participation of children. It was important to ensure that the participation was meaningful and benefited the children. Informed consent had to be obtained from the parents/guardians, which allowed the children to participate in the project. In addition, some of the children involved in the participatory workshops were wards of the state, and special measures needed to be taken to ensure that their names and identities were not revealed in the reports and through the documentation of the project. Importantly, it was ensured that the errors made by the media in naming and identifying children in their news reports were not repeated in the MMP's analysis and reference to specific news items.

Another concern was to make certain that the children's participation was not tokenistic in its application of Article 12 of the UNCRC, which states that children have the right to participate in any matters that concern them. The following measures were taken by the MMP and its partners to ensure that the children's participation was meaningful:

- The capacities of children at different ages and stages of development were taken into consideration, to ensure that there were activities in which all could participate and contribute their views and opinions. Special provisions were made for those (younger) members of the group who could not articulate themselves verbally, to express themselves through drawings;
- Children from various race groups and socio-economic backgrounds participated in the workshops;
- There was equitable representation of gender amongst the children;
- Measures were taken to minimise harm against the children; those who did not wish to be named or identified were protected;
- The children were free to respond as they chose; neither the facilitators nor the activities guided or prompted them in any way;
- The participants benefited from their involvement in the workshops, with the knowledge that they were consulted, their views taken into account, and that they gained critical media literacy skills;
- Solar-powered, wind-up radios, provided by the Freeplay Foundation, ensured that the child participants were able to contribute and participate on an equal footing, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds;
- The children were informed at all times about the project; there was feedback between each of the workshops and follow-up correspondence;
- At the stakeholders' meeting, held in March 2004, the child participants made their own presentation about their experience of the workshops and the monitoring of the news media that they undertook.



Statement of Ethics²

In the application and understanding of Article 12, the MMP conducted research, in association with children, using the guidelines below:

- To respect the rights of children, as provided in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC);
- To ensure that the research is conducted in a way that benefits children's physical, psychological and social development;
- To encourage children to speak, and to listen to their views;
- To ask for informed consent from children and their parents, where appropriate, before involving them in research or in disseminating research information;
- To honour children's priorities and interests;
- To honour children's cultural values;
- To treat children as adequate and capable social actors;
- Not to impose the researcher or the researchers' ideas on the children;
- Not to use any form of abuse or exploitation for research purposes;
- Not to put children at risk for research purposes;
- Not to withhold information from children;
- Not to discriminate against children on the basis of age, gender, socio-economic status, caste, religion, language, race, ethnicity, or capacity;
- Where appropriate, to try to involve children in conducting the research;
- To ensure research report ownership by the children or, where appropriate, their parents or other related persons;
- Not to use material without the informed consent of the participants;
- Not to give out real names of persons or organisations without informed consent; confidentiality of all sources must be maintained;
- Not to use material that will be threatening to the children, even if they have given their informed consent;
- To give appropriate weight and value to children's feelings;
- To disseminate findings to the groups that contributed to the research, in a format that they can understand;
- To return all of the materials gathered from the research participants, keeping copies only with their informed consent.

In the execution of this project, the MMP attempted to fully incorporate the UNCRC provisions on the child's right to participation. The inclusion of children in this project, which was necessarily about and for children, added a key democratic perspective. The participation and contributions that the children made were mutually beneficial to both the MMP and the child participants.

2.2 Who were the children who participated?

The project invited the participation of a small sample of 35 children, ranging in age from 10 to 17 years and representing diverse ages, race groups, genders, and social and economic backgrounds. Of the total, 12 came from the Eastern Cape, 12 from Gauteng, and 11 from KwaZulu-Natal. There were 19 girls and 16 boys from African, white, coloured and Indian race groups. They came from assorted geographical locations, including a mix of urban and rural areas (see Appendix A).

The children were selected because they represented a wide range of different language groups and socio-economic environments. They participated voluntarily and permission was obtained from their caregivers to participate in the process. Children were selected on the basis of interest in media issues and not, for example, on ability or confidence. As they came from many different places around the centre where the workshops were held, the children did not know each other before the workshops. The workshops were structured in such a way that different age groups were catered for in all of the activities.

² Clacherty, G. and Budlender, D. (2003) *Children's Input into the South African Labour Programme*, Save the Children Sweden, Johannesburg, p. 9

³ Ibid, p. 9

⁴ Ibid, p. 9

⁵ Ibid, p. 46

2.3 The Participatory Workshops

In each province, a series of three workshops was conducted with the child participants, each of which had specific objectives:

2.2.1 Children Getting into the News - Workshop 1

The first workshop aimed to work with the children to identify and establish the core issues in the news media. A number of activities sought to elicit the children's ideas about the following:

- How children use the news media and how regularly they access news;
- What issues they regard as important in their lives;
- How they feel about the way these issues are represented (or not) by the media;
- How they believe children are represented in the media;
- Whether or not children's rights are violated by the media;
- How they think that other children should be protected in the news media.

The following table outlines the core activities of this workshop, as well as the rationale behind each activity:

Workshop 1 Activity	Rationale/aims
Questionnaire Children filled in a short verbal questionnaire with the researchers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To gain demographic data, contact data and an idea of children's media exposure, e.g. whether they have access to TV, radio and newspapers, and do they watch the news.
Introductory games	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To help the children and young people get to know both each other and the facilitators.• To emphasise that the children come from different environments, have different life experiences and that everyone's ideas are important and need to be represented.
Activity 1: Why are we here? It was explained to the children what monitoring the media was, and that everyone was there to help the MMP to develop indicators for their monitoring of the media over the following few months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To give the children a sense of what the purpose was behind what they were doing.• If the children understood that their input had directed the monitoring they would be motivated to be involved with the monitoring themselves.
Activity 2: What are the important issues for children? Working in pairs, the children wrote down on sets of cards what they thought important issues for children were. They then participated in a group discussion process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To let the children, without any outside influence, identify what they saw as the key issues faced by children in South Africa. These issues informed the monitoring process. E.g. monitors were able to record how often these issues were covered in news reports.• To allow the children to work in a non-threatening way, as pairs first, and then to begin the group process with a discussion.

Activity 3: What about the news?

(Conducted in a large group and in pairs)

1. A short viewing of television and radio news and a look at some newspapers.
2. A fairly open-ended discussion about news media.

TV, Radio and Print

Do children watch/listen/read the news?

What do they like about it?

What don't they like about it?

What would they like to see on the news?

Do they see children on the news?

How do they think children are shown/represented on the news?

How do they think children's issues are dealt with on the news?

- To clarify what is meant by news media.
To get an idea from the children of:
- what their interest was in the news media
- what they liked and disliked about the news media
- what they thought of the representation of children and children's issues.

Activity 4: Are children in the news?

(Conducted in pairs)

Children were given newspapers from the previous week. They cut out articles about children and pasted them on a sheet with a title that outlined the issue that the article covered.

This was followed by a discussion about the frequency of children's issues in the media and which issues were represented.

- To record how the children felt about how often children are in the news and how often children's issues are dealt with.

Activity 5: How are children shown in the news?

(Small groups of 4)

Each group was given a number of newspaper articles that featured children in some way. They then worked through a set of questions for each news piece:

- What issue is being covered?
- What do you think about that? (open-ended to begin with)
- Is there a problem here? If so what is it?
- How are children presented here?
- Is this good or bad for these particular children?
- Is this good or bad for all children?
- How could it have been done differently?
- Did you hear children themselves saying anything?

Each group then presented their extract and their discussion in the form of a summary poster to the rest of the group. Researchers recorded the discussions in the different groups.

After watching / listening to / reading a number of different reports, a list was generated of the "good things" and "bad things" as seen by the children.

To understand:

- what the children interpreted as victimisation
- what the children saw as "good practice" and "bad practice"
- what the children knew about their rights

The discussion around the set of questions was also used to feed into the development of indicators for the adult monitoring user-guide.

Activity 6: What we want to say to media professionals

(Large group)

As a group, the children painted a large painting that showed the main issues / problems that children face. They planned and discussed as a group what they wanted to paint in the image.

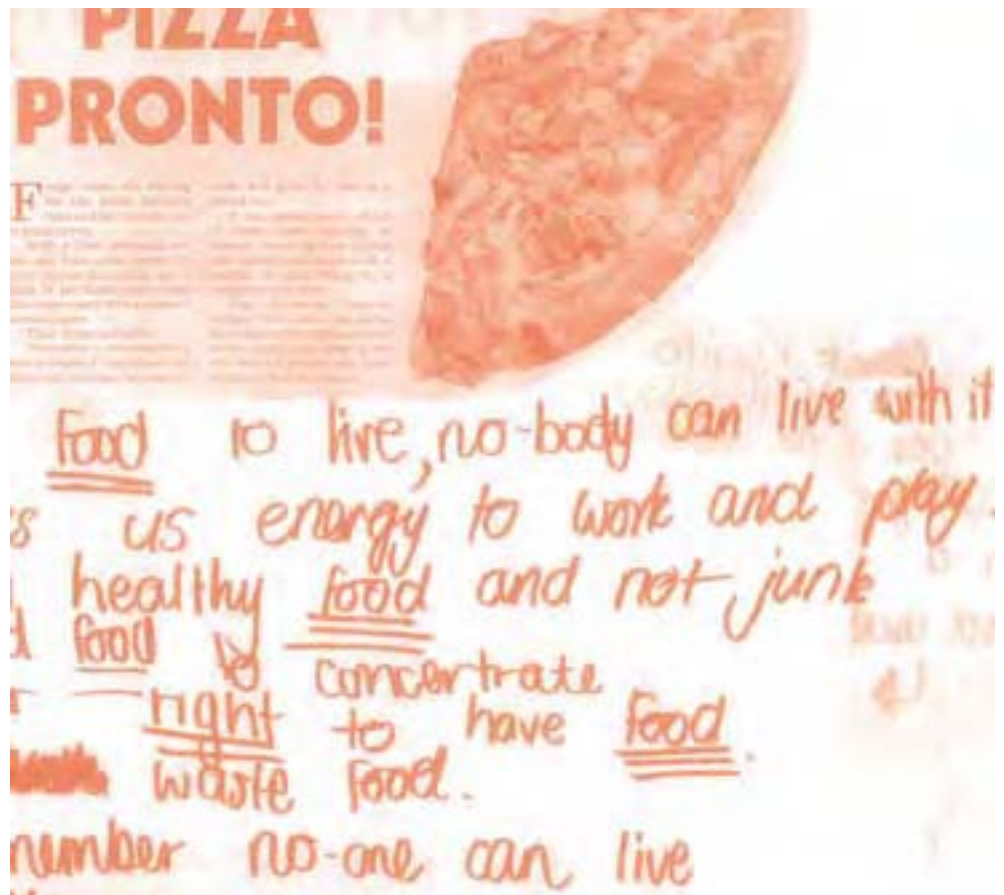
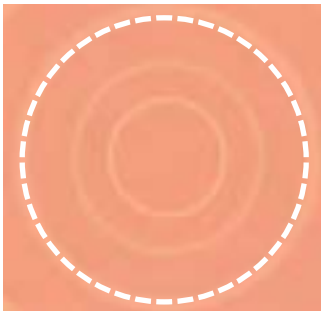
This was followed by a discussion about what they had drawn, so that it was clearly understood what each issue was about.

To enable the children to:

- identify the protective measures that children require
- consolidate their ideas in a concrete manner

The information obtained during the first workshop was fed into the parallel monitoring process conducted by the team of adult monitors trained by the MMP. Many of the indicators were based on issues identified by the children.

There was a time period between the first and second workshops, so a newsletter (see Appendix B) was sent out to the children in order to maintain communication. The content of the workshops was partly developed with consideration provided to the information received during the preceding workshop, therefore, a certain amount of time elapsed between the workshops. In order to ensure that the children understood that their participation was an ongoing process it was essential to maintain communication.



2.2.2 Children Becoming Media Experts - Workshop 2

The second participatory workshop took place before the children began monitoring the media. It aimed to provide basic media literacy skills, including understanding the news and its importance. It also taught the children some basic media monitoring skills. This phase helped to create a sense of ownership for the children in a project that directly affects them.

The following table is an outline of the activities conducted with the children in Workshop 2:



Workshop 2

Activity

Rationale/aims

Activity 1: How is the news made?

A simple visual poster that described the steps in the production of a newspaper was used as the focus for a discussion. The fact that the people involved in making the news made choices throughout the process was emphasised.

It was then explained that a media monitor monitors the choices that were made.

- To help the children see that the news is created by a number of different people who make choices about what should be in the news and how it is represented.
- To give the children an understanding of what a media monitor does.

Activity 2: Making our own choices

Working in groups of 3 or 4, children were given about 40 newspaper articles (each group was given the same articles). They then chose about 8 articles with which to make their own newspapers.

They had to make choices about the articles that went on to the front pages and which photos to use.

- To give the children a concrete example of what journalists and editors do when they create the news.
- To make children aware of the kinds of decisions that would need to be monitored.

Activity 3: Monitoring the news

The children were taught all of the aspects necessary to monitor the news within a human rights framework, including the meaning of terms such as discrimination, bias and fairness.

Children were given detailed training on how to fill in the monitoring forms that had been developed for their use.

- To allow the children to begin their own monitoring of the news media.

A set of monitoring forms based on those used by the adults was developed for the children in a monitoring book. Using the Freeplay Foundation radios, children monitored the news for a two-week period and captured the information in their monitoring books. The children were given the option of monitoring whichever news medium they preferred because of the difficulty in monitoring radio news bulletins. (Radio news bulletins are brief, and the children did not have recording facilities, which resulted in some difficulty in listening to radio news bulletins.) As a result, the children also monitored television news and newspapers.



2.2.3 Children's Monitoring Results - Workshop 3

The third and final participatory workshop had the following aims:

- To evaluate how the children experienced the monitoring process and what they had learnt about the media
- To give the children feedback on the results from the adults' monitoring and their own monitoring
- To ascertain information about representations of children with HIV/AIDS
- To empower the children by teaching them how to lodge complaints with the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) and the Press Ombudsman

The table below outlines the activities undertaken in this workshop:

Workshop 3 <i>Activity</i>	<i>Rationale/aims</i>
Introductory games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow the children to re-familiarise themselves with the researchers and each other.
Activity 1: What I have learned graffiti The children were asked to write down all of the things that they had learnt from the two previous workshops and from the monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To evaluate what they had learnt about the media.
Activity 2: How did you experience the monitoring process? The children were asked to draw a picture of themselves filling in their monitoring form and listening to their radios. They were asked to illustrate where they did this work and to write words around their pictures to describe how they felt doing this. This was followed by a discussion about what they had drawn. The children were also asked about where the radios they were given were now.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To find out how the children experienced the monitoring - how difficult they found it, whether it built self-esteem, etc. • To find out from the children themselves how to improve the monitoring forms so that they are easier to use.
Activity 3: What did your monitoring tell us? A researcher from the MMP presented both the findings from the children's data and the findings from the adult data. This was followed by a discussion about whether the children were surprised by any of the findings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To give the children feedback on a process in which they were involved.
Activity 4: What do you want to say to the media? Based on what they had heard from the results of the monitoring, the children each painted/ drew a poster that the MMP could use in their advocacy work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow the children to express their concerns to the media.
Activity 5: How you can be an ongoing monitor? The MMP explained to the children how they could lodge a complaint if they came across something in the media that they thought violated children's rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To empower children beyond the three workshops.
Activity 6: Diplomas The children were presented with diplomas by MMP, thanking them for their involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that the children knew that their contribution was appreciated.

3 Children Getting Into The News - Workshop 1

3.1 Children's access to the news media

In order to determine the levels of media literacy and awareness among the children, it was necessary to identify what types of news media they had access to, and what they thought about these media. The following table reflects this information:

	Gauteng	Eastern Cape	KwaZulu-Natal
TV at home	9	8	9
Watch tv news	7	9	5
Radio at home	9	8	10
Listen to radio news	4	3	6
Read newspaper twice a week	6	4	7
Read newspapers	6	1	5
Total participants in group	12	12	11

The researchers found that the children across all of the groups had almost equal access to television and that fairly large proportions of the children watch television news. Those who did not have a television in their home often watched at a friend or neighbour's house. Radios are also a widely accessible form of media, which validates the contention that radio is the most popular medium in South Africa. However, few children listen to the radio for the news, rather, it is used mostly for entertainment purposes.

A surprising discovery was the children's use of print media. Although most do not read newspapers on a daily basis, children across different socio-economic backgrounds tend to read the newspaper at least twice a week. These children, therefore, have significant exposure to the media.

3.2 Why do children watch the news?

When questioned about their media viewing habits, some children said that their parents were more motivated to watch the news and the children only watched news programmes when they could not watch anything else. However, this does not necessarily mean that children are not interested in the news; the results of the second focus groups indicated that the children were interested in the news, particularly in matters that affected them.

While it appears that children have little control over the television and tend to watch the news because of their parents' viewing habits, there are those who seek news and information about the world. Thus, it seems that children have some of the same reasons for watching the news as adults do.

Here are some comments from the children:

"My father is always saying, 'It's the news! Be quiet now.' So I sit and watch until something else comes on" ...

"It is a little boring, so I sometimes go and do something else." ...

"We watch to find out if anything bad has happened to people you know who live somewhere else." ...

"I watch because I am worried about the war that is coming." ...

[Apparently referring to the war in Iraq.]





3.3 What were the important issues for children?

A vital aspect of this project was to give the children the opportunity to participate and consider issues that are important to them. This in turn enabled the researchers to compare the issues that the children identified as important, with those issues reflected in the news media. The issues raised by the children were used as indicators that then fed into the adults' monitoring methodology. The table reflects the key issues raised by the children:

Getting along with others	Sport
Food	Safety
Water	Love and respect
Unemployment and how it affects children	HIV/AIDS and how it affects children
Knowing your rights	Medical care
Looking after yourself	Friends
Crime	Parents
Rape	Looking out for each other
Child abuse	Poverty
Education	Health
Homes	Substance abuse
Stable environment	Peer pressure
Clothes	Privacy
Racism and how it affects children	

Many children identified basic needs such as food, water, clothes and homes as important issues. Others identified larger social problems such as racism, unemployment and HIV/AIDS. The children explicitly expressed that they would have liked to see information about these larger social problems represented in relation to how they affect children. Other issues raised pertained to emotional well-being, such as love and respect, friends, looking after yourself and parents.

The children also identified child abuse and rape as important issues. This was surprising, as child abuse and rape receive more coverage in the news media than any other issue featured on the list.

These quotations illustrate some of the meanings that children attach to the various issues:

"Education is important because you can get a good education and you can get a better life if you go to school." ...

"Rights are important to children. The right to be safe and to have a home." ...

"Food is important. I think a child needs to eat before he goes to school. If a child does not eat food before they go to school they really don't concentrate. You must have something in your stomach so that you can think." ...

"I noticed that kids in this area live in shacks. Kids can't study in places like this." ...

"Racism is a problem for many children. In our school people don't like black kids coming to their school." ...

"I think racism is a problem for many children. People used to tease me because my mother is white and my father is black. They didn't get it, how can that be? People need to learn that you are like everybody else, they cannot say they do not like you because of your colour." ...

"I stay in a children's home and I realise how important family is. You can have water and food but with no family it is hard." ...

"Safety is important. Children are not safe from abuse and rape." ...

"I think we as girls we need to have a say about rape because we normally blame ourselves for being raped. We forget that we did not plan to be raped." ...

"Children must be helped to speak up because they are getting raped in their houses and when you speak up your parents threaten to chase you out of the house." ...

3.4 Children's review of the news media

Once the children had identified the issues that they thought were important in the first participatory workshop, they were asked to review various news media, including print, radio and television news broadcasts. This exercise introduced the children to the basic principles of media monitoring. The children were asked whether the issues that they had identified as important were actually represented in the media. The children's comments provided insight into their perceptions of what they thought was important and how, if at all, these were represented in the media.

"There is nothing on the radio news about children. These guys, they don't think our issues are important." ...

"There are articles about children in this paper but there are not enough. There could be more. Why is the cricket so important when children are living on the streets? People need to know how kids are living. Why should the world see cricket stuff when children are suffering?" ...

"There isn't enough about children in the newspapers. The people on the newspapers they don't take us seriously." ...

"In this newspaper you see more information about cell phones. There is only one about children." ...

"Maybe they don't report because they are ashamed. They do not have any answer for us when we say why are we hungry, or why do schools not let us come to school so they do not report. They are scared and ashamed to report because they don't have any solutions." ...

Children also talked about what issues they would like to see covered in the news:

"I would like to see articles about how other children live in other parts of our country." ...

"We want information about HIV/AIDS. Children have to know how to protect themselves." ...

"We want to know when schools reject children with HIV/AIDS. We need to know also when schools send children away because they do not have school fees." ...

"I think they must put in more about children's rights and responsibilities. Parents don't give children their rights and children need to know about them." ...

These comments indicate that many of the issues that the children saw as important were often not represented in the news media, which identifies a lack of content in the news that relates to children. Both the adults' and the children's monitoring projects confirm this.



3.5 How did children see themselves?

The purpose of the first set of participatory workshops was also to establish how the children saw themselves as represented by the media. The children were asked to comment on newspapers, radio and television news broadcasts. Although they lacked the vocabulary and media literacy skills, the children were able to express opinions about particular images or representations.

The children were acutely aware that most of the coverage afforded to children in the press tended to be negative, for example:

"They only show bad things that happen to children. They never speak about good things that we do as children." ...

In relation to one article that reported on the funding of an HIV/AIDS programme, accompanied by a picture of a four-year-old HIV-positive boy, one child participant identified the negative representation of a child, saying,

"Why must they show this child with the tube in his nose and the medicine. He looks sick and very bad. I really don't like it. They should have taken the tube out and then taken the photo." ...

Overall, the majority of the children noticed various articles that represented children as victims or portrayed them negatively. What was particularly interesting about this activity was the discussion that arose when the children looked at the articles, especially one about the closure of a waste dump where people had been collecting food. The article was accompanied by an image, photographed from above, of some children sitting in a wheelbarrow.

Child 1: I think this picture is bad. These children look sick and thin. They do not have energy. The way they took the photo is bad. It is not a beautiful photo. It is ugly. The way the children are seated on the wheelbarrow. It is not nice at all.

Child 2: If it was me I would allow the journalist to tell my story. If I don't allow them to show my picture, no one will see that I need help. I think the person who took this picture is right but I don't like the way it is shown. But taking the picture was a good idea. Maybe they can find people who will sponsor them.

Child 3: I think the way he made them sit in the wheelbarrow is a problem.

Child 4: I think they should let the children speak for themselves but unfortunately it won't be possible. They are weak; they cannot even remove flies that fly into their face. How will they manage to speak? The person who did speak on behalf of them he is right.

This kind of discussion illustrates the sophisticated level at which the children were able to analyse what they were reading in the newspaper. It is important to note that none of the children had been taught media literacy skills at this stage.

3.6 What about asking children to tell traumatic stories?

In relation to an article entitled "Bloodbath hero's battle to survive," which focused on a boy who witnessed the murder of his family, one participant commented:

"I really love this article because it says this boy is a hero. It shows children can do things." ...

While this article had a positive title, it was based entirely on the child's account of what he had witnessed during the murder of his family. The article was accompanied by a photograph of the boy sitting among the coffins of his dead family. The item was problematic for several reasons; it was in direct contravention of the Criminal Procedure Act; the reporter named and identified the minor, who was a key witness and was likely to be involved in further criminal proceedings. This child's personal safety may have been at risk, and there was little consideration for the trauma that he had suffered.

In the Eastern Cape group, the children talked about how wrong it was for the reporter to have interviewed the child. Again, the children seemed to instinctively recognise the ethical problems of interviewing a child who has recently suffered a traumatic experience.

"I think it is wrong to get him to tell his story. That makes him think too much about the bad thing that happened." ...

"I think it is wrong to keep on asking him questions. It will make him confused and more scared. When he answers their questions a picture of what happened will come to his mind." ...



3.7 What did the children think about revealing identities?

The participants were fairly outspoken about news articles that revealed the identity of particular children. The children in all of the groups were quite adamant that, for example, rape and abuse survivors should not be identified:

"It is not good to show his face. Everyone knows him and will laugh at him." ...

"This girl will grow up and then when she grows up she will see what they said about her and will be very sad." ...

"I think they should not have shown this child's face next to the coffin of his family. People will know him and then will ask what happened and then he will always remember". ...

They identified articles that protected the child's identity as good practice:

"I think it is better that there is no photo because if you had the face it will affect the child. If they had the details about the child you can go and find that child then the child will be more scared and people will tease her. They will keep on bringing back the subject. It won't be good and healthy for the child." ...

"This is good because if they had shown her face, when she walked on the street everybody was going to disrespect her. She was going to be teased by other children." ...

"I think it is fine to not show the face of the child because this child will be teased if everyone knew her." ...

The children pointed out the irony of protecting the identity of the perpetrator, while simultaneously revealing the identity of the victim:

"They don't show a person who is a suspect and a criminal but they show the person he raped." ...

"Here the teacher was wrong but she is not in the picture - the boy is there. The teacher should be shown." ...

"The teacher is guilty and the whole world should see him or her. What she did is wrong." ...

"If people do crime you can't see their face. But you often see the face of the innocent children. They were supposed to protect and respect the face of a child." ...

While the children were clear about protecting the name and identity of a child who had been raped or abused, they supported naming and identifying children who were ill or poor. They believed that telling these sad stories could help the children named in the news item because someone might sponsor them. These comments point to a lack of knowledge on the children's behalf in relation to the media and the rights of an individual by optimistically assuming that people will always help others in distress.

These were some of the comments that the children made, which favoured the revealing of identities:

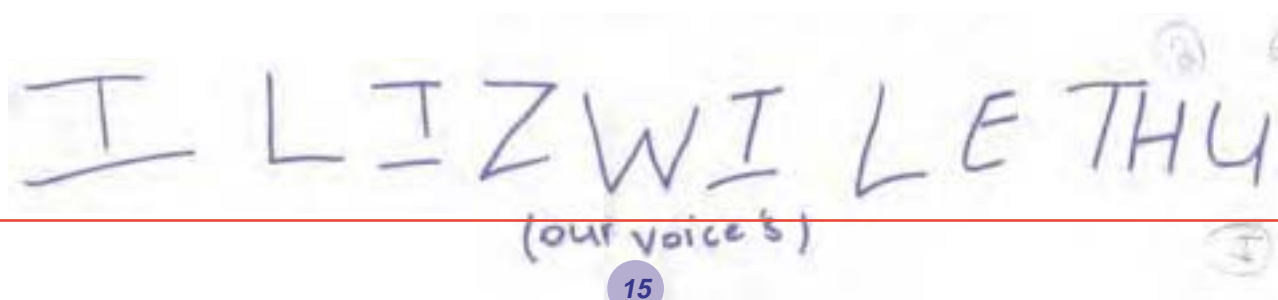
"I think this photo is alright. If it was me I would want my photo in the newspaper. No one will help these children if they are not shown on the picture." ...

"Maybe someone will help this boy now they have heard his story." ...

"If it was me I would allow the journalist to tell my story. If I don't allow them to show my picture no one will see that I need help. I think the person who took this picture is right but I don't like the way it is shown. Maybe they can find people who will sponsor them." ...

"I think this child is HIV positive. He is going to die. If people don't understand his situation they may laugh at him but when they know about HIV/AIDS they will give him support and love. He must be open so he can get help. I am not going to get support easily if I am not open about being HIV-positive. They need to be open so people can help them to cope with the stress." ...

The participants based their decisions on whether or not to reveal children's identities by using the standard benchmark of maintaining the child's best interests, even though they did not always fully understand the consequences or repercussions of these decisions. Overall, the issue of naming and identifying children is a complex issue, with the child's right to dignity and privacy being paramount.



3.8 In what kinds of stories do children appear?

Both the children and adult monitors observed that information in the media on or about children tended to be mostly negative. The child participants, however, still recognised the essential role that the media plays in highlighting important issues, albeit negative:

"I think it is good to have articles like this. Now I know about children who are hungry. I feel bad for them. I wish I could help them but it is not possible because I still depend on my parents." ...

"I think it is good to have these articles about abuse and rape as then grown-ups are made aware. Mothers can warn their children. They will be more careful about sending them out at night in the dark." ...

In addition, the participants raised the fact that the media tends to focus on dramatic issues, such as child abuse, and may ignore other children's issues. This was also reflected in the monitoring done by the adult monitors, which indicated a fairly narrow representation of children in the news media, both in terms of topics and roles:

"There is always a story about abuse in the paper and when a child is abused then the story is discussed by people on the news but then what about other things that happen to children. Teachers beat children and they send them home if they have no uniform. What about those stories?" ...

The three groups of children discussed this tendency and commented on how badly it reflects on children:

"People think children are always in trouble, that they cannot do anything for themselves." ...

Children in all of the groups talked about how few journalists actually interview children and ask them to tell their stories. They liked a television news insert that showed young children on their first day of school, because the reporters interviewed the children themselves.

One child pointed out that it often helps children to speak for themselves:

"I think it helps to speak. This child did speak. She said she is scared of the rapist. She had freedom of speech. We can trust it because she said it herself. It will help her to speak out about what happened." ...

3.9 Asking children for their permission

An interesting discussion arose in the KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng groups around the asking of children's permission. There was some debate, but generally the groups felt that younger children were unable to give their permission to be interviewed or photographed:

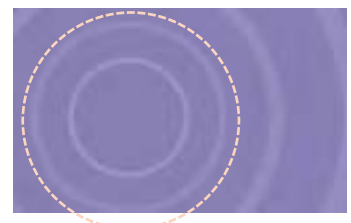
"I think young children cannot give permission. Parents must do it. Only at say 10 or 11 do you know, you just think 'I am going to be on TV!'" ...

The group said, however, that children should be approached, and that younger children should be asked in their parents' presence. With older children, the consensus was that it was important to ask the child's permission because some parents may give consent against the child's wishes. The children also said that the parents were not always correct.

"His mother should not have let them take the picture." ...

The above comment was made in relation to a story about a pre-schooler who had soiled himself and, reportedly crying hysterically, was subsequently hosed down with cold water by his teacher on the playground. The report then relates the mother's response, and the action she intended taking against the school. A photograph of the child accompanied the article, which enabled the public to identify him.

The comments indicate that children are aware of the importance of obtaining permission. Even though they were not cognisant of the fact that minors cannot give consent, they were aware of the ethical issues surrounding consent.



4 Children Becoming Media Experts - Workshop 2

The aim of the second set of participatory workshops was to provide the children with the skills to understand the news. This was achieved through a basic newspaper-making exercise and a monitoring project in which children themselves undertook to monitor the media.

The participants were divided into three groups per province, so that each province would produce three newspapers. They were given a selection of approximately 40 articles, cut from various newspapers, with which to construct their own newspapers. The articles were diverse; they covered crime, child abuse, politics, HIV/AIDS, general interest items, sports and entertainment, as well as positive and negative stories about children. The articles were all broadly relevant to the time period and reflected the topics that the children had identified as important during the first participatory workshop. The articles were all actual news stories and reflected what the media had determined as prominent news items.

The children were asked to make their own newspapers (using a minimum of eight articles), using any of the available pieces that interested them. They could make a newspaper comprised of only positive news, only negative news, about children only, about adults only, or a combination of any of these topics. In addition, they were given free range to write up their own stories and create their own headlines.

The newspaper-making exercise aimed to show the children that news is about choice and that decisions made in a newsroom are based on certain assumptions. The exercise further hoped to determine what children would like to see in the news and how they understood the media.

4.1 What did the children's newspapers reveal?

4.1.1 News diversity

Overwhelmingly, the children strived to maintain a balance between positive and negative news stories, and often tended to juxtapose a positive item with a negative item. They also demonstrated a need to feature news that was relevant to their lives.

Using ratios of positive to negative items, the researchers found that the Gauteng group used the most positive items, followed by the KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape groups. With this in mind, it may be relevant to point out that the participants from Gauteng tended to come from wealthier homes, with the greatest access to media, while the children from the other provinces had less access to the media.

Children from the Eastern Cape group focused more on negative news items, specifically items on child abuse. Since some of these participants came from a children's home, this may indicate a greater awareness or sensitivity to issues of abuse.

Ratios of Positive to Negative Stories

	Eastern Cape		Gauteng		KwaZulu-Natal	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Paper 1	4	6	12	2	14	2
Paper 2	4	4	7	3	7	4
Paper 3	7	3	5	5	4	2

Even though the children made use of negative images or stories in their newspapers, there were clear attempts to use the items to deliver more positive or meaningful messages than was the case in the original context of the articles.

Ratios of News to Entertainment

	Eastern Cape		Gauteng		KwaZulu-Natal	
	News	Entertainment	News	Entertainment	News	Entertainment
Paper 1	5	3	6	7	7	9
Paper 2	5	4	6	4	4	7
Paper 3	8	3	6	3	2	4

In all of the groups, the news content was higher than the entertainment content. This suggests that, contrary to popular belief, children are interested in the news and they recognise the need to be informed.

Representations of gender

It was notable that the participants were attentive to equitable gender representation; stories featuring girls or women were far more prominent in the children's newspapers than in the mainstream media. The overall ratio in the newspapers of images of males to females was 36:34.

	Eastern Cape		Gauteng		KwaZulu-Natal	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Paper 1	9	7	12	13	2	6
Paper 2	9	9	10	9	13	8
Paper 3	8	7	5	8	13	16

In one instance, gender issues were raised through the selection of an article about a girl who wanted to cut the fat off her body. Some children had opted to include the photo of the girl while others opted not to. This is what the participants said:

"This journalist put the picture in but we left her out because it would not be right to show her face and everything like that. We did not think that she would like it."

"It is ok to show her face because she is not funny. She is beautiful."

"The media is putting an image in children's minds that looking like a star or model is the only way you will be accepted in society."

Ratios of children to adults

Although there was a clear adult component, children were represented far better in the children's newspapers than they were in regular newspapers. This is in keeping with the observation that the producers of newspapers tend to feature information or stories that interest and are relevant to them.

	Eastern Cape		Gauteng		KwaZulu-Natal	
	Children	Adults	Children	Adults	Children	Adults
Paper 1	7	11	34	10	8	15
Paper 2	9	6	13	9	6	23
Paper 3	17	7	10	5	2	5

Representations of race

The children's newspapers also showed more equitable representation of race. A count of the different races represented in their newspapers showed that 55 percent of all sources were black, while 19 percent were white. Although the children had raised race as an issue, and attempted to portray the racial demographics of South Africa equitably, the participants did not draw specific attention to race.

4.1.2 Abuse

Abuse was clearly an issue; articles that portrayed child abuse featured consistently in all of the newspapers. The fact that this issue was emphasised in the children's newspapers dispels the myth that children do not want to hear about, or deal with, child abuse. In the children's monitoring, 34 percent of the stories that contained children focused on abuse.

One of the groups selected an article about a woman who had been abused by her husband, with an accompanying photograph of both the woman and her minor daughter. The children explained why they had selected this article:

"In our country it is there for that all women and children need a good life. So that they can know how to make a living, how to build their home and family."

The following caption was featured underneath the image:

"Crying shame the woman and her child end up dying or live in the streets."

These comments indicate a good understanding of what is needed for healthy familial relationships. The children acknowledged the trauma of abuse victims, rather than representing them as statistics. The children's presentation of the story further recognises the victims' humanity, rather than simply representing the story as a stand-alone news item.

In one of the newspapers, named Ilizwilethu, (meaning "Our Voices" in Nguni) the last page of the newspaper consisted of items on abuse and children orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS. They called this page the "page of shame," to show people how many children have been raped, "abused and hurt in just one week". The children commented:

"I don't think most people realise they have to do something about it [abuse]. Parents must stop abusing children because we are the leaders of tomorrow. We need the courage from the parents. They must do something and stop abusing us."

4.1.3 Basic necessities

The children displayed a tendency to draw meaning beyond the content of the story. Positive images were used to express a need for necessities, such as libraries. This expression was achieved in a way that did not represent children as victims, but rather as resourceful and resilient.

A powerful example was the image of a pizza, which was used to represent a basic right to nutrition. It seems that these children, some of whom came from extremely poor homes, believed that poverty and basic needs are an important reality for many children and adults in South Africa, and that often, the media does not adequately cover this.

4.1.4 Heroes

Many of the groups included articles about children who were represented as heroic, or were featured in positive roles. Many of the children selected the article about a street child who had been talent-spotted and commented:

"Still, even if you are poor it does not mean that you will never get anywhere in life. This girl she was poor, she had nothing basically, and now she is famous. The message is no matter what happens you can always become something in life."

In another example, children used the image of an Iraqi woman shielding her two children from crossfire between opposing forces. The accompanying headline read: "Bodies continue to pile up." The children interpreted this image from a more positive perspective, saying:

"A mother covering her two children. We said we are putting this on the front page because it shows that this woman is willing to die for the children. The heading they [journalists] used is saying the opposite. They are not looking at what is good about the situation but only at the bodies."

This comment attests to the children's ability to interpret positive information from negative images, as well as their overwhelming sense of optimism. The comment also points to the children's recognition that most news reports about children tend to be negative news; framed by negative language. In contrast to this trend, the children enjoyed seeing positive reports about children.

4.2 Newspaper titles

Many of the children gave names to their newspapers. Some had conventional names such as "The Herald," while others were named "Child's Potential" or "Our Voices." The children explained:

"We called it 'Children's Voices'. We made this newspaper and it is our voice."

"We chose that because we put things that are happening in 'Our World Today', things that are affecting us."

The selection of such names indicated that the children recognised that the newspapers were an inclusive forum through which they could express themselves. It also demonstrated strong ownership of the newspapers, and recognition for what children are capable of achieving.

4.3 Design and layout

It was clear that the children were aware of the basic structure of a newspaper; most of them maintained the basic design and layout of a standard, freely available, commercial newspaper. In this way, important stories were featured on the front pages, while sports and entertainment were featured in the last pages of the children's newspapers.

Only a few groups digressed from this basic layout by ordering their selection of news items differently. For example, positive stories were prominently placed on the front pages, while negative stories about abuse and rape were placed on the last page.



5 Children's Monitoring Results - Workshop 3

The MMP wanted to address the misconception that children do not listen to the news and are not interested in the news. In fact, children do listen to the news and are actively interested in matters that affect them. The children were asked to monitor the media over a period of two weeks, and record their findings in monitoring workbooks, in order to establish what they thought of the media. This information was recorded in the participants' language of preference and was translated later where necessary.

The MMP developed a user-guide called *Silalele si mamele*, "we are listening." The guide explained what the news was about and what a monitor was. It also explained and defined specific media terms, such as bias, fairness and discrimination. Each child participant was given a monitoring workbook and was asked to sign an agreement with the MMP and its partners before undertaking this exercise.

The MMP also ensured that all of the children had equal access to the media and obtained radios from the Freeplay Foundation for this purpose. These wind-up, solar-powered radios enabled the participation of children who may not have had access to electricity or batteries.

The monitoring activity conducted by the children was based on the media monitoring methodology used by the MMP in its ongoing monitoring. The monitors were asked to look at the manner in which news stories were constructed; to summarise each news item and to record whether or not the item portrayed children. The gender and race of the subjects were also recorded, in order to ensure that the children were aware of the gender and race issues in the news, and could monitor the media from a human rights perspective.

The children were also required to note down the topics that each bulletin contained. This was related to the topics that the children had designated as important in the previous workshops, and enabled the MMP to identify which topics the children noticed in the news. This method allowed the children to make note of the content of the overall news bulletin, paying special attention to whether news items were relevant to children.

Finally, the monitors were asked to say whether they liked or disliked a story, and to give the reasons for their decisions. They were also asked to give a judgement on the news bulletin, and to comment on whether or not the bulletin contained children, and how that made them feel. To cater for the younger children in the groups, children were asked to draw a picture about the news bulletins and express how any one of the stories made them feel. This was to assess which types of news stories had the most impact on children, as well as to assess how watching the news made them feel.

5.1 Compiling a database

The monitoring conducted by the children generated 35 workbooks, with approximately 350 different bulletins, which were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. A database was created to enable the MMP to address the ways in which the child monitors highlighted topics that appeared in the news. The monitoring undertaken by the children ran parallel to the monitoring conducted by the adult monitors. This allowed for comparisons to be made between the monitoring conducted by the children and the adults. To a large extent, the results of the children's monitoring were verified by the results of the monitoring done by the adults.

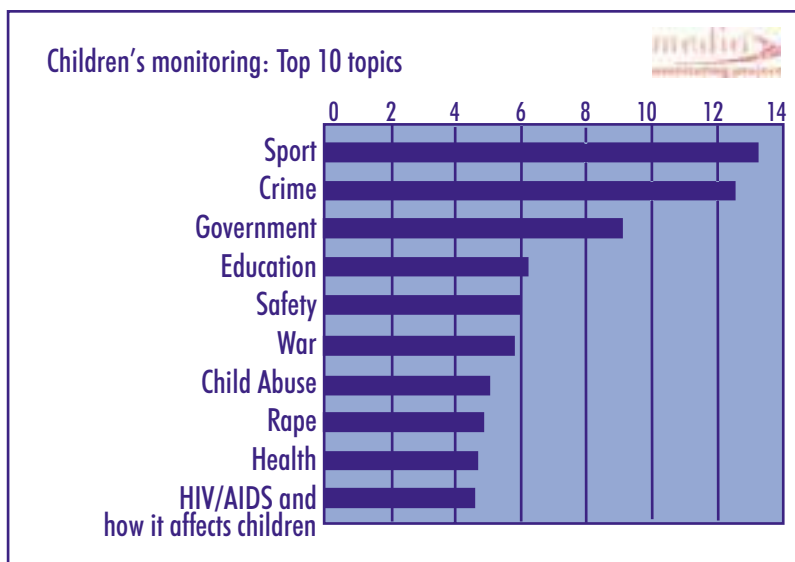


5.2 What was in the news?

The following graph indicates the topics that the children identified in the news, according to a topic list of important issues that they had compiled during the first workshop. It was found that sport featured prominently, with a total of 13 percent. This could possibly be because children are interested in sport and thus, they remembered those articles more clearly. However, this time period was also characterised by a visit from a prominent foreign footballer, and items that featured him were noticed, thereby linking sport to entertainment and celebrity coverage.

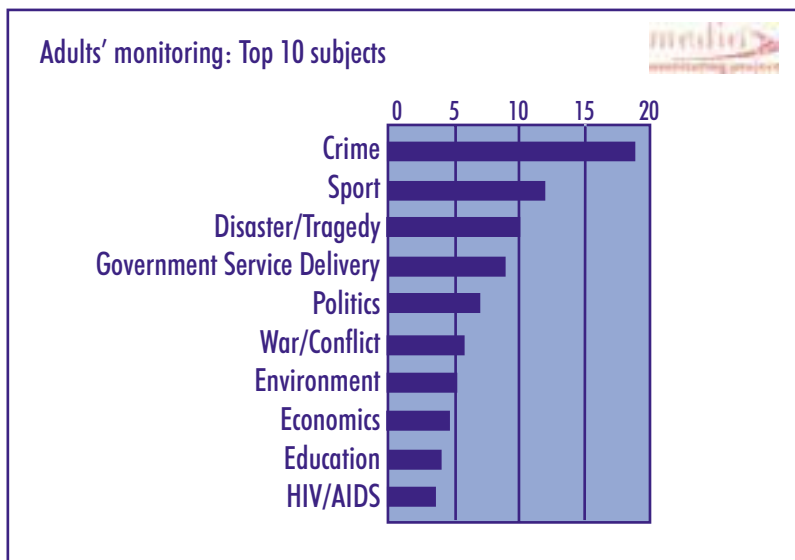
Crime also featured prominently in the news, along with stories about the government and education. Children found that safety was important; this was closely linked to other items in the news such as war, child abuse, rape and crime. It seems that this is because children feel that people need safety when terrible things threaten them. Health was also an important topic in the news, as well as HIV/AIDS. The HIV/AIDS issue had originally been identified as important only when it affected children, but the monitors noted the topic when it related to adults as well.

Graph A



Each news item that the adult monitors recorded was also subject-coded, so as to determine what subjects appeared in the news and to enable a comparison with the topics identified by the children. Graph B indicates the subjects that appear most frequently in the news. The subject results are very similar to the topics identified by the children, which suggests that children do notice prominent topics in the news.

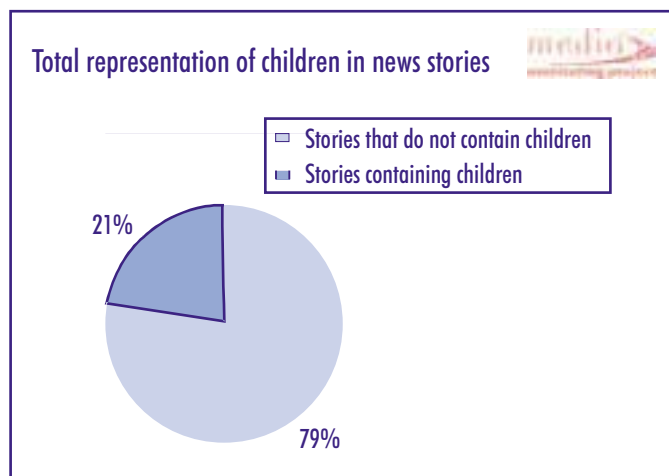
Graph B



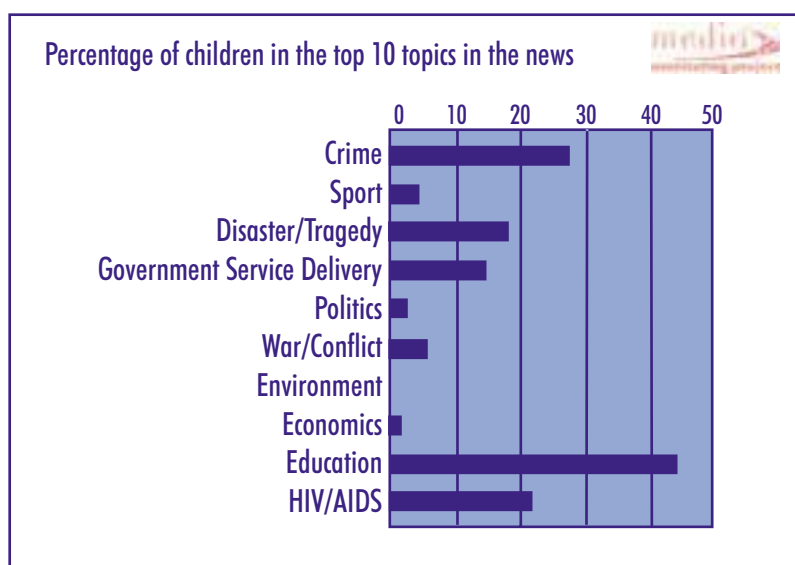
5.3 Were children featured in the news?

The children's monitoring revealed that children do feature in the news, although not very prominently; only 21 percent of the total news items mentioned or featured children. This figure is high, however, compared to the adult monitoring results, where only 6 percent of news items contained children, and seems to indicate that children remember those items that portray children most clearly. Since the children did not record the news bulletins that they monitored, but had to rely on memory, the results may have been slightly skewed.

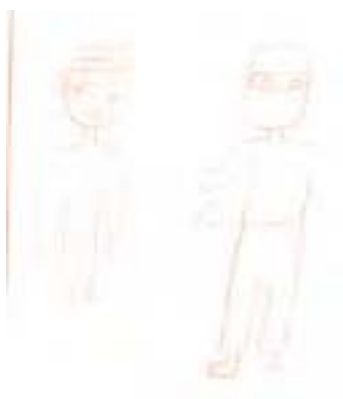
Graph C



Graph D



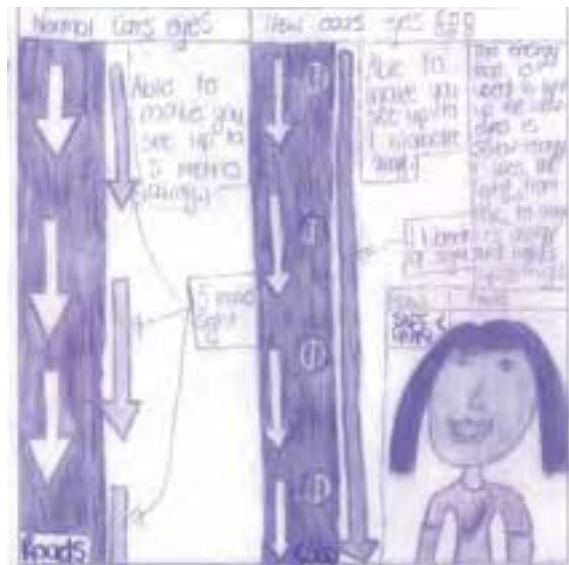
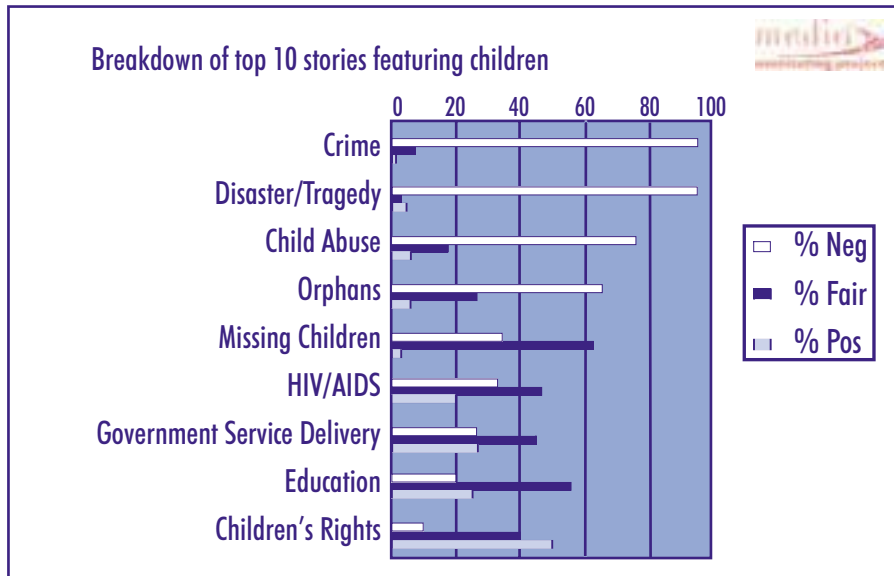
Children were largely underrepresented in the news, with the highest representations in education (44 percent), followed by crime (26 percent) and HIV/AIDS (21 percent).



5.4 When children were in the news, what were the stories about?

Of the 21 percent of news stories that profiled children, most were crime and missing person stories. (The missing persons issue was prominent during this period due to a particular series of events around the identity of a young man who had come forward questioning his parentage.) Following this, were stories on disasters and tragedy, education, child abuse, government service delivery, children's rights, orphans, unusual or special stories, and HIV/AIDS.

Graph E





A further analysis of those stories containing children revealed that most of them were negative. Overall, 52 percent of stories were negative, 33 percent were fair, and 15 percent were positive. The most negative stories that contained children were stories about crime and disasters, or tragedy (92 percent). Stories on child abuse were also predominantly negative (76 percent), as were stories on orphans (67 percent). Stories on missing children were mostly fair (62 percent), but featured a negative perspective (35 percent). In the stories on HIV/AIDS; 33 percent were negative, 47 percent were fair, and 20 percent were positive. Stories on government service delivery were mostly fair, where the most negative stories in this category concerned health. Education stories that featured children were also generally fair. The subject that featured children most positively was children's rights, where 50 percent of the stories were positive, and only 11 percent were negative.

Many of the children commented on this negative trend in reporting on children:

"There was a story about children but it was only about the bad stuff happening."

"In every news bulletin there are children who are raped, street kids, orphans and more. This is bad for children."

"I feel sad because nothing is said about the good children do."

On the other hand, the children responded optimistically to the positive stories on children's rights:

"I like this news today because they encourage us as children to talk our rights to people and they give us power to talk to our parents."

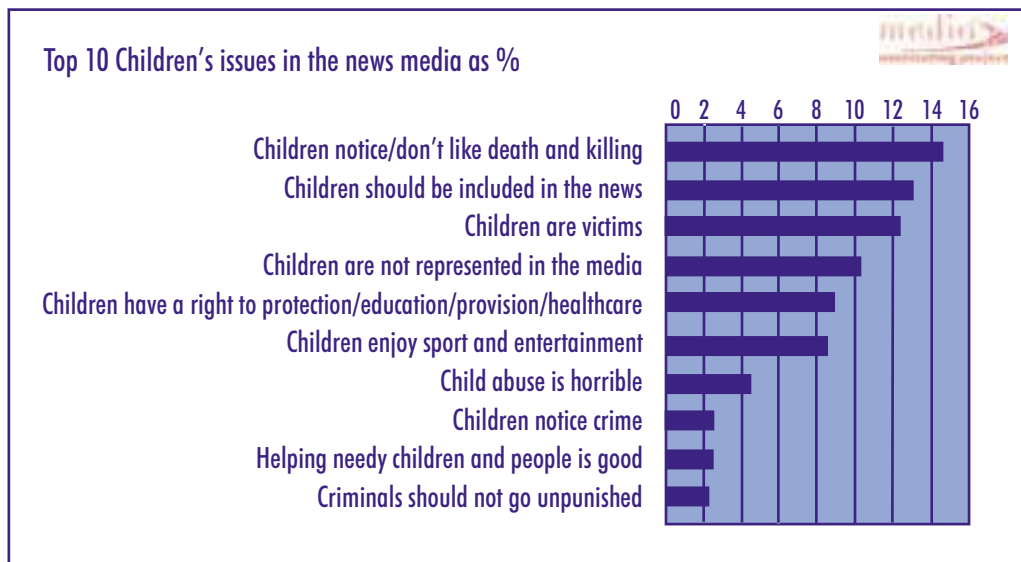


5.5 What do children think about the news?

The children raised a number of important issues in relation to the news that they monitored. Most importantly, the children commented that they noticed, and did not enjoy, the features on deaths and killings. This is particularly relevant, given that crime and disasters/tragedy are two of the most common news subjects, and children are the most negatively represented in these stories. The children also mentioned that they should be included in the news, which is linked to the fact that the children believe that they are underrepresented in the news media.

The child monitors noticed that children are primarily represented as victims in the news and commented on their need for, and right to, protection, education, services and health. They also felt strongly about child abuse, acknowledged the prevalence of crime and believed that criminals should be punished. On a more positive note, the children mentioned that they enjoyed the sport and entertainment coverage and valued the help provided for “needy” people.

Graph F



These are some of the things children said about the news:

“There was too much of violence in this broadcast.”

“I liked the story because there was no killing.”

“I dislike the news because of the many bad and accidents and crime.”

“It's like they don't have anything for us or about us because we know nothing and are too young.”

“The news made me feel left out, it's like children don't exist.”

“In South Africa children are totally ignored, TV shows and newspapers should try harder to look in the problems of the young generation.”

“There was nothing about children. I feel that people on the news don't take us seriously.”





5.6 What did children notice about gender and race in the news?

The children were asked to note gender representation in news items; whether stories that contained children were about boys, girls, or both. These results indicated that boy children were far better represented than girl children: 44 percent of stories included boys, while only 29 percent included girls and 27 percent included both boys and girls. The children noted that in the stories on crime, boys were more often portrayed as murder victims or victims of general crime, while girls were more often portrayed as rape victims. Girls were also portrayed more often as victims of child abuse in general. Gender seemed most equitably represented in stories on education, where 92 percent of the stories that included children contained both boys and girls.

In their monitoring, the children were also asked to take note of race. Some monitors acknowledged race in some instances, but many did not. Where it was indicated, the results show that race was fairly accurately represented in terms of South African demographics, with more stories containing black people and a far lower general representation of other races. Part of the explanation for these results lies in the media that the children monitored. Children were asked to monitor any medium they felt comfortable working with (print, radio or television) and in whatever language they preferred. As a result, many of the children monitored media geared towards black listeners, or viewers broadcasting in African languages, and thus had a greater representation of people who could speak African languages (predominantly black people). These results cannot be relied upon, however, as too many children did not identify a race category in their monitoring.



5.7 How did children feel about the news?

As part of the process, the monitors were asked to express how they felt about various aspects of the news. One of the tasks was for the children to describe a story that they liked or disliked, and to express how that story made them feel. The most commonly expressed emotion for this task was “sad”. Many of the children said that they felt sad particularly in response to stories on crime and tragedy, or disaster. This seems to further reflect the reality that children notice when people die and they do not like death or killing. The second most commonly expressed emotion was “happy”, and this was mostly in response to sports-related stories, which confirmed that children enjoy sports and entertainment. The children also expressed feeling “angry” and “scared” in response to crime stories. On the whole, crime stories elicited the most response from the children, and these responses were generally negative.

Another task invited the children to comment on whether or not the news that day had contained any children, and then to express how that made them feel. Again, the most commonly expressed emotion for this task was “sad”, in response to stories where children were featured negatively (for example, crime, disaster or tragedy, and child abuse). The second most commonly expressed emotion was “happy” and this was primarily in response to stories that contained children. In this case, there were some positive stories about children, but some children said that they were just happy that children were mentioned in the news, even though the story was negative. When news stories did not contain children, many of the children expressed that they felt “sad” and “angry”.

The third task required the children to draw a picture of any one of the news items that they had monitored, to describe how it made them feel. This exercise was included for those children who may have had difficulty expressing how they felt in words, or who preferred to express themselves artistically. The results were very similar to the first task and the most commonly expressed emotion was “sad”, in response to news items on crime and disaster or tragedy. Many children drew pictures that showed that the items on violent crime and rape made them feel very sad. The second most commonly expressed emotion was “happy”, in response to sports-related stories. The visiting celebrity footballer featured prominently in the drawings, along with other drawings about soccer.

Despite the many “sad” stories on the news, most children still said that they found the news interesting: 65 percent of the children found the news interesting, while 17 percent found it somewhat interesting, and 19 percent did not find it interesting at all.

It was also evident that the children listened to the news, were interested in the news and had opinions on a wide range of matters, particularly those that affected them. Despite the prolific negativity, it was found that children are survivors and that they are very optimistic. Often, they found positive elements in a negative story, or extracted a lesson from a negative news item so as to ensure that the negative event would not recur.

Below are more direct comments, in the children’s own words.

On crime:

“The criminals must stop killing our police because they are helping our mothers to catch fathers for women abuse.”

“I disliked the story about the 17-year old boy who shot a fellow student in the head because children should not be carrying any weapons to school or be exposed to violence at schools.”

On war and conflict:

“Bush is a total idiot. He is gaining from other people’s suffering and I think that is sick. He goes on and on about weapons when all he really wants is oil and money.”

On child abuse:

“I didn’t like the story where a man who did child pornography said that the state was violating his rights of privacy because he was violating other children’s rights by doing child pornography.”

“I don’t think watching child porn can be called ‘research’.”



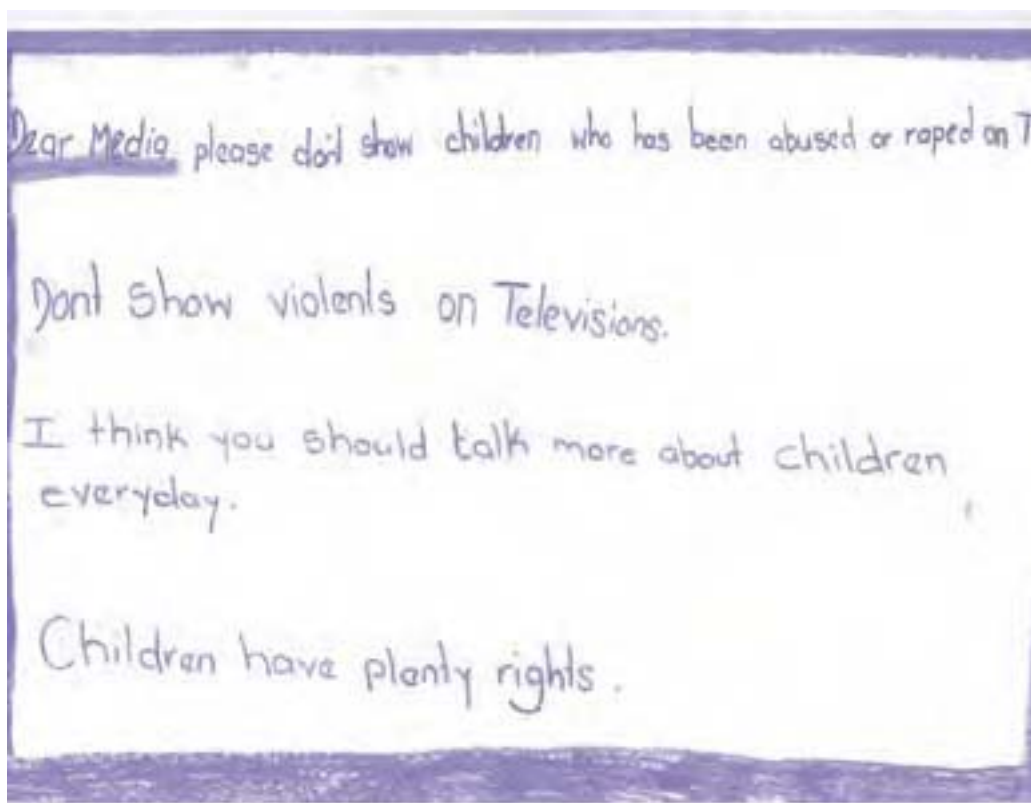
5.8 Success of the monitoring

All of the children took the project very seriously and completed their monitoring successfully. They monitored the news, were able to make summaries and apply their new media literacy skills in a critical manner. The indicators clearly showed that the children had become conscious of both their and others' human rights, and could identify where and when these rights were being violated. The participants also identified a strong need for a more protective environment for children. The skills that they learned allowed the children to actively participate and enabled them to teach others (such as their parents) to become more aware of their human rights.

5.9 The final stage: reporting back to the children and evaluating the learning

In preparation for the third set of participatory workshops, the MMP developed a booklet that contained the results of the children's monitoring. This document explained to the children how their participation had enabled the research team to determine the results and described how they could become responsible citizens by lodging a complaint with the appropriate government body when they felt that there had been a human rights violation in the media. Another important aspect of the last workshop was to determine what the children had learnt, and what they thought of the project. This was done through discussions and a poster making exercise.

Educating children about their rights in relation to the media was an important feature of this project. The children were aware that the media have an obligation to protect the identity of children who have been raped and abused. One of the participants said the following:



"I know that children who have been abused need their names and faces protected. Journalists do not have a right to show that. I did not know that before."

The children also commented on how happy they were to have learnt about the basic operations of the media:

"I learned to make a newspaper."

"I understand how newspapers and TV news is made now."

"I am now listening to the news. I got interested and now I listen every time at night and in the morning."

"I start listening at 3.00 when there is a programme that is like an informative news programme. This is on till 7.00 then I listen to the news and then a story then I switch it off. Then in the morning I listen to the news programme."

"I heard on the news in the morning that Mars was near the planet earth and then I watched it at night."

Children learned more than just how the media was made; the process has encouraged them to think critically about what is shown in the media. The poster below illustrates how this child has begun to think broadly about what is shown on television:



This shows the development of real media literacy skills.

Their comments about rights show that even though the process focused on children's rights in the media, the children have been able to apply this information to rights in general. In particular, they were able to understand and internalise the concept of the right to participation and to be heard:

"I have learned that adults have to respect children's rights because children have got rights."

"It has taught us our rights, how to stand firm on things that are happening, how to take a stand in the world. It has educated us how not to be victims."

One child described how he was able to apply learning about rights to his own life:

"I felt sick of seeing and hearing of issues of discrimination. It made me more aware of discrimination at school and of how other black children like me were being undermined in our town. They did not want to sit with us at school."



Another theme that emerged was that the children gained a sense of their own power and potential through the process. One child wrote the following when asked to show what she had learnt from the workshops:



This is what she noted about what she had written:

"I put that I realise now I can make a difference and have a right to be listened to like an adult."

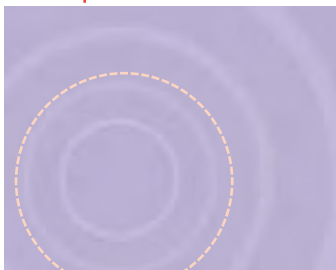
Question: What was it that made you feel you could make a difference?

"Well, the monitoring. We did it properly like the adults and you used our information in the report. You even made graphs with it. You took it seriously. It will go into a report that will help children. I feel that I did that. I can make a difference in other children's lives. I also feel like I have some power as a child."

This drawing relates a similar theme:



"I realised that we can understand what is going on around us. If it is about us we are the best people to say something about it."



The children talked about how proud they felt to be part of the project:

"I felt proud because other children at school, even in other places really, except for these 12 children I am sitting with, do not do what we are doing, that is monitoring the news. They also need opportunities like these. So I felt proud of being part of monitoring the news."



At the outset of the project, the children were given solar-powered radios to enable them to monitor the news. Some discussion arose around what had become of these radios once the project was over. This was done to find out if the children still had ownership of the radios, or whether they had been taken over by adults. It was clear that in some homes adults used the radios, but it appeared that children still had access to them. In most homes, the children had expressed their ownership quite firmly as the comments below confirm:

"Mine is at home and it is waiting for me".

"Mine is in a cardboard box at home. I take it out when I want to listen to it. I keep it in a cardboard box because there are many children at home and they may damage it. Small children like touching and twisting things".

"I was listening to it yesterday, day before yesterday, the whole week, in fact since you gave me that radio I have been listening everyday".

"One brother wanted me to sell it to him for R100. But I said no"!

"People like asking me where I got the radio. I tell them it comes from far, in America. (The group laughs). I really cause a scene if someone uses it without asking me first. I tell them that they will twist and wind it too much and they will break the handle. So they are all afraid to touch it at home. So we decided to keep it in the box and open it when I come back".

"We listen to Tshedi and Kcee they are DJs".

"Then at 7.00 we listen to stories"

"At night hymns and gospel"

"To feed your spirit".



6 Media Stakeholders' Meeting

A stakeholders' meeting took place on the 26th of March 2004, where the results of the adults' monitoring were presented to the media and other interested stakeholders. The children who participated in the project were also given the opportunity to present the findings of their monitoring and their experience of the workshops. In addition, the children formed a panel and responded to questions from the floor on their understanding and opinions of the representation of children in the media. They also gave a number of suggestions to improve the representation of children in the media:

- All of the children said that journalists need to think before they write or take pictures of children. The children said that the effects of the story were often harmful to children and that journalists should think about whether they would like it if the same thing happened to them.
- The children also said that children suffer double trauma, e.g. when they have been raped and then the media features an image of their face. They felt that children should be protected.
- The children were all very enthusiastic about the research in which they had participated. They said that they loved contributing, and that it would be helpful if more children could do what they had done. They also said that children like to be involved in the news because many of the stories are about issues that directly affect them.
- One of the participants suggested that more attention be paid to newspaper supplements so that they include and access more children.



7 Conclusion

In spite of the lack of media literacy amongst the children in the first participatory workshops, it is clear that the children showed advanced critical thinking skills and were outspoken about the rights of children in the news media context by the end of the project. They were also able to articulate many of the issues that would be raised in an adult debate about children in the media.

The children's comments and monitoring strongly suggest that there is not enough on or about children in the news; as a result, children feel excluded. They also strongly expressed that they would like to be given an opportunity to voice their opinions. One child articulated this idea:

"It is good that they ask us because we are children. We know how other children feel when people do things like take a photo like this one." ...

It is evident from the children's feedback that this project involved far more than simply teaching children the skills to monitor the media. They also learned about children's rights in a practical context that allowed them to internalise the concept of these rights. In particular, they developed an understanding about the child's right to participate.

In addition, children who participated in this process became critical media users by the end of the third participatory workshop, to the extent that they were able to articulate what they felt about the news media, what they think should be included, and how they think the media should be protecting and representing children.

While making their newspapers, the children learned that the news is about choice, and that they can question what is presented to them as "truth". Through monitoring, these children will be more aware of the choices being presented to them by the news in future. As a result of this initiative, the children are better informed; they are know their rights and are equipped to identify human rights violations. They are able to help build a protective environment for other children and adults, and they are able to understand how powerfully the media influences perceptions. All of these new skills will empower children and by extension, their families, friends and communities, to participate more actively in society, and help them to shape their environments in a manner that will strengthen democracy at all levels.

This research reveals that children consider being informed as important. They also demonstrated the ability to question what was being presented to them in the news on a basic level. More specifically, the children appear to believe that the news provides information that may help them protect themselves from possible danger. However, the children also perceive the news as an important instrument to solicit assistance for those less fortunate than themselves, and those with serious disabilities. The news, therefore, clearly elicits feelings of sorrow, anger and fear for the human suffering represented in the news, as the children recalled more vividly those news stories in which violence and disasters or accidents were predominant.

The participatory workshops enable the conclusion that children are not passive viewers/listeners of the news, but rather that they engage, evaluate and interpret what is presented to them as news, and integrate this information into their own experiences. However, at present, children's relationship with the media is based on inequality, and as such, makes children vulnerable listeners and viewers of the news.

The research has been particularly valuable as it showed that children are able to partake meaningfully, and that they are enthusiastic participants who are not only empowered by their participation, but in turn, provide valuable insight when accessed appropriately.



8 Way Forward

Many of the findings of the adults' and the children's monitoring will be used to develop strategies to improve the representation of children in the news media. The MMP and its partners have committed to providing training workshops aimed at media practitioners who frequently report on children and children's issues. In addition, many of the media stakeholders present at the stakeholders' meeting committed themselves to participating in this process in order to change the way that children are currently represented in the news media.

Focus areas will include:

- The participation of children, in terms of being sourced on different issues and being included in the news-making process
- Broadening the representation of children, both in terms of roles and stories
- Including a greater diversity of children in the media
- Addressing gender and racial imbalances
- The identification of children in stories
- Reporting on difficult topics, such as abuse and crime

Further activities are also required to increase the number of children who benefit from participating in this type of project. The MMP has a number of proposals that will take children's participation to a larger scale. These include:

- Follow-up monitoring to assess the improvement (if any) in the representation of children in the news media, as a result of the initiatives aimed at improvement.
- A Children's Media Literacy Campaign. As a result of the success of the Empowering Children & Media project, the MMP would like to expand, not only children's monitoring and media literacy, but also children's participation with and in the media, covering television, print and radio media.

The Children's Media Literacy Campaign aims to educate children by providing them with critical media literacy skills to monitor the media within a framework of human rights. Empowering children through knowledge of their rights empowers them not only in their understanding of the media, but also to raise their voice if and when those rights are violated, thus facilitating the development of a protective environment. An additional focus on gender equality will ensure equitable participation of girl children.

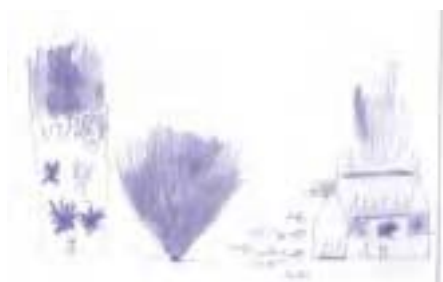
What are the components of the Children's Media Literacy Campaign?

Radio Media Literacy Project: Focused on radio, this project culminates in children producing their own radio news programmes.

Print Media Literacy Project: In addition to a print monitoring project, children will participate in a best article competition.

TV Media Literacy Project: In partnership with local producers, children will participate in television news.

To obtain a copy of the adult monitoring results, or for further information on new projects involving children, please contact the MMP.



9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A

Demographic profile of children who participated in the research

Eastern Cape

Gender	Age	Race	Area
F	16	B	Nompomelelo Informal Home
M	15	B	Nompomelelo Informal Home
F	12	B	Nompomelelo Informal Home
F	13	B	Nompomelelo Informal Home
F	15	B	Nompomelelo Informal Home
M	10	B	Farms in nearby rural areas
M	11	B	Farms in nearby rural areas
F	17	W	Port Elizabeth Children's Home
M	15	C	Port Elizabeth Children's Home
F	13	B	Nompomelelo Informal Home
M	11	B	Nompomelelo Informal Home
M	10	B	Nompomelelo Informal Home
Total Participants: 12 (6 girls, 6 boys)			



KwaZulu-Natal

Gender	Age	Race	Area
M	15	B	Marion Ridge
F	16	B	Claremont
M	16	B	Claremont
F	13	B	Claremont
F	11	B	Savannah Park
M	15	B	Savannah Park
F	13	B	Savannah Park
M	13	C	Dermont
F	13	I	Dermont
F	13	I	Dermont
M	16	I	Savannah Park
Total Participants: 12 (7 girls, 5 boys)			



Gender	Age	Race	Area
F	12	B	Pimville Soweto
M	13	C	Riverlea Extension
F	16	B	Johannesburg Inner City
F	16	B	Thokoza
M	11	W	Johannesburg Northern Suburbs
M	10	C	Riverlea
F	11	W	Johannesburg Northern Suburbs
F	11	B	Pimville Soweto
F	10	I	Johannesburg Northern Suburbs
F	11	C	Johannesburg Northern Suburbs
F	13	C	Riverlea Extension
M	17	B	Thokoza
Total Participants: 12 (7 girls, 5 boys)			



Children's rights and the news! Media Monitoring Project



*"There isn't enough about children in the newspapers.
The people on the newspapers they don't take us seriously."*

Can you find yourself in one of these photos?



East London



Pinetown



Johannesburg

We held three workshops around the country to find out what young people thought about children in the news. You took part in one of these workshops. You all had lots to say about children in the news. We took all the things you said and sorted them into a list of issues. You will find the list on the back page.

What will happen now

The Media Monitoring Project will now train a team of adults to watch the television news, read the papers and listen to the radio news for 3 months. This is called monitoring. They will use the list of issues from your workshops (see back page) to guide their monitoring.

You will also be involved in monitoring. See the back page for news about the next workshop!

These were some of the things you said in your workshops:

- ❖ The issues that are important to us are not in the news. Journalists should write and make articles about some of the problems children face like poverty, crime, abuse, peer pressure and drugs. They should also write about things that are important to us like education and rights and respect.
- ❖ We need more news about children who have done good and brave things. Tell us about children who are heroes not only about children who are victims.
- ❖ Sometimes people read about children's problems and then help them by sending money.
- ❖ Photos of children who have been abused or raped should never be shown. If something bad has happened to a child their face should not be shown.
- ❖ Journalists should not interview children when something bad has happened and the children are sad or upset.
- ❖ Journalists should ask children's permission before using their photos.
- ❖ Young children do not understand about permission so they should ask the parents.
- ❖ Ask us what we think – don't just ask the grown-ups.

Don't miss the next workshop!

If you live in **Johannesburg** we will have the next workshop on the 19th April at Saxonwold School. We will phone your teachers before the workshop to let them know when we will fetch you.

If you live in **East London** (and PE) and **Pinetown** (and Durban) we will meet on the 26th April. We will phone you all before the workshop to let you know about lifts. We are looking forward to seeing you! We will show you how you can monitor the news.

Love from

Glynis, Kgethi, Musa and Jessie



If your parents or teachers or you want more information about the next workshop you can phone us on (011) 482-4083