

## THE PRESSING SIGNIFICANCE OF MEDIA POLICY FOR CHILDREN IN INDIA

*“Right now is the time his bones are being formed,  
his blood is being made  
and his senses are being developed.  
To him we cannot answer ‘Tomorrow’  
His name is ‘Today’*

These highly perceptive and touching lines of the famous poet, Gabriela Mistral pack the entire meaning and significance of our topic. Children, inheritors of our future, the fore runners of all that we stand for, the enhancers of our glorious achievements – CANNOT wait!

It is time we wake up and alter the dejected and bleak fortunes of our children and given them a real chance to bloom and shine – Ours shall be a real proud nation then.

For this very quintessential and gargantuan task we need active and whole hearted participation of the media that is not only far reaching but also sustained and lasting till the goals are actually visible.

Therefore, the urgent need to have a proper media policy for children articulated and laid down becomes imperative. India’s commitment to the welfare of its children began with the Article 39 of **Directive Principles of State Policy** enshrined in the Constitution of India. It was followed by the **National Policy for Children resolution of 1974**. India was also an active participant of the **World Summit for Children** whose goals have been embodied in India’s National Plan of Action for Children. The 1959 UN General Assembly declaration in its preamble says: ‘Mankind owes to the Child the best it has to give’. But this does not mean children are given the best we can give or that we give them the care and concern which they are entitled to. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has therefore, rightly observed: ‘Child Care must be the corner stone of all our constructive activities’. Our constitution made special provision for children – Article 24 – ‘No child below the age of 14 shall be employed to work in any factory or engaged in any other hazardous employment’. Art. 39 - ‘the state shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that the tender age of child is not abused... that ... children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in the conditions of freedom and dignity’...

Art. 45 enjoins upon the state ‘to provide... free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.’ Integrated Child Development Services Scheme was evolved in 1975-76. The International year of the Child gave a fillip to the implementation of National Policy. Schemes were drawn up for pre-school education, universalization of primary education, day care centres, vocational preparation for child both normal and handicapped. Schemes like child in Need Institute were started; projects like the Indo-Dutch Project for Child Welfare (based on the felt needs of Child) were developed with the help of the Netherlands foundation. Then there are the ‘Bal Kalyan Kendras’. In 1992 India has also ratified the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** adopted by the U.N. in 1989. In addition to all this there are the countless state programmes for Children throughout the country.

Hence, with all the above provisions, one may safely assume that India is clearly stating its national priorities by placing Children First. Alas, the efforts so far have not gone beyond merely

scratching the surface. There is much more to be achieved and much water is yet to pass under the bridge.

Setting up goals is great but realising them needs a lot of commitment, effort, coordination and management. To this end, the role of media becomes very apparent. Media is the catalyst between the policy makers and the beneficiaries.

Considering that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the U.N. recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Moreover with the conviction that the family as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well being of all its members and particularly children should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community – **the prime areas of focus related to the rights of the child shall be as follows** – Definition of a child, protection from discrimination, best interests of the child as primary consideration, parental guidance that are appropriate to a child's evolving capabilities, Child's survival and development, preservation of identity, prevention of separation from parents, aid in family reunification, prevention of kidnapping or unjustified retention of children abroad, freedom of expression of Child's opinion, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of association, protection of privacy, access to appropriate information, joint primary responsibility for raising the child on parents, protection from abuse and neglect, protection of a child without family, adoption, refugee children, disabled children, health and health services, optimum nutrition, periodic review of placement, social security, adequate standard of living, education - primary education free and compulsory – aimed at developing the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent for an active and productive adult life; full enjoyment of rights to children of the minorities or indigenous populations, right to leisure, recreation and cultural activities, prevention of child labour, protection from drug abuse and sexual exploitation, prevention of sale, trafficking and abduction and other forms of exploitation; protection from torture and deprivation of liberty, protection and care in armed conflicts, natural calamities and rehabilitative care, administration of juvenile justice, respect for higher standards that may be applicable.

Having reviewed this long list of child requirements, large-scale public action needs to be mobilized very soon and very effectively. India faces a real challenge that is certainly no insurmountable. Shaping the future today for tomorrow's India by investing in Children in the best development strategy for the country.

Till now the DD's children's programmes appear to be designed for children living in cities. They are the privileged children and are already exposed to education and information and the good things of life. The entire emphasis has to change as a very large segment of rural children are totally ignorant and illiterate and need orientation. Figures indicate that 40% of our population comprises Children below 16 years. It is a pity that hardly 5% of our TV programmes are meant for or directed toward children. This is disproportionately low and is an imbalance which desperately needs to be corrected.

According to Manzural Amin who had been the Additional Director General of DD – **the main findings regarding problems hampering the raising of general standard of children's programmes are as follows:**

- Children's programmes have the lowest priority in the scheme of the things at DD Kendras.

- Fees to talents are ridiculously low.
- Funds are inadequate and the demand for extra funds tends to raise the eyebrows of the authorities.
- At most of the Kendras the children's programmes are presented live, as no facilities are provided for rehearsals and pre-recording of programmes.
- Eng cameras are not available when required for outdoors.
- Transport is also not available when need most.
- A producer is assigned production of children's programmes without any consideration whether he or she has the aptitude and the capability to do this work. More often than not this is treated as a stop-gap arrangement.
- Producers who have been trained at the Films and TV Institute of India, Pune, for doing Children's Programmes are given some other responsibility on their return to their respective Kendras.
- Sometimes the responsibility of children's programme production is given to Junior Production Assistants who are just getting initiated into the art and craft of TC and who are still learning its basic grammar.
- No effort is made to test the aptitude of a producer.

Since there is always a pressure on FTII, the normal training period of 5 months is curtailed, which results in hurried and inadequate training for the TV staff.

- There is no systems approach for scouting of child talent; mostly it is through the trial and error method. Sometimes, when a major production for children's programmes is undertaken. The child artistes are made to wait inordinately without any facilities for snacks or even water.
- Children's programmes are generally scheduled at every Kendra at the beginning of the evening transmission. This is the time when children are still out doors playing; consequently viewing of this programme is poor.
- There is hardly any research input for this programme.
- There are no special surveys made and even when surveys are made and findings available, producers are not interested in such findings. They have a feeling that such figures are all cooked up and are not quite authentic.

The overall quality of children's programmes would certainly improve if these defects are removed.

One of the most important suggestions made by the working group on software related to the creation of a panel of people from the field of media and child development who may 'periodically review programmes for their effectiveness'.

As per the present available data:

- The sex ratio is 927 females per 1000 males- 1991 Census.

- Education 19 to 24 million children in the age group of 6-14 remain illiterate. Only 52% of enrolled primary school children reach grade 5. India is one of the few countries in the world where primary education is not compulsory. The state is obliged to enforce compulsory primary education.
- Under 5 mortality rate was 96 per 1000 live births in the year 2000.
- Child malnutrition (46%) - 2000 census.
- Access to safe drinking water ( 68%)- 2000 census
- Access to improved sanitation facilities ( 26-50%)-2000 census
- Percent of under 5 years underweight- ( 41%)-2000 census
- Children having acute respiratory infection who are taken to health providers ( 60% plus)
- Breast feeding only 40% children receive it exclusively.
- Close to 2.2 million children afflicted with cretinism and 6.6 million are mildly retarded and suffer from various degrees of motor handicap.
- Iodine deficiency – 50- 89% use iodized salt. Iodine deficiency alone accounts for an estimated 90, 000 still births and neo-natal deaths per year.
- Vitamin A deficiency- less than 30% children between 6-59 months are receiving at least one Vitamin A supplement.
- 30% of infants born in India are low weight babies and the situation has not improved since 1979.
- Immunisation – 55% are getting DPT, 50-69% are getting for measles.
- 50,000 deaths in 1999 caused by neo-natal tetanus.
- 0-32% in 1999 received ORT for diarrhea.
- 265 polio cases reported in 2000.
- HIV AIDS –0.1-0.4% prevalence among young people aged 15-24 yrs.
- Levels of birth registration 39% or less
- Child population 0-14 yrs – 2001(Boys 160 million and Girls 150 million)
- Children between 0-6 yrs of age 150 million ,
- 78% reside in rural areas.
- There is an adverse female to male ratio, Female child mortality exceeds male child mortality in 224 out of 402 districts of India due to negligence as well as female infanticide.
- 43.8% children suffer from moderate degrees of protein energy malnutrition and 8.7% suffer from extreme forms of malnutrition.
- 56% of pre-school children suffer from iron deficiency.
- Child labour- 13.17 million child workers below the age of 14 yrs. 17.36 million child workers in the age group of 5-15 yrs.
- Juvenile criminals – 1991 data – 29, 591 juveniles were apprehended for various crimes under IPC. 20% children between the age of 7-12 yrs, 64% between the age of 12-16 yrs, 16% were girls between the age of 16- 18 yrs, 70% were living with parents, 60% belonged to families earning less than 500 Rupees a month.
- 43% were girl child marriages.

**The observations of the committee on Rights of the Child: India (23.02.2000) are as follows :-**

**The factors and difficulties impeding the implementation** of goals constitute primarily the high rate of population growth, extreme poverty, impact of structural adjustment and natural disasters along with diverse and multi-cultural society compounded by traditional customs (like the caste system) and societal attitudes (e.g. towards tribals, girl child, dowry, child marriage, ritual prostitution etc. To this we can add the rampant corruption and general lack of will power to take active initiative.

Keeping this in mind, the **committee recommends** – proper, clear and integrated legislation coupled with allocation of the required resources to ensure and strengthen the effective implementation, sufficient administrative coordination and cooperation as well as intersectoral coordination between central, state and municipal levels of govt. including support to local authorities for capacity building. The committee also encourages the establishment of a statutory independent national commission for children with the mandate of regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in the implementation of the objectives at all levels. It should be empowered to receive and address complaints of violation of child rights, including with respect to the security forces.

We have certainly found strength in the **Indian Supreme Court** with its extensive power of **judicial review** has developed the concept of using **rights’ litigation** to link the directive principles to justifiable fundamental rights. **Social Sanction litigation** has expanded the scope of constitutional redress for violation of child rights. The right to life has been recently interpreted as broader than a negative duty of the state to refrain from infringement of personal liberty. It has been interpreted as a positive duty to provide the basic conditions for survival.

Having outlined the needs and the provisions, the first and foremost step that needs to be taken is the elimination of adult illiteracy about children’s rights which is wide spread among policy makers, intellectuals, ideologues, opinion makers mainly media, human rights communities and of course the parents and children themselves. To this end, media has to be employed and for that the **media persons should be amongst the first to be properly trained** about child rights and its importance – for a society that neglects and victimises its children only exhibits its lack of humanism.

The media has been taking up the relevant issues from time to time but in the absence of a clear media policy on children – the emphasis and magnitude of dissemination is lacking. According to the **Mac Bride Commission**, the communication policies ‘do not necessarily imply rigid, centralized planning but may simply constitute a favourable framework for the coordination of activities, allowing flexibility and a wide choice of approaches to communication strategies. A uniform media policy shall attain the most crucial objective of bringing about overall widespread acceptance of programmes for child welfare.

In India, the freedom of the press is guaranteed under Article 19(i) (a) of the constitution but the national electronic media are under the direct control of the government and perpetuation and dissemination of government’s policies and programmes are its primary functions. Therefore, the national electronic media can be put to use effectively. As the programmes which are of utility to the common man fall within the purview of **Public Service Broadcasting**. Under the mandate from the **Prasar Bharati Act, 1990** having among its objectives – taking special steps to protect the interests of children and also providing comprehensive broadcast coverage through the choice of appropriate technology, promoting research and development activities in order to ensure that radio and TV broadcasting technology are constantly updated, expanding broadcasting facilities by establishing additional channels of transmission at various levels etc.

In the **working paper on the National Media Policy** it has been recommended that the **Apex Regulatory Body** should be an independent autonomous public authority representative of all sections and interests in the society and should control and regulate the use of air waves in the interests of the public and to prevent invasion of their rights. The foreign satellite channels must also be brought within the ambit of the said regulatory body in order to make them amenable to the Indian laws. Now, this particular provision can be easily moulded for the benefit of the children. Considering the fact that at present it is only AIR and DD that talk a little about child

rights, whereas the other channels be they Indian or foreign do not give any messages or advertisements concerned with the welfare of children.

Media plays two most important roles – informative and persuasive – particularly TV, which is a powerful socialization agent. It is more potent for development of attitudes and change. At the same time it presents role models to the young more powerfully and effectively than do the other agents like the family, school etc. The studies in India and abroad show that children are the main viewers of TV, Children from the lower socio-economic groups watched more TV and with great concentration (Steiner 1965).

Therefore, if the media is used responsibly to serve the Welfare object for children and to create national awareness it will have an immense impact. Moreover, in the best interests of children. TV and AIR can join hands with traditional folk forms as a vital tool for development communication. **Traditional art forms** are close to the hearts of the rural people and are more easily acceptance to them. Group communication about enlightening people and are more easily acceptable to them. Group communication about enlightening people of child rights and welfare measures – options and help sources etc. Through established traditional forms of folk songs, drama, puppetry, theatre, harikatha, yakshagana, lavani, Bhawai etc. They acquire a special status as media of social interaction, information exchange and cohesion. The villagers trust and derive values and directions from the content of the theme. Folklore constitute the most popular and widespread media of communication. Therefore, folk artists should be given a chance to express themselves about child welfare to the rural masses on TV and Radio. They should be encouraged to conduct training camps workshops, seminars because they have always been nearer to the masses.

Puppetry also serves as a powerful vehicle of communication. They reflect the value and culture and are seen with rapt attention. The messages given by them generally find acceptance.

The integration of both mass media and traditional media should be taken into consideration to keep a balanced flow of information between the urban and the rural areas.

**(DAVP) Directorate of Advertisement and Visual Publicity** with their use of posters, folders, brochures, booklets, wall hangers, outdoor displays like hoardings, cinema slides, wall paintings and transit advertisements on buses, railway coaches etc help in massive multi media publicity campaign to inform, educate and motivate the people to participate in national development. They are also joined by the Directorate of Information and Publicity at the state level. If the electronic media and DAVP began cooperating on child welfare and rights issues – the awareness campaign will gain a greater and faster momentum.

One major requirement is to have a **participatory model of communication** – where the poor people participate and agencies, institutions are involved. The villagers-particularly children should be given an opportunity to express themselves and participate in the planning process. It is here that media should play its role in recording, transmitting and disseminating messages through its network to all the villages in the country.

We ought to refer to the **Draft Bill for Media prepared by the Central for Media Studies** – The Draft Bill claims to be a ‘comprehensive’ legislation on Broadcasting and could cover Radio, TV, Satellite, Cable, Interactive TV multimedia, Terrestrial including MMDS and the Telegraph Act as relevant to Broadcasting. This CMS Draft Bill provides for: (1) An autonomous Broadcasting Commission of India (BCI) with responsibility for licensing operators (2) Prasar Bharati Corporation (3) Two councils on statutory footing one for ensuring standard in broadcasting and other for promoting audience involvement and examination of complaints from Public (4) Two

Boards for coordinating cable, satellite and other channels, and other for coordinating community service broadcasting. It also provides for advertising and programme codes applicable for all the three streams of broadcasting in the country, responsibility resting with the standards council.

It should be remembered that a very large segment of India's child population lives in the villages. Therefore, all programmes for children must take this basic fact into account. It is also important to note that a very large segment of child population in our country is illiterate and has no access to education. TV can be a boom to such children. According to Manzural Amin – The country wide classroom lessons on TV brings to children a variety of skills, concepts, events, values, services and facilities – which are of utility for children particularly those living in the rural areas and also for disadvantaged children in the urban situation.

One thing that becomes glaringly apparent after perusing all the policies and provisions that the Indian Govt. has; is that **not much importance has been given to the deprived children in the policy that govt. has adopted so far with the media.** The fact is there is no clear cut and substantially effective media policy on children. The Children so far have got a passing reference. The Govt. has so far not taken it upon itself to emphasize strongly and elaborately on children in need. People in rural areas as well as some of the urban population are totally ignorant about child welfare measures, rights and needs of children and the laws encompassing children. The various modes of redress and complaint, the service providers are still languishing in the shadows – there is dire need to bring them into limelight. People must know that there are NGOs, VOs and other organisations than can help children in difficult circumstances.

Some of the NGOs are doing commendable work regarding child welfare, development and juvenile justice and have helped many children from suffering and critical situations, to provide them a normal and healthy childhood as well as they can. However, resources and means and cannot possibly reach all the children that need them equally desperately. For this, the government not only needs to encourage them but join hands with them in partnership so as to strengthen their hands, enhance their capacity and make them far reaching. Generous funds need to be allocated for this purpose and media involvement to publicize this is needed urgently.

Besides, the organisations that are existing to help children – are helping them put only till they are children – what happens after that? Nobody has given it a thought. In the families, parents help their children to take a proper place in the society and become a positive and productive citizen – they invest money to ensure it. Alas, same is not true for children who are brought up by institutions, organisations or NGOs. This is due to lack of funds.

Therefore, the pressing need for **Social Security Schemes** become apparent. Any child who wishes to make a decent living ought to be provided with funds in order to do that. Without funds they cannot start a business, nor can they go in for any kind of training courses or studies to shape their future. Here is a genuine cause for which media – the opinion makers – can stand up and lobby around to create an effective pressure group that not only brings about a social security legislation but all see to it that it is implemented rapidly. Of course, it won't be easy, considering the staggering population of children in India but effort needs to be made and after that 'man supposes and God disposes'.

In the United States of America, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), enacted the Children's TV Act of 1990. It was a landmark statute that made educational programming an obligation for broadcasters and restricted advertising to child audiences. This is an excellent example and if followed in India – shall have outstanding benefits for the deprived children.

The freedom of speech includes the right to disseminate information to as wide a section of the population as is possible, and, therefore, the access which enables the right to be so exercised is also an integral part of the said right. Therefore, it becomes a primary duty of the media to provide access to and disseminate information to the children as well as adults for their benefit, to shape a better and well-informed generation. It has been seen that it is generally lack of information about rights, duties, laws and punishments that emboldens people to inflict injustice, abuse, deprivation and exploitation on children. For the same reason, the children do not speak out or fight back or assert themselves. They feel they are completely helpless and hopeless and resign themselves to their fate.

### **POLICY GUIDELINES:**

#### **OBLIGATION TO DISSEMINATE INFORMATION AND CREATE AWARENESS ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILDREN**

- (1) It is a fact that the official media units have to play a vital role in the context of overall development strategies and programmes of the government. Since, so far children's cause has not been taken up with the commitment and magnitude. That is required, the various processes of thinking, planning and execution of publicity programmes have to be turned to the efforts in these directions. People have to be mobilized towards the goals set by the Government and public support mustered for child awareness and benefit programmes. The official media in particular as well as other private media have, therefore, an obligation to provide information and build up motivation in support of the cause of children. They must strengthen the confidence of children, promote the concept of self-reliance and encourage a constantly growing positive attitude towards children.

#### **TRAINING OF MEDIA PERSONS REGARDING CHILD RIGHTS**

- (2) The media persons must undergo training via seminars, lectures and slide shows, to be fully informed themselves about the issues related to child rights, child welfare and laws related to children. This will surely help them to be more effective in dissemination of information as well as to make issue sensitive quality programmes for child benefit.

#### **MEDIA PUBLICITY OF CHILD RIGHTS CONVENTION AND NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS**

- (3) The media should heavily publicize the convention of the Rights of the Child as well as all the relevant national legislations, provisions and policies.

#### **MEDIA PUBLICITY OF VIOLATIONS ON CHILDREN**

- (4) The media should publicise and endeavour to bring to light all types of violations committed on children and adversely publicise the violators. However, care must be taken as to avoid sensationalizing the persons involved – especially the victimized children.

#### **A FIXED TIME SLOT FOR CHILDREN**

- (5) A fixed time slot for children should be created – 'DD Kids' or 'DD Nanhikaliyan'. Time must be allotted generously for the purpose of demystifying and properly explaining as well as coaching on the rights of the child, their welfare, information on avenues of career. Information on service providers for children and other modes of complaint and redress. Along with this there should be educative as well as entertaining programmes.



### **MEDIA VIGILANCE COMMITTEE**

- (6) Having been sensitized by training, the media can form a Media vigilance committee to watch over all the various issues concerning child rights and welfare. The various ministries they come under, the related bureaucracy and other organisations. They can mobilise support in the masses for creating a pressure group to demand proper implementation of policies; to root out corruption and inaction; to create transparency in every dealing regarding children and to emphasize the need for greater allocation of funds for children.

### **MEDIA EFFORT FOR UNIFORM LEGISLATION**

- (7) Media should also highlight the need for a properly integrated, uniform and uncontradictory legislation.

### **MEDIA EFFORT TO DEVELOP ADVOCACY**

- (8) Media should endeavour to develop advocacy and social mobilization and sensitization campaigns using various modes of media, training programmes through mobile camps as well as investigative studies.

### **MEDIA ORGANIZED TRAINING OF IMPLEMENTING AUTHORITIES**

- (9) Officials of implementing authorities can be targeted for training and sensitization regarding the needs and rights of children, through media organised campaigns and seminars.

### **CHILD SPECIFIC RESEARCH AND STUDY SECTION**

- (10) AIR and DD must create a child specific research and studies section that is constituted by trained media experts regarding the psychology, needs and interests of children and create quality programmes according.

### **SPOTS ON CHILD BENEFIT ISSUES**

- (11) Every channel ought to compulsorily provide messages and spots on child benefit issues and also have at least one weekly or quarterly programme that focuses on the rights of the child.

### **SPOTS ON SERVICE PROVIDERS AND CHIDLIN**

- (12) Every channel in general and AIR and DD in particular must give spots providing information regarding service providers – NGOs, VOs, Government Institutions as well as height and give frequent spots on ‘**Childline - 1098**’ toll free call that is an emergency aid unit for children in sudden crises.

### **LINKED NETWORK OF MEDIA, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND AUTHORITIES**

- (13) The media should take active role in creating a lined network of all the NGOs, VOs, government institutions, individuals etc. in the field of child care and child rights along with lawyers and the police so that information and opinions can be shared and quickly transmitted. This will also contribute towards preventing clash of vested interests, contradictory legislations, any kind of pressure or corruptions or negligence and dereliction of duty.

### **MECHANISM FOR COLLECTING AND ANALYSING DATA FOR ACCOUNTABILITY**

- (14) There should be an effective mechanism in the DD and AIR for collecting and analysing data as well as audience research units so as to not only assess the impact of their dissemination and popularity of child oriented programmes but also to exact accountability in the service providers as well as implementing authorities. This should

be done by focussing and finding out the fact regarding the number of actual child beneficiaries and how many of them actually receive aid and become good and self-reliant citizens.

#### **LOBBYING FOR SOCIAL SECURITY SCHEMES**

- (15) Media should become a united force in lobbying to form a pressure group for the creation of severely needed social security schemes. This is needed to help the distressed children to create a law-abiding and socially conforming self-employment. Otherwise, after they cease receiving aids after growing up they might take to crime and illegal activities to earn living.

#### **OPEN PLATFORM FOR CHILDREN IN PERIODIC PROGRAMMES**

- (16) AIR and DD should have weekly or quarterly programme that provides an open platform to the victimised as well as normal children to voice their problems and air their grievances. They should be provided counselling by experts and informed about modes of complaint and redress.

#### **CREATION OF OPEN CHILD COURTS**

- (17) Media with its immense power to influence and reach can help to create open child courts on the pattern of Panchayati Raj that reaches the grassroots. Media persons should take active part in it so that any kind of suppression or pressure does not find foothold there – this can be done through publicity that creates public opinion and positive pressure.

#### **LOCAL SETUPS FOR INFORMATION**

- (18) Media should help to establish local set-ups with full details at village level, for giving appropriate and adequate information to the villagers irrespective of their position in the village. This will prevent the whimsicality of the local heavy weights. For this the ministry of information and Broadcasting should provide radios and TV sets to all the villages; this will further aid the media in being effective.

#### **THEMES SHOULD BE SENSITIVE TO LOCAL PSYCHE AND ORIENTATION**

- (19) Media persons should make themselves aware of the psychological dispositions and orientations of different sections of rural population and modify the particular theme accordingly for use in broadcasting media. The programmes on children should be field based, need-based, area-specific and audience specific. This may be done by adding local flavour and language as well as regional folk artists may be invited to present the issues and messages in their own unique style.

#### **DECENTRALIZATION OF PRODUCTION FACILITIES**

- (20) It is imperative to decentralize production facilities to much greater extent. For this purpose base production Studio using EFP equipment in different regions (on much larger scale than attempted before) – should be set up. Only then can media effectively reach its messages to the far-flung and neglected areas where ignorance rules.

#### **EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF T.V. STATIONS**

- (21) Management of TV stations should be run of efficient lines to produce right type of quality programmes for children at minimum cost and with substantially increased time slot for children.

### **PROGRAMMES IN MORE ACCEPTABLE FORMAT**

- (22) Care has to be taken to guise the programmes related to child rights in a more acceptable and light entertainment format like social comedies, adventure and action oriented themes.

### **MEDIA GLORIFICATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL FOR INCENTIVE TO BETTER PERFORMANCE**

- (23) There is urgent need for the media to help bring about genuinely preventive and effective law enforcement regarding child rights violations and juvenile justice – for this purpose media glorification of exemplary feats of law enforcement personnel as well as all the service providers specially in cases related to the girl child; shall aid to expedite and manifest the goals in a more pervasive manner.

### **SPOTS FOR ENCOURAGING REPORTS ON VIOLATIONS AND IMPORTANCE TO REPORTERS**

- (24) DD and AIR should give spot messages encouraging the general public to report any concrete violations, suppressions, deprivations or exploitations of children. The media can mobilise the people with providing an enticing opportunity to appear on TV and speak on the radio. This ego boosting exercise for people's self-glorifications will encourage and create interest in people who otherwise would not bother.

### **EFFORTS TO MAKE CHILDREN MORE VISIBLE**

- (25) In order to help create a general conviction that children and young people are equal to adults in value; they need special consideration, but should have equal rights – the media should start a process where children are more visible and their concerns voiced more clearly.

### **CREATE AWARENESS REGARDING RIGHTS AS WELL AS NEEDS OF CHILDREN**

- (26) AIR and DD in particular need to provide massive awareness in public regarding children's rights pertaining to adoption, foster care, abuses exploitation, property rights, rehabilitation etc. on one hand and nutrition, health, education, survival etc. on the other. There is a great need to take this up as a long term mainstreaming. Considering the extent of ignorance in the general rural populace.

### **OUTSIDE PRODUCERS SHOULD BE INVITED FOR HEALTHY COMPETITION**

- (27) DD and AIR should open its doors to the outside producers – a healthy competition can be launched on contract or commission basis for high quality children's programmes.

### **ADVISORY, MONITORING AND PURCHASE SELECTION COMMITTEES**

- (28) Children's programme, Advisory, Monitoring and purchase, selection committees should be constituted for all major programmes including films, imported programmes and advertisements.

### **PROJECT VALUE OF SEX EQUALITY**

- (29) Children's programmes should project values of equality or breaking sex stereotypes.

### **CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PROGRAMMES BY OTHERS**

- (30) The weeks programmes should be analysed and evaluated with audience critics, newspapers, child related organisations and young film makers.

## MORAL CODE OF ETHICS

- (31) The moral code of ethics must always be observed so that no commercial and sexual; exploitation of children is spuriously carried out on T.V. or any other media. Children should not be exhibited in the nude , used for sexual innuendoes or titillation .

## TYPES OF T.V. PROGRAMMES

- (32) TV programmes should be used in fostering the development of desirable values and habits among children and for this purpose, following suggestions should be followed:

- (a) The programmes have to be **tactfully presented** – if it is purely entertainment oriented. Then the children will not become informed and if it is purely informative in a lecture mode then it will be too dry and boring. Therefore, **a perceptive balance has to be acquired.**
- (b) **Animation films** must be simple and realistic which contain **clear visual portrayals of programme messages.**
- (c) Attempt should be made to **create programmes that are meant equally for the unsophisticated and the elite,** the poor and the rich For E.g. the American Serial, “ Sesame Street”- though directed to the underprivileged, children of all strata showed very keen interest in the programme, which was based on added research. It was a Kalidoscope for pre-school children. This 1969 serial had become immensely popular and was based on interesting games, absorbing stories and intelligent educational exercises. Animation as well as puppets and moppets were used to put across the point. This serial is being telecast on the ‘Hallmark’ Channel at present.  
This was an experiment in teaching in a most unorthodox manner. What children of pre-school age learnt was the alphabet and their associated sounds and various geometric forms such as line, a triangle, a circle etc. It also contains songs on various alphabets giving multiple word examples of each alphabet as well as personifying each alphabet. The serial became an international attraction overnight. Captain Kangaroo was another good serial for children.
- (d) **Real life documentaries on Kids** should be made having realistic, positive, constructive and sensitive approach. Issues should be identified, problems should be solved, questions raised and answered – solutions must always emerge to provide hope, strength and avenue to the viewers.
- (e) At the moment, programmes prepared for kids are not very interesting, they should have a **strong element of fantasy, excitement and action** – this makes children imaginative, bold and enterprising.
- (f) **Random – on the spot on the road interviews of children** may be taken to bring out their opinion and condition. At the same time, parents’ attitudes can be tapped with relevant and critical questionnaires and voice-overs. This will be beneficial in the sense that – it will shame people into becoming more responsible towards their children – specially out of fear of monitoring by the media.

The pattern shall be same as those countless programmes on movies and film songs, film stories etc. That have no use for children. The Ruby Bhatia's and Cyrus Broacha's of the V.J. fame can be put to better use.

- (g) There should be quarterly panel discussion programmes for e.g. 'A Panel for Parents & Children' in which pediatricians, psychiatrists, psychologists, lawyers, representative from NGOs and from relevant administrative machinery provide their experts to answer questions and solve the problems and give counseling to audience constituted of parents and children. This programme will have its key mission of generating keen interest and awareness about the needs and rights of children and also their welfare and how to provide and achieve them.
- (h) It is imperative to have one weekly programme on Drug Abuse. Detailed information must be given out via medical experts, regarding the ways in which each type of narcotic, psychosomatic or other harmful substances work on our system and the extent of damage it is capable of doing – how it slowly destroys life and all its hopes with it; its family and social repercussions etc. This will help create awareness as well as fear for one's well being also value of healthy life. Mostly children get into all this because they simply do not know that these things are fatal. The juveniles get into it as a mode of escape and rebellion considering it fun to do something that is not approved of; for the intoxication and psychedelic effects – the 'trip'. The children need to be scared off these things effectively and the adults shall benefit by it too.
- (i) There should be a weekly talk show on prime time – endeavouring to be compact and precise – touching all the burning issues of child rights and exacting accountability from parents, legislators, judiciary, service providers, police as well as putting questions and rhetoric's to the society in general.
- (j) Active efforts for development of programmes on each right of children with the involvement of UNICEF, WHO and UNIFEM.
- (k) Telecast of documentaries on training programmes of various groups of people.
- (l) Community awareness programmes in which field shots of the service providers in action, in slums and rural areas are given.
- (m) Programmes on parents of deprived children, the problems they face in fulfilling the rights of their children.
- (n) There should be programmes on children that were lost and have been found by various service providers so that their families can get information and be reunited with them.
- (o) All the important messages and spots should come in every commercial break

#### CREATION OF OMBUDSMAN OFFICE

- (33) Ombudsman office should be created with active media involvement and partnership representing all the child related organisations. This shall be a completely autonomous body that is free of all kinds of pressure, vested interests and corruption. The working of

this office shall get constant exposure on TV and Radio as well as the Press. The cases shall be telecast and broadcast 'live'. This shall generate the much needed active interest and positive public opinion that will immensely benefit children by turning the public pressure in their favour.

#### **REMOVAL OF IMPEDIMENTS AND SOCIAL EVILS BY THE MEDIA**

(34) The media should intensify its efforts to remove the background impediments to realising and implementation of the rights and needs of children. It must create a positive attitude in public against all the social evils like bigotry, caste and class consciousness and the Indian version of Apartheid against certain castes and communities, dowry system, female infanticide etc. In short act as a catalyst for a social change.

#### **CONSTANT DIALOGUE WITHIN THE MEDIA**

(35) Media units should have a constant dialogue among themselves and establish effective horizontal linkages to support and supplement one another's programmes and resources.

#### **CONTINUOUS EVALUATION AND REASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE**

(36) Each media units should have adequate systems for continuous evaluation and re-assessment of its performance in the context of its specific objectives, resources and schedules for maximum focus on child requirements and optimum quality of programmes.

#### **COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES LIKE 'KRISHI DRASHAN' ON CHILDREN**

(37) On patterns of 'Krishi Drashan' - the media can make a community programme going up to the slum children and rural population- taking up their problems and giving them direction and counselling.

#### **CHILD ORIENTED PRODUCTION STYLE**

(38) A new production style that is child oriented in all its aspects has to be developed. As a matter of policy, if children are always kept in mind while making any programme, the role of media would become truly ideal.

In summing up this appeal for the children's cause, one is reminded of these inspiring lines by Rabindranath Tagore ('New Birth' 1940):-

*'Today we search for your unwritten name;  
you seem to be just off the stage,  
like an imminent star of the morning,  
infants bring again and again  
a message of reassurance -  
they seem to promise deliverance,  
light, dawn'.*

It is hence needless to say that children the harbingers of new hope and rejuvenation must be given their optimum dues – the best the society can give to them and our media must take up the torch if there is to be concrete deliverance for the children of this nation.