

The International Clearinghouse  
on Children, Youth and Media

NORDICOM



INSTITUTO DE  
INVESTIGACIÓN  
EN MEDIOS

Proposal for  
an International Research Project on  
**Children and Media**  
to Create Indicators for a  
**Media Social Responsibility Index**

Tatiana Merlo Flores and Cecilia von Feilitzen

with support of Karl-Gunnar Lidström



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## Foreword

The aim of the present proposed research project is to – in the long run – improve the media situation for children and young people (-18 years of age) in the world by creating indicators for a Media Social Responsibility Index.

The idea of this international research project stems from Tatiana Merlo Flores, sociologist and President of Instituto de Investigación en Medios, Buenos Aires, Argentina. During her many years of research on children and media, she has also in several studies asked about and analysed issues related to social responsibility.

Tatiana Merlo Flores presented her idea in, i.a., Cape Town, South Africa, in November 2005 at one of the preparatory meetings of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Summit on Media for Children to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in March 2007. The idea was highly appreciated. Essential viewpoints on the future realization of the project were especially – and have both previously and continuously after that been – given by Karl-Gunnar Lidström, formerly at The International Programme Office for Education and Training,<sup>1</sup> Stockholm, Sweden. We are deeply thankful to Karl-Gunnar Lidström.

Tatiana Merlo Flores had also previously asked Cecilia von Feilitzen, media researcher and Scientific Co-ordinator of The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media<sup>2</sup> to collaborate with her on the project.

Cecilia von Feilitzen's and Tatiana Merlo Flores' common preparatory work for the international research proposal was made possible by a grant from the Nordic Culture Fond<sup>3</sup> during 2006 to Nordicom (Nordic Center for Media and Communication Research),<sup>4</sup> Göteborg University, Sweden, of which the Clearinghouse is a part. We express our heartfelt gratitude to the Nordic Culture Fond for this support.

We also warmly thank the Nordic researchers with long-standing experience of children, young people and media who gave their valuable viewpoints on the proposal during a meeting in August 2006: Professor Thorbjörn Broddason, University of Iceland; Associate Professor Dr. Ingunn Hagen, The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU); Adjunct Professor Dr. Sirkku Kotilainen, University of Turku and University of Jyväskylä, Finland; and Assistant Professor M.A. Gitte Stald, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

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<sup>1</sup> The International Programme Office for Education and Training (<http://www.programkontoret.se>) is a Swedish government agency supporting schools, universities, companies, organisations and individuals in order to help them participate in international cooperation initiatives.

<sup>2</sup> The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media at Nordicom (<http://www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse>) is an international knowledge centre with the aim of increasing awareness and knowledge about children, youth and media, thereby providing a basis for relevant policy-making, contributing to a constructive public debate, and enhancing children's and young people's media literacy and media competence. Moreover, it is hoped that the Clearinghouse's work will stimulate further research on children, youth and media.

<sup>3</sup> The Nordic Culture Fund (<http://www.nordiskkulturfond.org>) is a Nordic body of cooperation whose task is to support cultural cooperation in the broad sense between the Nordic countries. Its secretariat is located in Copenhagen, Denmark.

<sup>4</sup> Nordicom (<http://www.nordicom.gu.se>) is a knowledge centre for the area of media and communication research, a co-operation between the five countries of the Nordic region. Nordicom's activities are based on broad and extensive networks of contacts and collaboration around the world.

As is emphasized in the report to the Nordic Culture Fond in late 2006, the research proposal will during the continuous international contacts be subjected to new viewpoints and need to be polished in its detail depending on the researchers who would like to and have the possibility of taking part in the project.

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## **Proposal for an International Research Project on Children and Media to Create Indicators for a Media Social Responsibility Index**

*Tatiana Merlo Flores & Cecilia von Feilitzen*

### **Object and main questions**

The object of this developmental research for social change is to create indicators for a Media Social Responsibility Index (MSRI) based on four pillars:

- 1) Previous international and regional charters, declarations and resolutions on children, young people and media prepared by World Summits and many other meetings and organizations over the world,
- 2) The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Millennium Development Goals,
- 3) The United Nations Global Compact initiative, and
- 4) Comprehensive international comparative research in which children have their say.

Although the fourth pillar, research with children, is the most essential one, it will be dealt with after the others.

The main questions of the project are:

- Which are the best and most useful indicators for media companies and their stakeholders to assure their social responsibility for media contents that children use?
- How to elaborate global, concrete, measurable and – above all – useful indicators for such a Media Social Responsibility Index?

Media in this context are defined as mass media of all kinds, that is, print media (newspapers, journals, books, etc.), auditive media (radio, CD, mp3, etc.), audiovisual media (film, television, video/DVD) and so-called interactive or digital media (the Internet, video and computer games, i-pods, etc.). Different forms of advertising are also included in the media.

The rapidly changing media landscape also means an ongoing convergence of the media, e.g., that newspapers, radio, television programmes, electronic games, etc., to an increasing extent are available on-line and that also cell phones are a way in to Internet, 'the mobile internet'. Not only are media technologies converging but even to a certain extent the relations between formerly 'producers' and 'users' (listeners, viewers, readers) who now, at least via different digital platforms, have the possibility to be more interactive, and active, in certain contexts of the media processes. Traditional genre borders of media texts are becoming disintegrated and fluid in many aspects, as well.

Important to bear in mind is the fact that children are not only using media contents specifically addressed to them, such as children's programmes, children's books, etc. From an early age they also use adult fare, especially when it comes to television. And in the changing media landscape most kinds of media contents are becoming more easily available to children (as well as to adults). That is why this project proposal not only focuses on media contents targeting children but on all media contents that children use.

The project embraces three phases that are closely integrated (something which is evident from the time schedule in the end of the proposal):

- To learn via research about children's views of the media
- To work out a Media Social Responsibility Index
- To negotiate with Global Compact partners (see below) and then media companies and their stakeholders about adopting the index.

By media 'stakeholders' we mean owners, boards of directors, etc., of the media, and – above all – sponsors and advertisers, i.e., business companies that pay for publicity in the media. Much media contents tend to adapt to the policy of sponsors/business companies outside the media in order to increase the audience. Media social responsibility and corporate social responsibility generally are, thus, closely interwoven.

## **Children and the media – background**

During the last two decades, ever-larger parts of the world were flooded by TV sets and satellite channels. In 1996, 7 out of 10 households worldwide were estimated to own a TV set. This represented a 100 per cent increase in terms of channel expansion, hours of television watched and television sets possessed by households since the end of the 1980s.<sup>5</sup> In addition to satellite television there were videos and DVDs. Moreover, computers with Internet connection are spreading, especially among well-to-do households and countries, and the video and computer game industry has become the fastest growing and most profitable entertainment business aimed at children and young people. Cell phones are multiplying exponentially. The explosive media development is accompanied by an enormous increase of traditional advertising and an abundance of new forms of commercial publicity.

The changing and converging media landscape has intensified public debate as regards both hopes and fears. On the one hand, the media flow, which is increasingly independent of time and place, has aroused expectations of greater freedom of choice, equal access to information for all, and facilitating means for democracy and active citizenship. On the other hand, there is also fear of, i.a., standardization of the media output; more violent entertainment; discriminating portrayals of gender, social groups, cultures and nations; pornography; and direct infringements on the Internet. This could have undesired consequences for users, not least children and young people, besides risks of media addiction and an unnecessary orientation towards more consumption.

At the same time, the swelling media equipment in the richer households/areas of the world, where many children and young people have their own TV sets, DVD players, computers, mobile phones, etc., have meant that parents know less about and mediate their children's media use to a lesser extent than before.<sup>6</sup> Children have affective relationships with media<sup>7</sup> but many children express lack of communication with their parents about the media.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lamb, Robert (1997) *The Bigger Picture. Audio-visual Survey and Recommendations*. New York, UNICEF

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Larsson, Karin (2004) "Children's On-line Life – and What Parents Believe. A Survey in Five Countries", in Cecilia von Feilitzen & Ulla Carlsson (eds.) (2004) *Promote or Protect? Perspectives on Media Literacy and Media Regulations*. Yearbook 2003. Göteborg University, The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, Nordicom, p. 113–119

<sup>7</sup> Merlo Flores, Tatiana, Caron, André H. & Caronia, Leticia (2001) "TV as I would like you to be". International comparative research in seven countries supported by UNICEF and presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Summit on Media for Children, Thessalonica, Greece, in 2001

In the growing media competition – a consequence of the explosive trans-national media flow since the mid-80s and the succeeding generation of digital media – there are signs that the media contents addressed to children and young people have deteriorated in many countries, whereas it in several other countries never has been extensive or of good quality:

Although digital platforms, such as Internet, mobile phones and computer games, in certain contexts are promising tools for changing relations between production and reception of media contents,<sup>9</sup> digital media are still not evenly spread in the world. In fact, the digital divides are immense, leaving large parts of the world population, children as well as adults, outside many of the media converging processes. Keeping to traditional media, such as television, radio and print, there are also great inequalities. In many African countries, most children do not have access to television, and radio broadcasting is often restricted to a few of the country's languages. In the Maghreban part of the world, domestically TV programmes produced for children and young people are to a large extent lacking.<sup>10</sup> In especially the poorer Asian countries only a very small proportion of TV programmes, radio programmes, films, books, periodicals and newspapers are made for children, and when there is children's TV programming, it mostly consists of imported cartoons.<sup>11</sup> In Europe, a study during the 1990s found that the domestically produced children's programming declined, absolutely and relatively, while there was a great increase in imports, mostly cartoons from the U.S.A. These tendencies were stronger among European public broadcasters with low public funding and a great dependence on advertising and sponsorship than among public broadcasters with more public funding.<sup>12</sup> Though several organizations in many Latin American countries work for qualitative TV, foreign productions are said to spread without cultural resistance. And in the U.S.A., the three big 'global' children's cable networks – Nickelodeon, The Disney Channel and Cartoon Network – all with mostly cartoons (and also reaching a substantial number of households in other continents), have led the ordinary TV networks to diminish or give up their production and broadcasting of children's programming.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Casas, Ferran, González, Mònica & Figuer, Cristina (2004) "Parents, Children and Media: Some Data from Spain, Brazil, Norway, South Africa and India", in Cecilia von Feilitzen & Ulla Carlsson (eds.) (2004) *Promote or Protect? Perspectives on Media Literacy and Media Regulations*. Yearbook 2003. Göteborg University, The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, Nordicom, p. 129–146

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Merlo Flores, Tatiana (2005) "Videojuegos y chicos en situación de calle: hambre de inclusión e identidad", *Anales de la Educación*, Buenos Aires, Ministerio de Educación, p. 228-231

<sup>10</sup> Bensalah, Mohamed (1998) "Image and Violence – A Questionable Relationship", *News on Children and Violence on the Screen*, Vol. 2, No. 2-3, p. 14-15

<sup>11</sup> Goonasekera, Anura (1998) "Children's Voice in the Media. A Study of Children's Television Programmes in Asia", in Ulla Carlsson & Cecilia von Feilitzen (eds.) *Children and Media Violence*. Göteborg University, The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen, Nordicom, p. 203-213; Banerjee, Indrajit & Seneviratne, Kalinga (2006) "Money, Ratings and the Kid – Children's Television in Asia", in Ulla Carlsson & Cecilia von Feilitzen (eds.) *In the Service of Young People? Studies and Reflections on Media in the Digital Age*. Yearbook 2005/2006. Göteborg University, The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, Nordicom, p. 159-166

<sup>12</sup> Blumler, Jay G. & Biltereyst, Daniel (1997) *The Integrity and Erosion of Public Television for Children. A Pan-European Survey*. A monograph of research sponsored by the Center for Media Education (Washington, D.C.), the Broadcasting Standards Commission (UK), The European Institute for the Media (Düsseldorf, Germany), and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU)

<sup>13</sup> Westcott, Tim (2002) "Globalisation of Children's TV and Strategies of the 'Big Three' ", in Cecilia von Feilitzen & Ulla Carlsson (eds.) *Children, Young People and Media Globalisation*. Yearbook 2002. Göteborg University, The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, Nordicom, p. 69-76

Naturally, there are also some countries that have preserved or even ameliorated a rich and/or diverse media output for children with a large proportion of domestically produced programmes, for example, Australia, Japan and the Nordic Countries. And there are several countries 'in-between' in this respect.

As mentioned in the introduction, children simultaneously all over the world use adult programming from an early age, although this tends to occur later in age if there is diverse and attractive children's programming available on times suitable for children. Because of this fact it is essential that the Media Social Responsibility Index for the media and their sponsors is valid not only for media contents especially made for children but for all media contents that attract children.

## **1) Previous international and regional charters, declarations and resolutions on children, young people and media**

The failing television situation for children and young people was the reason why Australia which, on the contrary, had brought about a positive development as regards child television, in 1995 held the (first) World Summit on Television for Children in Melbourne for discussion and raising awareness of the world situation.<sup>14</sup> The idea of the Summit, addressing mainly media professionals but also researchers, media educators and policymakers, was conceived by Dr. Patricia Edgar, then Director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation. The Summit, which was attended by some 650 delegates from about 70 countries, began a worldwide movement under the auspices of The World Summit on Media for Children Foundation, established in 1999 and chaired by Dr. Patricia Edgar.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> World Summit in London, U.K., in 1998 was, as the first one, mainly concerned with television.<sup>15</sup> However, as is evident from the heading, the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Summit on Media for Children in Thessalonica, Greece, in 2001 widened its perspective to cover all media including the Internet. The same was valid for the 4<sup>th</sup> World Summit on Media for Children and Adolescents in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2004, and will be true of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Summit on Media for Children, Media as a Tool for Global Peace and Democracy, that will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2007.

Not only have children's and young people's media situation been given attention by the World Summits every third year. Several regional Summits have been held in Africa and Asia, as well, in order to deal with relevant issues not having got sufficient attention at the World Summits. For example, regional African Summits have placed greater emphasis on radio (the most used medium in the continent) as well as on the educational and developmental needs of African children.

Other kinds of both international and regional meetings on children, young people and media have also been arranged, for example, by Centre International du Film pour l'Enfance et la Jeunesse (CIFEJ), the European Children's Television Centre (ECTC) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). Furthermore, the number of film and television festivals related to children and young people have multiplied (several with support of the long-standing international television festival PRIX JEUNESSE).

In addition, the media situation of children and young people has to a growing extent been the focus of international and regional meetings, symposia, seminars and forums arranged by UN agencies, such as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNESCO and UNICEF, as well as by EU expert seminars, the international research community and several associations of media educators (some of which have been supported by UNESCO, as well).

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<sup>14</sup> The Summit is documented in *World Summit on Television and Children. Final Report*. Carlton, Australia, The Australian Children's Television Foundation, 1995

<sup>15</sup> The second Summit is documented in Anna Home & Amy B. Jordan: *The Second World Summit on Television for Children 1998. Final report*. University of Pennsylvania, The Annenberg, Public Policy Center

Since the late 1980s, a succession of charters, declarations and resolutions about how the relations between children, young people and media can be improved, have been put forward at the international Summits and other conferences. A great many of the supranational, research and media educators' meetings have also resulted in different kinds of declarations, resolutions, etc., with recommendations and urgent requests to take the relations between children, young people and the media into consideration.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Relevance to the research project***

The here proposed international research project on children and media to create indicators for a Media Social Responsibility Index will carefully take all these experiences, charters, declarations, resolutions and recommendations into consideration when creating the indicators for the Media Social Responsibility Index.

Moreover, the research proposal is expected to be first presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> World Summit in South Africa in March 2007, organised by the Children and Broadcasting Foundation for Africa (CBFA) of which Firdoze Bulbulia is Chairperson.<sup>17</sup> A series of intermediary reports from the research project are planned to be made at various suitable subsequent occasions in 2008 and 2009. The final research report is planned to be submitted in time for the 6<sup>th</sup> World Summit on Media for Children in 2010, an event that is proposed to take place in Sweden.

## **2) The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Millennium Development Goals**

Not all World Summits and meetings mentioned above have explicitly made reference to The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) from 1989 valid for children and young people up to 18 years of age. Even fewer meetings have referred to the more lately adopted UN Millennium Development Goals (based on the UN Millennium Declaration in 2000). However, especially the UN CRC has nevertheless been an essential incitement to the growing global awareness that the abovementioned Summits and other meetings represent, and it has successively been more and more visible in the agendas of the meetings. For instance, the website of the coming 5<sup>th</sup> World Summit says: "...underlying goals and objectives are in line with the objectives of the World Summit Foundation on Media for Children, the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the priorities outlined in the Millennium Development Goals and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child".<sup>18</sup>

UN CRC includes more detailed articles directly related to the media than the UN Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MGDs).

Article 13 in UN CRC says:

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

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<sup>16</sup> A collection of the international and regional declarations and resolutions is available on the website of The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, see <http://www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse> → Links & Databases → Declarations

<sup>17</sup> The 2007 Summit has received manifest political and economic support from the present and former presidents of South Africa, Mr. Thabo Mbeki and Mr. Nelson Mandela, the Minister of Communications, Dr. Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and the Union of National Radio & Television Organizations of Africa (URTNA).

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.5wsmc.com/objectives.htm> (February 2007)

2. The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

- a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; or
- b) For the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals.

Article 17 in UN CRC says:

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

- a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;
- b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;
- c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;
- d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;
- e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.

For the rest, the UN CRC, the Millennium Declaration and the eight MDGs include basic urgent needs among the world's children and adults that mass media can contribute to fulfil.

### ***Relevance to the research project***

The UN CRC and MDGs will be of utmost concern for the proposed research project when creating indicators for the Media Social Responsibility Index. An overriding principle of UN CRC is also that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions (Article 3).

## **3) The United Nations Global Compact initiative**

The international and regional charters, declarations, resolutions, recommendations, etc., mentioned under 1) as well as the UN CRC and MDGs mentioned under 2) cannot be said to have been adopted by most media, especially not by multinational media conglomerates, which on the whole are private, driven by acquisitiveness, and defend themselves by referring to their own freedom of expression without respecting children's rights and human rights.

Naturally, there are different kinds of external media regulations and recommendations of self-regulation in several countries, mainly for the established press and national public TV channels, and to a certain extent also for regions (e.g., the EU Directive on Television without Frontiers, OECD's guiding principles, the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity, and others). However, these ethical guidelines are neither adopted nor applied by most private media worldwide and are largely not valid for the so-called global media flow.

There are organizations in the world trying to get national and multinational industries voluntarily to include human rights in their guidelines and codes of conduct. One example is the UN Global Compact.

“Through the power of collective action, Global Compact”, launched by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 1999, “seeks to advance responsible corporate citizenship so that business can be part of the solution to the challenges of globalisation. In this way, the private sector – in partnership with other social actors – can help realize the Secretary-General’s vision: a more sustainable and inclusive global economy”... “Today, many hundreds of companies from all regions of the world, international labour and civil society organizations are engaged in the Global Compact, working to advance ten universal principles in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption.”<sup>19</sup>

Several of the Global Compact ten principles refer directly to children, such as

- The support and respect of the protection of international human rights
- The refusal to participate or condone human rights abuses
- The abolition of child labour.

The Global Compact principles do not directly refer to media as central agents in the process of social responsibility, although the globalisation processes during the last two decades have been dominated by precisely the media, putting several media conglomerates on the top list of the biggest companies generally worldwide (which was not the case twenty years ago), why the media are controlling a bigger and bigger share of the world economy. The media have also become one of the most important socialisation factors in national, regional and global perspectives.

Nevertheless, the absolute majority of the media are not among the companies that have signed the principles of Global Compact. There are some scattered media companies over the world that did – and these are often small or ‘alternative’ ones (see Global Compact’s database).

Global Compact expects that participants yearly make a Communication of Progress (COP), including descriptions of practical actions taken to integrate the principles, and of measurements of outcomes. As resources for creating and submitting a COP, Global Compact recommend, among other things, the performance indicators developed by their partners, for instance, Global Reporting Initiative.

The vision of the independent, non-for-profit Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) “is that reporting on economic, environmental, and social performance by all organizations becomes as routine and comparable as financial reporting. GRI accomplishes this vision by developing, continually improving, and building capacity around the use of its Sustainability Reporting Framework”.<sup>20</sup> GRI has elaborated indicators for companies and other organizations related to Economy, Environment, and four aspects of Social Performance: Labour practices & decent work, Human rights, Society, and Product responsibility. Several indicators under Product responsibility – associated with consumer health and safety, products and service labelling, marketing communications, and customer privacy – could directly be applied also to media contents, although media products/media contents are not mentioned by GRI with the exception of “marketing communications, including advertising, promotion and sponsorship”.

Also referring to children in this respect, GRI says, among other things, that “marketing approaches that are seen as inappropriate can incur risks for organizations, including alienation of customers and other stakeholders, damage to reputation, financial costs, and legislative action”.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.unglobalcompact.org> (February 2007)

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.globalreporting.org> (February 2007)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.globalreporting.org> (February 2007)

The companies voluntarily send reports to GRI worked out according to its global guidelines and indicators. A search in GRI's database shows that only a pocketful of media companies worldwide has delivered such reports.

### ***Relevance to the research project***

The research project proposed here will take the lack of indicators for media contents into consideration and try to elaborate measurable indicators for media companies – and any company related to the media since media contents are relevant also to them – indicators that are useful for the companies and that extend their corporate social responsibility actions.

Thus, the research analysis will provide material for developing indicators for a Media Social Responsibility Index that the media and their stakeholders around the world will be able to apply to their social responsibility projects as a mark of ethical standards and moral considerations of the rights of the child in the production of media contents that children use. The aim of the analysis is to find a Media Social Responsibility Index, which contributes to more diverse media contents that engage and empower children and young people and give them meaningful insights into their life, relationships and social problems. These are media contents that children and young people will use (and themselves produce). At the same time the media and their stakeholders must find the MSRI useful and giving them goodwill in the eyes of both children, young people, adults – and other important actors in the arena.

Although previous charters, declarations, etc., rarely have been adopted by the media, we believe that the idea of going one step further, would be attractive to many companies. Companies that have signed the Global Compact and use the indicators elaborated within this research project will get the opportunity to expand their corporate social responsibility actions to the last part of the value chain – the media contents – which they already produce or finance. This will be a way for the media and sponsors to work for contents and contexts that live up to the rights of children.

It is, thus, anticipated that this project, when completed, will provide a simple and effective way to acknowledge the rights of the child in the creation of media and media contents that children use. Media companies and media stakeholders who apply the MSRI will, namely, have a significant advantage in the global market in all stages of the value chain. Responsible corporate citizenship, being part of the solution to the challenges of globalisation and contributing to a more sustainable and inclusive global economy and development, will be useful for the media and their stakeholders themselves and will contribute to positive media images and brands, and increased public confidence in the companies. In addition, those media companies applying the index to their contents will have produced their work in accordance with the latest 'best practices' in the industry – providing children, parents and other adults with the ability to determine the social responsibility of the media output.

The Global Compact provides a structure for the application of the MSRI. Support in the form of collaboration and cooperation has been pledged from the Executive Head of the Global Compact, Mr. Georg Kell, located in New York in the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (see Appendices).

## **4) Comprehensive international comparative research in which children have their say**

As mentioned in the introduction, the here proposed international research project will rest on four pillars: 1) Previous international and regional charters, declarations and resolutions on children, young people and media elaborated by World Summits and many other meetings and organizations over the world, 2) The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Millennium Development Goals,

3) The United Nations' Global Compact initiative, and 4) Comprehensive international comparative research in which children have their say.

It is important that the Media Social Responsibility Index not only is useful for the media and the sponsors in terms of their and the global economy and their image-building – but also that the indicators building up the index is based on what children themselves think, feel and desire of media in their everyday life, guaranteeing that the media contents are attractive and useful also for children and young people and facilitate their possibilities to understand, express themselves, participate, communicate and act in the local environment. Although dealt with as the last pillar, this is the most extensive and essential part of the project.

### ***Previous research***

Over the decades, much research on children and media has been conducted worldwide, documented in scientific reports, articles, and books. During the past ten years, The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, Nordicom, Göteborg University, has also collected, synthesized and distributed in different publications child and media research from countries that are not so frequently visible in the international research community.

The child research that will be performed for the MSRI shall, besides new empirical research, be based on the best and most significant national and international previous research findings on children and media. And the new international comparative empirical research within the project shall be conducted by and in collaboration with outstanding scholars with long-standing experience in the field.

### ***New international comparative research***

The objective of the new comprehensive empirical comparative research with children in the project is to investigate the following main questions:

- Which are the viewpoints among children in different contexts and parts of the world as regards the role of traditional and digital media in their everyday lives?
- How and why do children use and integrate the different media/media contents in various personal and cultural contexts to understand themselves, other persons and the local community surrounding them, as well as other cultures and the world?
- Which media contents do children themselves say that they like and dislike – and why?
- How do children perceive the portrayals of them in different media?
- How would children like to be portrayed and heard?
- Which are the most essential things that different media could give children, according to them, and which are their critical viewpoints of the media in these respects?
- Which rights do children consider as most important to be demonstrated in the media?
- Which rights do children think are most violated in the media?
- How would children like different media to be?
- In which ways do children – and would children like to – actively participate in different media contents and contexts, and in the production of these contents? Through which channels? Producing which contents?

- How do children mean that they would be best empowered by and with the media – individually, culturally and socially?

The empirical research study will in all likelihood generate some findings that are more general or consistent for children in all partaking countries. However, there will also be findings that are characteristic for children in different local, cultural and socio-cultural contexts. Local contexts are also of more and more interest to different content providers in the converging and fluid media landscape.

### ***Method***

The above-mentioned questions of the empirical work with children will be studied through a multi-faceted process of quantitative surveys and qualitative interactions with small groups of young people. Different methods will be used for two purposes: 1) to get findings that truly represent children's perspectives, and 2) to get data for an analysis that reflects the consistency and cultural diversity of children's opinions around the world in order to work out efficient indicators for the Media Social Responsibility Index.

As a background it is also necessary, besides presenting general media statistics for the countries studied, to describe the media and media contents in different contexts that children in each country mostly use (and produce) (time and length of radio and television programmes/programme categories, country of origin, websites, phone services, etc.).

The main age group for the project will be 11-12-year-olds – as a suggestion 800 children in each participating country. For the sake of continuity this age group will be supplemented when it comes to the survey questionnaire (see below) with smaller samples of 8-9-year-olds and 16-17-year-olds (200 in each group; for the 8-9-year-olds and illiterate children there must be verbal support from the researchers and especially designed questionnaires with pictures, etc.).

It is desirable that at least two countries from each world region<sup>22</sup> participate in the project. This means that the quantitative part of the project will include at a minimum 14,400 children.

The project has been conceived as triangulating data using the following methods:

- survey questionnaires to children (8-9, 11-12, 16-17-year-olds)
- focus groups/informal interviews with groups of children (11-12-year-olds) following up findings in the quantitative survey
- children making storyboards (of media stories they desire to hear and tell about) (11-12-year-olds)
- children's role-playing (of news, soap operas, programmes and other media contents that they prefer) (11-12-year-olds)

Within each country, the researchers will choose different schools: in a large city and in one or several small communities, respectively, and with different social and cultural levels taken into account – including children outside of any formal schooling. It is also important to make a careful sample of the 1,200 children and adolescents according to the proportions of urban/rural population and its homogeneity in each country.

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<sup>22</sup> Regions are here defined in accordance with the UN geographical regions: Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America, Asia, Europe, Oceania (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>).

The quantitative survey data will be analysed by means of SPSS and the open-ended questions will be treated both quantitatively and qualitatively.

For the qualitative analysis (focus groups, storyboards and role-playing) there will, as a suggestion, be 12 groups of six children for each country, representing again different urban/rural regions and socio-cultural levels. For illiterate children the researchers are required to help them write down their words on the storyboard.

This will mean at least ca. 8-900 children as a total in the qualitative research, where children express themselves spontaneously about the role of media in their lives.

The role-playing will be videotaped as a base for the analysis and for visual presentation of the research results.

The researcher/research team in each country must ask for permission to carry through the research from the ministry of education/culture/family (and the school directors) to have access to the schools and other child groups.

For the empirical research project to be as comparative as possible, detailed instructions for all stages of the project will be worked out. Furthermore, the researchers must during the whole research process have close contacts (for example, via a common space on the Internet and video-conferences; if there is enough financial means, there will also be meetings and seminars).

## **Researchers, advisory groups, financing and support**

Many qualified researchers have expressed great interest in participating in the research project. The final composition of researchers will, however, depend on possible funding.

Besides the participating researchers, there will be a scientific advisory group.

Groups of children will also be advisors for the design of the questionnaires, formulating/giving viewpoints of relevant questions, etc.

CVs of researchers and the advisory group shall be added to the project proposal.

Many national and international financing sources will be approached. Funding will probably for the most part be of national or bilateral character.

General (non-financial) support will be sought from, among others, ministries, formal and voluntary organizations, policymakers on national, regional and international levels, and media organizations and associations (broadcasting unions, associations of Internet service providers and telecommunicators, regulation authorities, etc.). Supporters will receive a yearly progress report from the project.

## **Time schedule of the project**

### ***March 2007***

- The project proposal will be sent to interested researchers for composing research teams.
- The two proposing researchers will prepare material for the first project meetings, i.e., elaborate concrete questions and instructions for the questionnaire and for the qualitative parts of the empirical study, as well as compiling previous international and regional charters, declarations, resolu-

tions and recommendations on children, young people and media, together with the following documents: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Millennium Declaration, the UN Millennium Development Goals, the UN Global Compact, and the indicators of the Global Reporting Initiative.

### ***24-28 March 2007***

- The 5<sup>th</sup> World Summit on Media for Children in Johannesburg on 24-28 March 2007 will be the first meeting for interested participating researchers/countries. After discussion and making up concrete plans for collaboration, costs and application for funds, the research project will be presented in a special plenary session at the Summit.

### ***April-December 2007***

- Further contacts and meetings with interested researchers will be taken. The research proposal will be adjusted according to participating researchers' viewpoints.
- Budgets for participating countries will be prepared.
- Different versions of the research proposal will be composed – a detailed one for academic funds, a briefer one for authorities and the industry, and one for seeking general support.
- Applications will be sent to national, regional and international funds by the participating countries/researchers.
- Inventories of previous relevant research on children and media will be done.
- Interviews will be carried through with representatives of companies that are engaged in Global Compact for studying the added value of such engagement.
- Media companies and their stakeholders will be interviewed – about the kinds of social responsibility indicators that best could fulfil both their and children's needs. In this context consideration must be shown for the fact that ethical standards and moral considerations vary between cultures.
- There will be further detailed discussions among the researchers about suitable sample-drawing for comparability within the empirical research, and about the methods: refinement and translations of questions and instructions for the quantitative and qualitative parts of the empirical study must be made, logistical issues must be thought out.
- The project and its progress will be presented at other international meetings.
- A progress report will be written.

### ***2008***

- Empirical data collections with children will be performed – first within the quantitative study and after that within the qualitative parts.
- Analyses of the data will be made.
- Preliminary indicators for a Media Social Responsibility Index will be elaborated based on previous documents.

- Contacts with Global Compact and Global Reporting Initiative will be made about the indicators and possibilities to implement the MSRI and to measure how companies that have signed the index are living up to it. (It ought to be mentioned that the Global Reporting Initiative has inquired of new ideas and related research.)
- Continued contacts with media companies and their stakeholders will be made.
- Continuous discussions among the participating researchers will take place.
- Preliminary reports of the empirical study will be written.
- The project and its progress will be presented at international meetings.
- A progress report will be written.

### **2009**

- Final reports of the empirical study with children will be produced.
- Indicators based on previous documents and the child research in combination will be elaborated.
- New contacts will be made with Global Compact and Global Reporting Initiative about the implementation process.
- Continued negotiations with media companies and their stakeholders will be made.
- Continuous discussions among the participating researchers will take place.
- The project and its progress will be presented at international meetings.
- One or several books will be written and printed.

### **2010**

- The final findings and recommendations will be presented visually and verbally at the 6<sup>th</sup> World Summit on Media for Children.
- Negotiations with media companies and their stakeholders will proceed.

Karl-Gunnar Lidström  
Skeppargatan 48  
SE-114 58 STOCKHOLM  
S w e d e n

Stockholm, 30 April, 2005

Mr. Georg Kell  
Executive Head of Global Compact  
Office of the Secretary-General  
United Nations  
S-1890  
NEW YORK, NY 10017  
U S A

Dear Mr. Kell,

We are addressing ourselves to you with a proposal on developing an international research project on media for children within the Global Compact Programme with a view to submitting a report to the 5<sup>th</sup> World Summit on Media for Children to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in March 2007 and to have it discussed there, for instance, in a seminar.

The idea of regular international meetings to discuss children and media was originally conceived in the early 1990's by Dr. Patricia Edgar, then director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation. The first *World Summit on Television and Children* was held in 1995 in Melbourne, involving some 650 delegates from about 70 countries. This Summit began a world-wide movement under the auspices of *The World Summit on Media for Children Foundation*, established in 1998 and chaired by Dr. Edgar.

The first Summits were mainly concerned with television. However, as of late they have been broadened to cover all media including internet. The Summit 2007 will most likely give a certain priority to radio and film. After Melbourne 1995 Summits have been organised in London in 1998, in Thessaloniki in 2001 and in Rio de Janeiro in 2004. Following Johannesburg 2007 the Swedish municipality of Karlstad has expressed a preliminary interest in hosting the Summit in 2010. The organisers of the Summit in 2007, *the Children and Broadcasting Foundation for Africa (CBFA)*, are members of the Summit Foundation. Its leading representatives, Ms. Firdoze Bulbulia and Mr. Faith Isiakpere, have attended all Summits respectively all but one held so far.

The 2007 Summit has received manifest political and economic support from i.a. the present and former president of South Africa, *Mr. Thabo Mbeki* and *Mr. Nelson Mandela*, the Minister of Communications, *Dr. Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri*, *the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)* and *the Union of National Radio & Television Organisations of Africa (URTNA)*.

In writing this letter to you we have consulted Ambassador Niklas Bergström, Head of the Swedish Partnership for Global Responsibility, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and some of his colleagues, i.a. to ascertain that our proposal is in line with the general principles of the Programme and that we have their support.

The aims of the research project are to

- work out social responsibility indexing for media companies – based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, existing research on children and media, as well as studies about what children themselves wish from and are critical of in the media;
- ask the media companies to relate to the index;

- engage existing independent voluntary organizations in the world and, if possible, also establish more such organizations that can monitor whether the media contents are in line with the index and keep an international level of decency.

The objective, then, is to present the media index at the 5th World Summit on Media for Children in Johannesburg in 2007. After that, if not before, the research group will address the media and ask them to relate to and integrate the index in their policies and activities.

As you are certainly well aware a succession of declarations and resolutions about how the relations between children, young people and media can be improved have been put forward in different contexts since the late 1980s, often at international sum-mits and conferences on media for children and adolescents. In the growing media competition, which is a consequence of the explosive trans-national media flow (satellite TV channels, Internet, computer and video games, etc.) since the mid-80s, the media environment for children and young people has deteriorated in most countries, both as regards children's programming and corresponding contents in other media directly addressed to them and as regards adult programming, etc., that children seek from an early age.

The international declarations cannot be said to have been adopted by the media, which on the whole are private, driven by acquisitiveness, and defend themselves by referring to (their own) freedom of expression without respecting children's or human rights. However, from another point of departure, several voluntary organizations in the world try to get enterprises within other branches to include human rights in their guidelines and codes of conduct.

When it comes to the media, such initiatives are more or less negligible. There are different kinds of media regulations and self-regulations in several countries, mainly for the established press and national public TV channels, and to a certain extent also for regions (e.g., the EU Directive on Television without Frontiers, OECD's guiding principles, the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity, etc. However, these ethical guidelines are not adopted nor applied by most private media worldwide and largely not valid for the so-called global media flow.

Noting that some of the Global Compact principles refer directly to children, for instance, #1 : The support and respect of the protection of international human rights; #2: The refusal to participate or condone human rights abuses; and # 5: The abolition of child labour it seems to us that this research project would fit into the Global Compact Programme. As we read on your home-page *Through the power of collective action, the Global Compact seeks to advance responsible corporate citizenship so that business can be part of the solution to the challenges of globalisation. In this way, the private sector – in partnership with other social actors – can help realize the Secretary-General's vision: a more sustainable and inclusive global economy. ... The Global Compact is not a regulatory instrument – it does not “police”, enforce or measure the behaviour or actions of companies. Rather, the Global Compact relies on public accountability, transparency and the enlightened self-interest of companies, labour and civil society to initiate and share substantive action in pursuing the principles upon which the Global Compact is based.*

The original project idea stems from Dr. Tatiana Merlo Flores, President of the Media Research Institute in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Having attended all Summits held so far she has in particular highlighted the work done by the World Media Summit for Children and Adolescents that took place last April in Rio de Janeiro. Dr. Merlo Flores has worked for many years with Dr. Cecilia von Feilitzen, media researcher at the Södertörn University College outside Stockholm and expert attached i.a. to the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth & Media initiated by UNESCO at Nordicom, Gothenburg University, and the Swedish Media Council attached to the Ministry of Education and Culture. She has attended the first three Summits.

A network of interested researchers is being established in Argentina, Greece, India, Ireland, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, and USA. A list of those persons who have already expressed interest in this project can be provided by e-mail should you so wish.

On the basis of the above information we would like to know to what extent and in what form you would be able to support this initiative – politically, financially, establishing contacts, etc. As soon as we know your reaction we will get in touch with i.a. the Nordic Cultural Fund, the European Commission, UNESCO, UNICEF, Red Cross, Save the Children and other possibly interested partners asking for their support.

Best regards,

Yours sincerely,

*Signed*  
*Cecilia von Feilitzen*

*Signed*  
*Tatiana Merlo Flores*

Karl-Gunnar Lidström  
Independent Media Policy Advisor  
Sweden

Cecilia von Feilitzen  
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CC

Ms. Firdoze Bulbulia, Chairperson  
Children & Broadcasting Foundation For Africa,  
5WSMC, South Africa

Mr. Niklas Bergström, Ambassador  
Swedish Partnership for Global Responsibility  
Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden

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Ms. Teresa Fogelberg, Associate Director  
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Ms. Athina Rikaki, President  
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Ms. Lene Wendland, Human Rights Officer  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
CABINET DU SECRETAIRE GENERAL

REFERENCE

19 May 2005

Dear Sir, Dear Madams,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 30 April 2005 informing us about your research project on media for children.

The project is an interesting and important one and you are certainly welcome to use relevant Global Compact principles as a framework for the research. If you have any queries relating to the principles, please do feel free to contact my office. If the Global Compact principles feature prominently in any part of the final report, we would be grateful for the opportunity of reviewing those parts to ensure that they are consistent with the spirit of the Global Compact.

While we are not in a position to offer financial support and, as a voluntary initiative of the UN Secretariat, we are not able to provide political support, we should be able to assist with some contacts. In particular, there may be some companies and other stakeholders participating in the Global Compact that might be interested in offering their perspectives on the topic. In this context, I invite you to contact my colleague Ursula Wynhoven ([wynhoven@un.org](mailto:wynhoven@un.org); +1-212-963-5705).

Moreover, if one of the outcomes of the research were to be a tool or other guidance that companies find helpful in implementing the Global Compact human rights principles or the principle on the abolition of child labour, we might be able to promote the tool to our participants. We would, of course, need to see the material in question before we could make a final decision on this.

Good luck!

Yours sincerely,



George Kell

Executive Head / UN Global Compact Office  
Office of the Secretary-General