

### III Children's and Young People's Own Media Production

Nowadays many websites, as well as voluntary and formal organisations, are offering children and young people advice or lessons about how to produce media content – making a short film, setting up a website, etc. There are also several school networks where classes exchange experience online or send 'video letters' about their experiences to other classes in the same or other countries. Moreover, there are quite a number of festivals and awards for short films, videos and websites made by children and young people.

However, there is less research about the *consequences* of children's and young people's own media production, both in the short and, especially, in the long run. During the latest years, much research in richer countries has focused on children's creativity online – in chat rooms, communities, when making blogs, setting up websites, editing digital pictures, etc. Often, this research concludes that young people's or certain groups' Internet creativity plays a role for their identity seeking and identity construction, self-expression, and social communication with peers in different regards. More recently, children's and young people's mobile telephony has been included in the studies. In addition, there is current research (by David Buckingham and Andrew Burn, see <http://www.childrenyouthandmediacentre.co.uk>) developing a prototype, which will enable young people to create their own adventure and role-playing games.

Even less research seems to have analysed the consequences of children's and young people's production of contents for traditional media – print media, radio, television, film, etc. Scattered studies performed in school settings show that such media work may lead to a better understanding of how media works – but there are also studies indicating that certain media production can be problematic, because of, among other things, lack of appropriate equipment, lack of time, or lack of motivation among children to communicate with people they do not know in projects designed by adults (Ai-Leen 1999, de Block et al., 2004).

This may also have to do with the fact that the pedagogic approach is not well thought-out. Experiences of media education and media literacy initiatives among children tend to show that media education often fails if it only seeks to get the audience dissociate itself from bad TV programmes and other media contents, that is, media education often fails if it attempts to 'vaccinate' or 'inoculate' students or viewers. Neither will that media education succeed very well, which only trains students in critical analyses of various programmes and other

media content, because this procedure becomes too abstract for many students. Instead, that media education stands a good chance of succeeding that sandwiches critical analysis and students' own production, a production – and this is important – that at the same time emanates from the young people's own pleasure and motivation. The first times students make, for instance, video films, they often imitate popular products. However, if students are allowed to make more films in the long run, the production process in itself will instead lead to choice of other topics and formats, and to reflection and critique.

The Danish media researcher and pedagogue Birgitte Tufte (1995) has worked out a useful zigzag model based on such reasoning and which consists of three stages:

- to critically analyse professional TV programmes, films, or other media contents
- to produce video films, or other media contents oneself; and
- to critically analyse one's own production together with other people.

And then the model begins all over again.

Evidence that this kind of zigzag media education with great emphasis on children's and young people's own participation in media production – i.e., learning by doing – often is increasing media literacy and understanding of how the media function is found in several sources. The Clearinghouse has collected in yearbooks (e.g., von Feilitzen and Carlsson 1999, von Feilitzen and Bucht 2001) and in several newsletters more than fifty practical examples of 'media by children', presented by teachers, single media professionals, researchers and organisations all over the world. The examples have different backgrounds and aims and represent projects both inside but more often outside school. They also apply to different media – TV, video, film, radio, Internet, newspapers, magazines, photography, books, CDs, and others. Here one finds, for example, Swedish children making animated films; Austrian children formulating a declaration of what good television is for them; Japanese children sending video letters in English to school classes in other countries; children in Ghana and Spain making radio programmes; Indian working children regularly producing a wall paper on the rights of working children; Australian children making own music and recording it on CDs, as well as writing short stories for a book collection; children and young people producing on the Internet; and much much more.

These examples are what one usually calls 'best practices' of children's and young people's media production – where the media professionals, researchers, teachers, voluntary organisations, etc., have observed positive consequences either through practical experience or, in a few cases, by means of more strict evaluations or research.

Taken together these over fifty best practices show interesting consequences:

- *Pride, power, self-esteem*  
The examples clearly show that children through their creative media participation have become empowered – that the participation has *strengthened their pride, sense of power, and self-esteem* since they have felt that their voices are worth listening to, that they belong to their community, that they have achieved an understanding of others and of their own culture.
- *Wish to meet everyday dreams and local reality in the media – cultural identity*  
Certain examples show – as do children's explicitly expressed viewpoints about what they want to see, hear and read about in the media – that children often wish to meet their *own everyday dreams and their own local, social and ethnic culture and reality* in the media. This means that children strengthen their *own cultural identity*.
- *Critical understanding and increased media competence*  
Moreover, the examples support the thesis that many of the goals set up by media education are realised through children's participation in the media: participation in 'real' media strengthens children's ability and curiosity, gives them *a critical understanding of the media*, and *increases their media competence*.
- *Greater social justice with audio-visual media*  
Some examples also demonstrate that children's participation in especially *audio-visual media* production is particularly suitable for children who otherwise do not manage well in the traditional school with its print-based culture, which is why media production in itself brings about *greater social justice*.
- *Interest in society, steps towards increased democracy*  
Several examples also show that children's participation in the media bridges the gap between media use, on one hand, and children's participation in their community, on the other, something which, in turn, has had further consequences: When the media participation has been something real for them (on terms not only directed or controlled by adults), the media participation has led to *knowledge of and interest in the local community and inspired collective action*, or the children have been able to use the media in order to *improve their situation in the community*. With that some progress towards more worthy media representations of children, as well as towards *increased democracy*, could be made.

These consequences are especially noticeable if the own media production has been included in a 'real' context, that is real radio programmes, video films, magazines, web sites, etc., *that have a real child and/or adult audience*. The examples also show that *project success requires that adults not only listen to children but also participate with the children and young people in equal partnership*, a partnership where all involved are experts.

Increased participation in the media by children and youth may, thus – besides counteracting the clear underrepresentation of children in the media contents – contribute to realising children's right to freedom of expression and children's right to participate in media and in society. At the same time, children will – at least to some extent – be protected against offensive and potentially harmful media contents, since they through their media participation will develop a critical thinking towards the media.

It is important to underline again that not all attempts at own media production are successful – they require, as mentioned, the participating children's pleasure and motivation, as well as time, adult support and certain resources.

## 1. Two Examples of Best Practices

This section reproduces two brief articles from *News from ICCVOS*, No. 1, 2004, about children's and young people's own media production, where the consequences of their taking part in the media production are described.

### **Children's Media Production in Lanalhue, Chile**

In the rural areas of Chile, children between the ages of 6 and 14 study in public boarding schools far away from their parents. One of these schools is in Lanalhue, which means 'lost soul' in the native language, situated 700 kilometers south of the capital of Santiago. The 90 pupils come from farmer families of extreme poverty. Seventy per cent of them descend from the native population. During the weekends, the pupils return back home and work in agricultural farming. Many of them have to walk an hour or more to get to school. The closest city is situated 16 kilometers away, but the children do not have resources to travel to the city.

In the face of the school's isolation and insufficient infrastructure, broadcast television and radio are the main ways of contact with the outside world. We went there with the purpose to teach the children to be radio reporters and to produce their own news about their school and community.<sup>1</sup>

#### Children as protagonists in the production process

The pupils did not have any experience of media education, media literacy or education in communication via media (von Feilitzen 2002).<sup>2</sup> Despite the educational reform that the government carried out in the 90s, a high correlation still persists between schools of extreme poverty and lack of education in media and technologies. In this case, the teachers needed support in learning how to use radio equipment. To help them, a method of teach-and-learn was designed.

The method solved the education problem of the teachers through the use of the children as protagonists in the process of radio production. The implied presumption is that media are a tool in the service of the basic human communication needs between persons and their surroundings in accordance with their own experiences, problems and interests. It implies acknowledgement of the significance of community and culture in each situation that is to be investigated. As communication educators we are more concerned with teaching the children to be protagonists in the whole communi-

cation process than focusing on the medium itself. Therefore the work centered on the children's active learning in being reporters.

## Results

Educating the children to be reporters entails that we use the radio as a pretext to develop better skills in thinking in such areas as communication, expression, discussion, analysis of reality, selection and reproduction of events that are enduring and independent of the chosen medium. During the three days the project lasted, the children produced 33 minutes of news-broadcast on their own. They were able to define what news is, to report news items, to edit and finally also to record them.

To achieve this we organized different workshops for training: 'The Ear', to develop the ability of monitoring; 'Components of the Radio', to handle the language of broadcasting; 'Expression', where the children learned how to breath and to announce; and, finally, 'Interview', to handle the recorder, to interview and to relate histories through the radio. Through teamwork and by assuming the real roles in a process of production the children had a meeting to discuss the important events in the area and to select the subjects for the programme. Then the children went out in the district to make reports: they made manuscripts, edited and recorded the news. The news was broadcast at school. The news was also transmitted to the whole rural district thanks to the radio station in the closest city, which became interested in transmitting the programme. The children walked all the way to the professional broadcasting studio to present it to the local community.

## Impacts of the children's experiences

The first emotionally moving indicator is the children's happiness, pleasure and satisfaction while learning. Even though the working day started early in the morning they insisted on working until eight o'clock in the evening.

*We threw ourselves out in the adventure of being reporters, they said.*

When they understood that messages represent the reality in which they live they came to appreciate teamwork and expressed that they felt responsible and important. They articulated expressions, such as:

*I never thought that I would be capable of producing a programme.*

*I've never felt intelligent before.*

Another consequence is that the children developed a sense of utility in relation to their own community. They became conscious that even though they live in poverty, their surroundings are full of information and histories. They became aware of the necessity to document their daily life. This strengthens their identity:

*We discovered that our grandparents had to work with farming because they didn't have the opportunity to study. Those who were able to study didn't use uniform and went barefooted to school during the winter.*

This experience also allowed the children to open up a door to the future as they dream of being reporters as grown-ups. Perhaps the words of Magdalena 11 years old express the common feeling of what this experience meant for the pupils:



Child radio reporters in Lanalhue.  
Photo: José Antonio Soto

*It's unbelievable to feel like a reporter, because it allows us to see more than our own square meter.<sup>3</sup>*

The method especially designed for this project<sup>4</sup> has been acknowledged in different seminars and has been replicated by other universities in Chile because of its innovative focus on pupils' media production.<sup>5</sup> To our country this method seems relevant, but we also need to promote other learning processes for children.

### *by Rayén Condeza*

Journalist, Master in Instruction Design, Lecturer in the  
Master Program in Communication and Education  
Institute of Media studies, Faculty of Communications  
The Catholic University of Chile  
Santiago de Chile, Chile  
E-mail: rcondeza@puc.cl  
Web page: <http://www.puc.cl/fcom>

### **Notes**

1. Part of the Catholic University mission is to contribute professionally to areas of great social need in the country. The project was carried out in July, 2002.
2. von Feilitzen, Cecilia (2002) Aprender haciendo: reflexiones sobre la educación y los medios de comunicación, *Revista Comunicar* 18, 2002, ISSN: 1134-3478, pp. 21-26.
3. A documentary for television was made based on the experience of the project. It shows the children in their learning process. The documentary was awarded an honourable mention at the 'Festival de Video Educativo de Chile, Videas 2002'. It has also been broadcast on television.
4. Condeza, Rayén (2002) 'Producir para los medios: niños y niñas protagonistas y su relación con el desarrollo de habilidades afectivas y de pensamiento de calidad. Hacia una metodología de intervención educativa'. A document written on account of the seminar 'Radio, Ciudad y Educación' (Radio, City and Education), Santiago de Chile, August 2002, 10 pp. Institute of Media Studies, The Catholic University of Chile.
5. It can be added that this project, among others, was selected (out of 400 proposals) for exposition at the World Panorama Session at the 4th World Summit on Children for Media and Adolescents in Rio de Janeiro, April 19-23, 2004. One of the adolescents participating in the Lanalhue project was also the only Chilean young person taking part in the Adolescents Forum at the Summit.

## The Young Web of Citizenship in Brazil

The Young Web of Citizenship is a net of information, culture and citizenship that connects young people in the nine administrative regions of the city of Belo Horizonte in Brazil. Based on a program in which adolescents aged 13 to 22 years develop abilities related to participation and communal mobilisation, the net promotes participation in and production of media.

The net benefits hitherto approximately 250 cultural groups and social institutions that develop socio-cultural products directed at young people in the city. These productions are coordinated by adolescents themselves with permanent support of a team of professionals. The weaving process has also mobilised more than 5,000 young people from communities spread across Belo Horizonte. Moreover, the information produced and transmitted via the media reaches more than 100,000 viewers, listeners, readers and Internet users of different ages and social conditions.

The Young Web of Citizenship is managed by a non-governmental organisation called the Communal Image Association (*Associação Imagem Comunitária*), which has been working since 1993 with ideas of media education and public participation in the media. The net was established in 2002, gathering youngsters from several previous activities promoted by the Communal Image Association. In order to construct the net, the adolescents have attended educational workshops and receive continuous advice from a professional team from the Communal Image Association. Articulating a wide range of projects in the area of culture and citizenship, the net allows disadvantaged adolescents to make their issues visible. In this process, they become protagonists of their citizenship by expressing their ideas in the public sphere.

### Media literacy and children's participation in the media

#### *Different media products*

Sixty-six adolescents are responsible for local mobilisation and communal creation of the following media products:

- television programs (a weekly 15-minute program broadcast on local channels in Belo Horizonte)
- radio programs (a weekly 60-minute live program broadcast by the educational station Favela FM)
- newspapers (30,000 copies per edition; distributed freely in the public schools of Belo Horizonte every six weeks)
- a website: [www.redejovembh.org.br](http://www.redejovembh.org.br)
- a syndicate of news (weekly bulletins with information about communities and cultural manifestations, sent to conventional media)

The net will also publish two books: an Alternative Guide of Culture and Citizenship and a methodological book, *Mídias Comunitárias, Jovens e Cidadania* (Communal Media: Youngsters and Citizenship). The guide intends to present groups and institutions that promote culture and citizenship, and the book will present results of the establishment of the net, as well as ways of reproducing it in other contexts. There will also be a CD-

ROM containing some of the net's productions. These products will be distributed freely to public schools and libraries in the city, and to civil organizations in the entire country.

All these actions have been possible thanks to sponsorship from the oil company Petrobras and other supporters (City Hall of Belo Horizonte, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Municipal Secretariat of Citizenship, Canal Saúde – Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, the National Ministry of Health, and the National Ministries of Justice and Communication).

### Inclusion in the public sphere

The Young Web of Citizenship is a grassroots project, attempting to provide a deep and lasting transformation of society via cultural development. Education for communication and participation in the media is seen as an important tool that can generate opportunities that surpass hurdles to social and individual development. Results are already being reached. What can be observed are, among other things, the following consequences:

The Young Web of Citizenship is comprised of adolescents who live in areas of social risk – slums, *favelas* and areas characterised by problems of urban infrastructure and low-income population groups. An important result is, hence, the consolidation of a net of inter-community communication produced and managed by people who are frequently outside public spaces, including the traditional media. The project shows a way to overcome current forms of exclusion, such as the symbolic invisibility that outsiders face. The net is a space for expression that divulges issues and understandings of poor youngsters – all the net's media addresses issues, groups and spaces that they want to make visible. The web also presents opportunities for formal and informal education, social projects, and tips for preventive health and quality of life. Humor, critique and art are significant features of this way of producing communication that attempts to represent a complex reality and overcome simplifications.

All the net's media products have had great feedback, which is evident in hundreds of phone calls, thousands of e-mails and increasing participation of different social and cultural groups. In addition, several themes suggested by the informative bulletins have acquired visibility in local and national conventional media.

### Positive impacts on the adolescents' development

Evaluation meetings (involving participants, parents, communal leaders and school members) and qualitative research inquiries have also pointed out that the participants in the net have shown improvement concerning: self-esteem; effective participation; will for teamwork; fluency of expression of their ideas through texts and audio-visual works; interest in and searching for information about subjects related to culture and citizenship; improvement of school performance (greater motivation and involvement in school and extra-curricular activities, bringing into class new topics and inquiries to be discussed). The adolescents have also become more involved in their communities, taking part in social projects and cultural groups in their neighbourhoods.

It must also be mentioned that several adolescents have got educational opportunities and opportunities to act professionally. They were invited to participate in other

educational and cultural activities offered by Centro Cultural of the Federal University of Minas Gerais and to take part in internships and training periods at large audiovisual companies. Finally, it must be highlighted that the core group of adolescents most involved in the Young Web of Citizenship will receive a scholarship in order to enable other adolescents to work with media in 2004.

In sum, the Young Web of Citizenship has enhanced intense youth mobilization in social and cultural actions and has strengthened such projects leading to youth citizenship. When communication comes closer to youngsters, and their actions are given visibility, youngsters come closer to citizenship.

### *Recognition*

The Communal Image Association, through the Young Web of Citizenship, has won the Award of Human Rights 2003 (Prêmio Direitos Humanos 2003), granted by the National Ministry of Justice. The net has also been considered a good social technology by UNESCO and Fundação Banco do Brasil. In addition, it was a semi-finalist in the National Itaú/UNICEF Award (for experiences of education and participation) and a finalist in the International Betinho Award for Communication (which gathered experiences that used information and communication technologies for the promotion of communal development and social justice). One of the television programs produced within the net was presented in Festival Internacional de Cinema do Rio 2003, the greatest event in Latin America in the area of cinematography. The Young Web of Citizenship has also received much attention from traditional local and national media.

*by Ricardo Fabrino Mendonça and Rafaela Lima*

Media Coordinator and General Coordinator, respectively

Associação Imagem Comunitária

Belo Horizonte, MG

Brazil

Website: <http://www.aic.org.br>

## 2. Other Youth Media Productions – a Selection

In the following paragraphs we give a few succinct examples of children's and young people's media production in the world most often led by voluntary organisations outside school. Occasionally we include excerpts from, or just point to, evaluations of the projects, evaluation reports that also contain recommendations for other groups and organisations that want to start similar projects.

### ● **Plan International**, <http://www.plan-international.org>

Plan International works across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean in communities where many people struggle to meet their basic needs. Working in partnership with local people of all ages, supporting them to end poverty in their community, Plan believes that every child should have the opportunity to realise her/his potential.

Plan implements close to 60 media projects worldwide. The text below provides examples of some of Plan's projects.

- **Kid Waves, West Africa**

*Kids Waves* is a regional radio project implemented at the national level in eleven West African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. *Kids Waves* is a 30-minute weekly show broadcast in local languages. The show is hosted by children and 'travels' to a different location/village each week. It involves different children each week coming from the visited community. Each show evolves around a theme linked to the rights of the child that is explained to the audience along with the responsibilities of children and of those influencing their lives.

In Senegal, *Kids Waves* is called *Radio Gune Yi*. Created in 1995, it is the first Plan radio project. The *Kids Waves* show is called *Deviwo be Radio* in Togo, *Etoto Deviwo* in Benin, *Bibir Radio* in Burkina Faso, *La voix de Alpha et Finda* in Guinea, *Denmisenw Kun Kan* in Mali.

- **The radio campaign 'I Am a Child but I Have My Rights Too!'**,  
West Africa

The regional radio campaign *I Am a Child but I Have My Rights Too!* has been produced since 1998 by Plan in West Africa in collaboration with close to 100 radio stations. The show informs parents, children and authorities on their roles and responsibilities to respect the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Seven West-African countries have implemented the project: Burkina Faso, Guinea, Togo, Mali, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Benin. Two countries, Niger and Cameroon, will start broadcast in 2006. Dramas and sketches are produced with children and professional comedians. Interviews, debates and radio contests are also included in the shows. They are broad-

cast by up to twenty (public, private and community) radio stations in each country. More than 700 productions of the stories promoting child rights have been made and thousands of broadcasts have been heard throughout the region. The show has won international awards.

**Evaluation**

*Radio Campaign in West Africa: I Am a Child but I Have My Rights Too!* is an evaluation report by Rosita Ericsson, 2005, for Plan Region of West Africa (available at <http://www.plan-international.org>).

This evaluation report of the awareness campaign on the rights of the child *I Am a Child but I Have My Rights Too!* says that children have active roles at all stages of the project. The campaign is produced and implemented by the participating country offices in collaboration with national and local broadcasters, authorities and NGO partners. The radio spots have been produced in more than 20 different languages.

The evaluation shows that the campaign has become something more than radio since theatre and school activities have become integral parts of the project. Hundreds of children have been involved in the production and broadcast of the show and many thousands have participated in its contests and public recordings.

Presenters, journalists and technicians from more than 90 radio stations have been trained to host the show. The stories are appreciated by both children and adults. The identification factor is high and children can relate the stories directly to their own lives. The messages give children courage to seek support from adults and to look for solutions to their problems. Listening children gain knowledge, which they pass on to others by discussing what they have heard with their families and friends. Hearing other young people talk on the radio encourages and motivates children to participate themselves or in other ways make their voices heard. Children who have participated in production and broadcast of the radio programmes have acquired a range of new skills, including communication and vocational skills. They are often empowered to take on new roles and responsibilities in their communities. Parents and other adults are starting to change their attitudes and value children as actors in the communities, the report says.

Furthermore, the campaign has contributed to breaking taboos surrounding excision and to raise the awareness about issues such as girls' education, discrimination of disabled children and ill-treatment of step-children.

The report shows that the impact of the project is particularly strong when it is implemented directly in the communities and involves young people directly through mobile radio stations, listening clubs or as an integrated part of Plan's advocacy work.

In sum, the project has greatly exceeded its planned outputs and original scope, according to the report, which also includes recommendations for media initiatives by other organisations.

- Sauti ya Watoto wa Dida (Give Children a Voice), Kenya and Tanzania

In this video magazine project in Kenya and Tanzania children are involved in the preparation and production of each film, both in front of and behind the camera. Each film focuses on an issue chosen by the children, including child labour, early marriage and street children.

- Rights of the Child, Malawi

*Rights of the Child* is a radio programme in Malawi, in partnership with Malawi Broadcasting Corporation and funded by UNICEF. Children produce radio shows about their rights.

- Agami (Future), Bangladesh

*Agami* is a weekly television show in Bangladesh broadcast by BTV, the national public network. Children host the shows and talk about issues relevant to their lives. The show reaches millions of viewers.

- Children Have Something to Say, India

*Children Have Something to Say* is a video project in India, which involves young people in creating short films (documentary, drama-documentary and animation) focusing on child rights. The stories are selected by the children themselves and relate to issues that affect their lives: child labour, child abuse, health and environmental issues and many others concerning the violation of the rights of children. The project won the One World Media Award for Special Achievement in a contest in the U.K. that recognises excellence in communication about the wider world through television, radio, print and new media.

#### **Evaluation**

*Children Have Something to Say: Video Project in India* is an evaluation report submitted to Plan India in 2003 and written by Sarah McNeill and Mimi Brazeau with the participation of three youth evaluators. (The report is available at, e.g., <http://www.iicrd.org>)

*Children Have Something to Say* was initiated by Plan India in 1999 and funded by the Plan National Office in the Netherlands. It had in 2003 been implemented in collaboration with eleven local NGO partners from seven states in India. The project is a (still on-going) children's media development project in involving young people, usually 14-18 years of age. A very high percentage of the project is child led, the evaluation report says.

The overall objective of the video project is to promote child rights and provide a platform from which the voice of youth can reach out to adults. More than 20 workshops, usually 20 days each, had been organized when the report was written. The workshops enable young people to reflect on and analyse various situations and circumstances faced by children in their local communities. The children spend time on researching stories and learning how to present a case study in a logical and

interesting storyline. Workshops also provide them with basic technical skills in the use of video camera and sound recording to present their story to the public by means of a short film.

The report found that the way this project enables children to have so much input to the final product makes it a special example of good practice. The project demonstrated that children have the ability to produce high quality films with minimal – though vital – assistance from professional filmmakers.

Thirty-six films had then been produced – all from the perspective of the child. According to the report, the films create a vivid, shocking and very moving picture of children's experience of childhood. The films were screened in communities and at training sessions for community workers. The messages targeted adults with the aim of sensitising parents, community leaders and government authorities about child rights issues in order that they will take action to improve the situation of children in India and respect the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The report further says that the project's impact is certain on child participants, parents, NGO partners and viewers. The experience also provides children with the confidence and skills to become a productive force as potential partners in the community's development activities.

In terms of the objectives set out, many outcomes exceeded expectations, the report concludes. In spite of certain weaknesses (which are also dealt with in the publication), the project is said to be a very effective way of putting children's participation in media activity into the service of child rights and be a successful means of making the views and voices of children heard. The report includes recommendations for similar and further work by other countries and organisations.

- Children's Voice, Nepal

The radio project *Children's Voice* produced and broadcast in Nepal has involved more than 100 children. The show aims to promote child rights and child participation.

- Bidang bulilit (Children Are the Stars), Philippines

Since 1999, children in partnership with a local radio station in the Philippines prepare, manage and produce one-hour weekly shows about children's rights, called *Bidang bulilit*. More than three million people listen to the programme.

- Young media clubs, Viet Nam

Since 1998, hundreds of children in Viet Nam have been trained in journalism including radio broadcasting on the initiative of Plan.

- Child media projects, Latin America

Since 1999, close to 2,000 children have been involved in producing radio programmes, videos and printed materials promoting the rights of the child in Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Haiti, Guatemala and Dominican Republic.

- Comunicando os direitos das crianças (Communicating Children's Rights), Brazil

In Brazil, young people are trained by professional radio workers to produce programmes. The project is run in partnership with a local NGO called the Centro das Mulheres do Cabo (Cabo Women's Center).

- Caja magica (Magic Box), Colombia

*Caja magica* is a magazine produced for and by children in Colombia.

- Aquí los chicos (Here We Are), Ecuador

In Ecuador a production team of 40 children, supported by a network of 300 community reporters, prepare and edit reports on child rights issues for a weekly live radio programme titled *Aquí los chicos*.

### ● **Africa Animated!**, <http://portal.unesco.org>

*Africa Animated!* is a series of cartoon productions in which young people from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda are trained in multimedia animation techniques and then produce their own cartoons. Despite efforts by regional broadcasters and the audiovisual community in Africa, children's programmes in Africa and in particular animated cartoons are mostly imported from abroad. In order to address this lack of local content production, UNESCO launched *Africa Animated!* in 2004, an initiative that assembles resources and expertise for the production of children's animated cartoons in Africa. The initiative was started in collaboration with specialized partners such as the SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation), Union of National Radio and Television Organisations of Africa (URTNA), the National Film and Television Institute of Ghana (NAFTI) and the Southern African Broadcasting Association (SABA).

### ● **Curious Minds, Ghana**

A group of young people from 8 to 18 who are part of the Children and Youth in Broadcasting/Child Survival and Development Action Club are producing a radio programme called *Curious Minds* in Ghana, broadcast by Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. Children act as presenters and producers of the show under the supervision of a professional journalist who coordinates the activities of the group. The purpose of the programme is to help make Ghana's citizens aware of issues related to children's rights. Two radio programmes per week are broadcast on national radio, one in English, the other in Ga. Some programmes involve resource people, some involve only the children framing the discussions from their perspective.

*Source:* <http://www.comminit.com/experiences/pdskdv42003/experiences-1327.html>

● **Mundo sem segredos (A World of Secrets), Mozambique,** <http://www.mediasupport.org>

*Mundo sem segredos* is a 30 minutes' children's radio programme in Mozambique that addresses the issue of HIV/AIDS. Media Support Partnership, a British non-governmental organisation, is training children to participate in the programming and presenting the radio shows for their peers. The project is funded by DANIDA (the Danish government). Since 2004, the weekly programmes are broadcast bilingually through Rádio Moçambique provincial stations in Portuguese and local languages. They contain a mix of interviews, drama, live reports, testimonials, music, and poetry. Children are encouraged to participate through letters, phone calls, and competitions. A weekly counselling session with a trained counsellor provides advice and solutions to listeners' questions or problems. Partners are the Ministry of Education and Rádio Moçambique.

● **Radio Infantil, Mozambique,** <http://www.ibis.dk>

*Radio Infantil* is a participatory children's radio programme in the community of Alto Molócuè in Mozambique. Run by the Danish NGO Ibis, the programme explores issues affecting children including child rights, HIV/AIDS, health, and education. The programmes are in Portuguese and Lomwé. The slogan of *Radio Infantil* is 'a voz da criança – a voz do futuro' (the voice of the child is the voice of the future). The project also supports the development of new media initiatives by providing training to radio journalists from Mozambique to produce more children's programmes.

● **Soul Buddyz, South Africa,** <http://www.soulcity.org.za>

In 2005, the third *Soul Buddyz* series was launched by Soul City, Institute for Health and Development, in South Africa and broadcast by SABC1. *Soul Buddyz* is a real-life television drama specifically developed to empower 8- to 12-year-olds and the adults in their lives. Each time it is broadcast it has been the most popular television programme in the country for children.

With strong real-life stories that affect children, their parents and their teachers, the programme delivers the positive message that all irrespective of age should – and can – talk about issues. It also breaks the stereotype that children are incapable of making informed choices and reinforces the message that kids can be active citizens in society. After the first two series, 1,900 *Soul Buddyz* Clubs had been set up across the country and had attracted 12,000 children country-wide who are interested in being agents for social change in their communities and in their own lives.

Additionally, the series *Buddyz on the Move* has been developed by Soul City in partnership with SABC Education and with support of the South African government.

Several evaluation and audience research reports with children and adults about the programme series are available on Soul City's website.

### ● **Talking Drum Studio, Sierra Leone**, <http://www.sfcg.org>

This project, supported by the NGO Search for Common Ground, Washington D.C., U.S.A., is also implemented in Liberia, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi, Macedonia and Ukraine. Talking Drum Studio creates and airs radio programmes with different formats that are designed to encourage peace and reconciliation. The radio stations collaborate with government agencies and local and international organisations. The show *Golden Kids News* in Sierra Leone brings together children of mixed backgrounds to serve as reporters, producers, and actors. This show creates a forum for children to share their hopes and fears, advocate on various issues, and discuss events related to war.

### ● **Children's Media Centre, Kyrgyzstan**, [www.neboscreb.kg](http://www.neboscreb.kg)

The Children's Media Centre (CMC) works in audio-visual and print media and the productions are done exclusively by children and young people. The project aims at promoting the child's self-expression. The members of the CMC study the problems faced by children and young people in Kyrgyzstan and evaluate their observations from the children's own point of view. In addition to that, the members spread information about child rights in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CMC members work on many different topics highlighting the problems of youth, including child protection, gender issues and HIV/AIDS. CMC produces videos and print media articles about homeless children, HIV infected people and women's rights violations.

### ● **Little Masters, China**, [www.xzrcn.com](http://www.xzrcn.com)

*Little Masters* is a national magazine in China, written, edited and produced by children under the age of 15. The project has been running for over 20 years and is considered to be a successful partnership between children and adults. Initially developed as a newspaper, *Little Masters* has been adapted to other media such as radio, television and most recently the web.

### ● **ANKURODGAM, India**

Koraput is one of the developing districts of Orissa in India. The monthly magazine *ANKURODGAM* in Koraput, carrying exclusive contributions of news and views from children, is an initiative of UNICEF. Children contribute their views on issues such as health, education and sanitation in their villages. There are now 100 child reporters from 10 villages in the district – and the plans are to reach every village and every child.

Children are provided with diaries where they write their daily observations. They also interview people and visitors and interact with officials on the development in their villages. This has developed children's confidence to ask questions – they want to be

equipped with more knowledge and information. This, in turn, has further strengthened their social belongingness and they have been participating actively in all possible developmental activities.

*Source:* Chelapila Santakar, Orissa, India, in an announcement on <http://www.crin.org/resources/infodetail.asp?id=6925>

### ● **Voice of the Children, the Philippines,** <http://www.ecpat.net>

In the Philippines, the most popular medium is radio, especially in remote areas where newspapers and television are not available. Every Sunday morning since 1999, a 30-minute radio programme – *Tingog sa Kabataan* (Voice of the Children) – is being aired on a local AM band radio station in the province of Cebu. It is the first and only radio programme in the area of Central Visayas that is produced *by* children (aged 9 to 18) *for* children. Its primary goal is to let children with experience of violence and abuse talk about and advocate for changes related to issues that affect them.

The programme, which started as a joint project of five NGOs with ECPATCebu as the lead implementing agency, is much listened to and received an award from, among others, the Association of Broadcasters of the Philippines. The BBC, U.K., considers it one of the best practices in the combat against commercial sexual exploitation.

The project has a direct effect on the children and youth who produce the programme, in the form of renewed self-assurance and more participation at school and in the community. Indirectly, the programme serves other victims of child abuse, helping them to recover from their own experiences.

Children's way to participation in the radio production, as well as necessary factors for replicating the project, are described more in detail on the above-mentioned website, where the full report of the project can be accessed.

### ● **PYALARA, Palestine,** <http://www.pyalara.org>

Pyalara – Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation – is a communication and media-oriented Palestinian NGO established for Palestinian youth. *The Youth Times*, which gives space to contributions from young journalists between 14 and 25 years of age, has developed into a 24-page bilingual Palestinian youth paper, published on a monthly basis. On average, a total of 20,000 copies are distributed per month to 100,000–120,000 readers. The paper was established in 1997 and is considered the first paper for Palestinian youth to be published in Palestine with a nationwide distribution.

Since December 2000, PYALARA has also produced, with the support of UNICEF and the cooperation of Palestine TV, a weekly two-hour TV programme called *Alli Sowtak* (Speak Up) with much representation of youth. An average of 300,000 Palestinian children and teenagers watch every episode, each of which has a major theme, for example: education, children's talents, health, and children's awareness concerning their various rights.

● **Cámara ! Ahí nos vemos, Mexico**, [www.rostrosyvoces.org](http://www.rostrosyvoces.org)

This project, launched in 2001, uses video production as an educational tool for young people, especially those living in the margin to learn about their communities, their peers and themselves. The programme *iCámara! ahí nos vemos* which has engaged several thousands of young people, is implemented by Rostros y Voces and is part of the global programme Make a Connection that operates in eighteen countries.

● **Sisichakunaq Pukllaynin, Peru**, [www.pukllasunchis.org](http://www.pukllasunchis.org)

Sisichakunaq Pukllaynin is a partnership between several schools and two radio stations in Cusco, Peru, that produces regular programming for and with children.

● **Just Think, U.S.A.**, <http://www.justthink.org>

Just Think is a non-profit organisation supported by foundations and government grants located in the United States. The organisation targets under-resourced populations from low-income communities teaching young people media literacy skills, critical thinking and creative media production. This is done by teaching and producing media arts in- and after school. The aim is 'to teach young people to lead healthy, responsible, independent lives in a culture highly impacted by media'. The website provides many examples of young people's own media production and presentations of the different programmes conducted by the organisation.

One example of the programmes is the Family Media Forum, a workshop involving children and their parents aiming at promoting the dialogue between them around media and media issues. Media habits of the youth are surveyed as well as the concerns of the parents. Some of the different themes of the workshops have been body image, media violence, culture/identity/diversity and video games. The students create their own media production and share it with their parents and there is also a package of activities and resources for use at home.

● **Educational Video Center, U.S.A.**, <http://www.evc.org>

Educational Video Center (EVC) is a not-for-profit media arts center teaching documentary video production and media analysis to youth, educators and community organisers in New York City. The centre's work is financed by public and private foundations, corporate and individual donors, and earned income. Since 1984, the EVC has used video and multimedia as means to develop the literacy, research, public speaking and work preparation skills of, in particular, at-risk-youth. By producing documentaries on issues from their everyday life these youth with social and/or academic difficulties

develop critical thinking skills and group collaboration. Many of the youth produced documentaries have also been broadcast on national U.S. television networks.

Publications, classroom curricula, production handbooks, research papers, viewer guides based on their work can be found on the website.

### ● **Let's Talk Children**, <http://www.unicef.org>

*Let's Talk Children* is a global radio service from UNICEF, focusing on the health, education, equality and protection of children. There are many different programmes featuring news and in-depth stories about, with and by children and young people around the world.

### ● **A summarising report**

*What Works in Youth Media. Case Studies from Around the World* by Sheila Kinkade and Christy Macy 2003 and published by International Youth Foundation, based in Baltimore, M.D., U.S.A., reports on

- how young people in Mexico learn to see their community with new eyes through the lens of a video camera (see the project *Cámara ! Ahí nos vemos* mentioned above)
- how young reporters of Children's Express U.K. express their views while learning life skills and has forged long term relationships with *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, Sky News, the BBC, and numerous other media outlets
- how Chinese children under the age of 15 write, edit and produce a national magazine, *Little Masters* (see also above how this project has developed into other media)
- how *Trendsetters* in Zambia, a magazine by and for youth is dedicated to preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS
- how *Troç* ('straight talk'), a youth-run television programme in Albania, educates the public about critical issues facing children
- how the Young Journalists Group, Viet Nam, seeks to engage their generation and through its twice-weekly broadcasts reaches over 30 million radio listeners
- how *Youth Outlook*, United States, is chronicling life through the eyes and voices of young people.

According to the report, the case studies show that youth media programmes such as these, where young people's voices are being heard, promote children's and young people's personal growth and development. For many young people, the experience they gain in analysing and presenting news make them more informed consumers of the news they receive, and more active citizens in their communities and nations. The young people also learn about critical issues, such as education, the environment, human rights, child abuse, the growing divide between rich and poor, and the impact

of globalisation. A strong thread running through the conversations with young people involved in youth media projects was also, the report says, that they were involved in an activity that was interesting, that engaged them creatively and intellectually, and that could make a difference.

The foreword quotes Sandy Close, Executive Editor of the Pacific News Service, who for years has supported youth-led media projects in the United States. She underscores the growing 'hunger' of today's young people to be visible in the media culture. 'It is as if these new media outlets have become the bonding tissue that holds young people together. Being visible – expressing oneself and being read or seen by others – means you exist.' That 'hunger' among young people to have a voice has coincided with a revolution in technology, and the result has been a dramatic increase in youth media projects around the world (p. 8).

### 3. Further Resources

#### ● **The Communication Initiative**, <http://www.comminit.com>

The Communication Initiative (CI) network is an online space for sharing the experiences of, and building bridges between, the people and organisations engaged in or supporting communication as a fundamental strategy for economic and social development and change.

The CI has, among other things, an extensive website (of summarised information – 17,000-plus pages – related to communication for development) which includes facts, evaluations, planning methodologies, change theories, programme descriptions, articles, reports and documents, and much more. The CI also releases several e-publications.

'Children', 'young people' and 'media' are special entries on the website and in the e-publications – one can find many examples of children and young people in Africa, Asia and Latin America taking part in and producing media communication for social change.

Currently, the CI network process includes: The Communication Initiative – in English, with a worldwide overview and focus; La Iniciativa de Comunicación – in Spanish, with a worldwide overview and focus on the Latin American experience and context; and Soul Beat Africa – in English, with a focus on the African experience and context.

The CI is a partnership of development organisations seeking to support advances in the effectiveness and scale of communication interventions for positive international development.

#### ● **The Child Rights Information Network**, <http://www.crin.org>

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN), established in 1995, is a global network that disseminates information about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and child rights amongst non-governmental organisations, United Nations agencies, inter-governmental organisations, educational institutions, and other child rights experts. CRIN's objectives are, among others, to support and promote the implementation of the Convention.

CRIN is supported, and receives funding from, Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children UK, UNICEF, Plan International and the International Save the Children Alliance. Project funding is also received from the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worldvision.

CRIN has a membership of more than 1,400 organisations in over 130 countries. About 85 per cent of the members are NGOs and 65 per cent are in the Africa, Asia and Latin America. In addition to working with member organisations, CRIN services

the information needs of 2,500 organisations and individuals who have joined CRIN's mailing lists.

On CRIN's website and mailing lists, there is also information on activities and research as regards media, for example projects involving children's and young people's own media production.

● **MAGIC**, <http://www.unicef.org/magic>

Another network and data bank is MAGIC (Media Activities and Good Ideas by, with and for Children) on UNICEF's website. The associated network, which was set up for professionals and organisations working in the field of children and media to share information and ideas, communicates through the e-mail group Young People's Media Network.

● **INFOYOUTH**, <http://portal.unesco.org>

As mentioned previously (see the section 'Media Literacy for Children, Young People, Adults and Media Educators'), UNESCO has initiated The INFOYOUTH Network. Among the 2006 activities is 'Youth and Media. A UNESCO workshop in Beirut', where students met from Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Tunisia and the Palestinian Territories for a workshop to learn more about media, and their role in it. A 2005 activity was the opening of a children's and youth's library in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The library – operated by Impact Library, an Ethiopian NGO – aims at offering young visitors a range of useful and interactive learning activities that incorporate multimedia tools.