



المجلس الوطني لشؤون الأسرة
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR FAMILY AFFAIRS



unicef

ASSESSMENT REPORT SUMMARY



**JOURNALISTIC
PRACTICES
ON CHILD
PROTECTION
ISSUES IN JORDAN**

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PROTECTION**
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Table of Contents

Key Roles of Media	6
Summary of Findings	8
Capacity Attributes	9
Capacity Challenges	11
Respondents who have poor or less than satisfactory knowledge on the following issues	13
Attitude towards certain social and child protection issues	17
Practice towards certain child protection issues	21
Status of trainings and rewards received	25
Perception of Journalists on the state of news media in Jordan	27
Membership, associations and network	29
Journalist Quotes	30
Recommendations	35



In partnership with the government and the civil society organizations, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is leading the efforts to combat violence against children in Jordan.

Partnering with media, especially with the journalists' community, is at the heart of this approach.

Key Roles of Media

- Media can advocate for the implementation of laws and policies that protect children.
- Media can help children and adolescents manage risks and challenges by promoting safe practices.
- Media is instrumental in changing attitudes, deep-seated norms and cultural practices and social norms that encourage violence and discrimination against children.
- Media can protect children's rights by raising awareness of prevailing issues and ensuring accountability of those responsible for preventing and responding to instances of violence against children.
- Media can become advocates for change and help strengthen the overall protective environment for children.
- Media can instigate a social movement, through use of their respective spheres, where every child in Jordan, irrespective of cast, creed or religion, is safe from violence, abuse and exploitation.



Media can advocate for the implementation of laws and policies that protect children.

- Media can help in highlighting causes and solutions when reporting on violence, abuse and exploitation against children.
- Media can be of little help if they lack understanding of the true extent of and dynamics associated with child protection issues. Their lack of appreciation of the rights of children can, advertently or inadvertently, increase the vulnerability of children by strengthening harmful cultural norms and practices.
- The voices of journalists are of little help if they fail to report on issues of child protection in a manner that protects children and promotes their rights. For being advocates of child rights, journalists themselves need to adhere and uphold to an extent possible the ethical standards for reporting on children.
- Journalists must consider the interest of the child as supreme and minimize harm and risk to children by carefully considering the consequences of their actions.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Reporting on children and young people has its special challenges. For instance, in some cases, the act of reporting on children places them or other children at risk of retribution or stigmatization. Furthermore, numerous studies and assessments have found that media can subtly induce society to justify violence against women and children, by focusing unduly on assumed 'reasons' or 'causes' for such an act. Media can also influence individuals' behaviors and has the potential to either transform or reinforce existing societal norms and traditions.

In order to improve the quality of reporting and better engagement with the news media, in particular the journalist community, UNICEF Jordan in partnership with the National Council for Family Affairs assessed the skills and knowledge of local journalists on issues related to violence against children.

UNICEF has developed a set of principles and guidelines to assist journalists to report on children issues in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner. These guidelines are meant to support the best intentions of ethical reporters, i.e. serving the public interest without compromising the rights of children. In 2013, UNICEF launched a global initiative called #ENDviolence. The initiative builds on growing public consensus that violence against children can no longer be tolerated –and that it can only be stopped by the collective efforts of ordinary citizens, policymakers, governments, stakeholders and media.

Capacity attributes of journalists explored during the qualitative and quantitative assessment are as follows:

Capacity Attributes

Performance Capability

Knowledge and Skills

Environment, Tools and Processes

Incentives, Rewards and Recognition / Motivation

Resources

Organizational Culture

Coordination / Feedback





Knowledge
Attitude
Practice

CAPACITY
CHALLENGES

Respondents who have poor or less than satisfactory knowledge on the following issues



Respondents who have poor or less than satisfactory knowledge on the following issues

“Unfortunately, writing skills in stories on child related issues are weak. Journalists need to learn to bring human-interest element in their writing. Journalists need to know concerned laws and regulation and need to apply convincing arguments in their write-ups.”

Hanan Al Kiswany



58%

61% 54%
Female Male

Children in armed forces

27%

27% 26%
Female Male



Children with disabilities

27%

29% 26%
Female Male



Discrimination against children

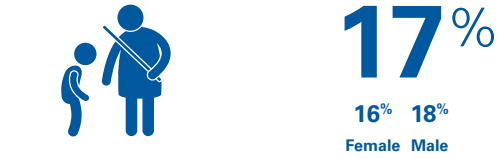
39%

41% 36%
Female Male



Juvenile justice

Respondents who have poor or less than satisfactory knowledge on the following issues



Corporal punishment



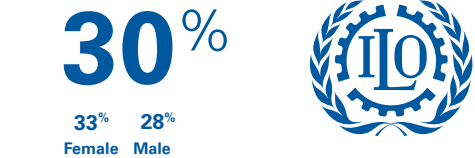
Child marriage



Child labor, and its worst forms

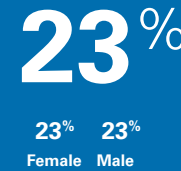
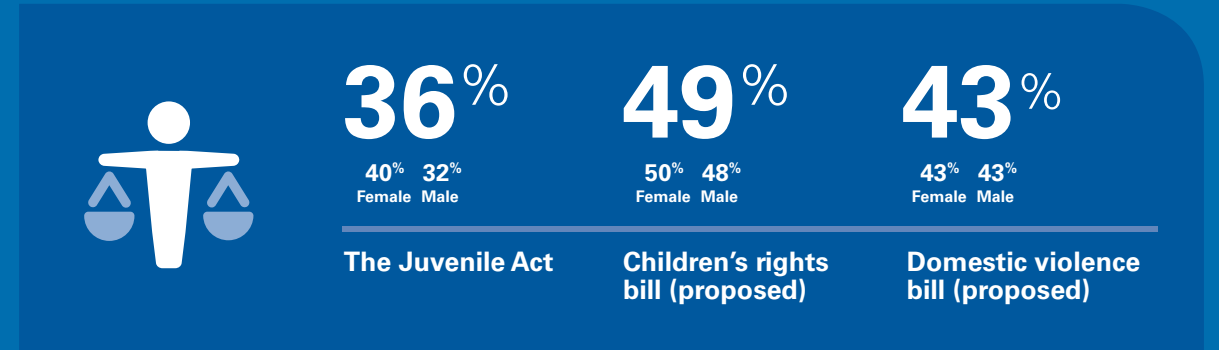


Human trafficking act

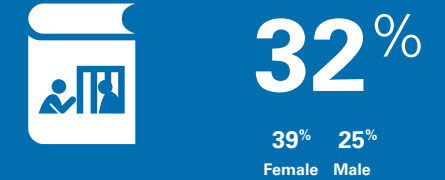


ILO conventions 138 and 182

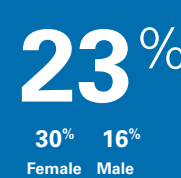
Respondents who have poor or less than satisfactory knowledge on the following issues



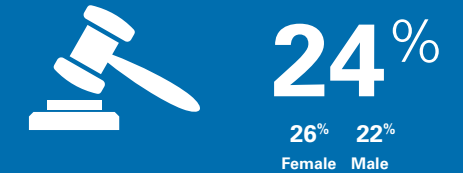
Convention on the rights of the child



Penal code, provisions related to children



The labor code



Jordan nationality law

Attitude towards certain social and child protection issues



Attitude towards certain social and child protection issues

24%

17% 31%
Female Male



Tend to agree that it is
OK for parents to discipline their children with physical punishment

“Media in general is not keen in covering such [issues concerning children] topics, especially radio. They think topics related to protection of children or women rights do not sell well and not have the audience.”

Rawan Khrais

15%

9% 20%
Female Male



Tend to agree that **a person who commits rape should not be punished** if he agrees to marry the girl he abused



12%

13% 12%
Female Male

Tend to agree that **a girl may be married off at an early age that is 15** if it ensures her security and well being

12%

10% Female 13% Male



Tend to agree that a person **should not be punished harshly** if the girl he abused is of immoral character

16%

9% Female 22% Male



Tend to agree that **a teacher has the right to use physical violence against bullies** who are difficult to control

“When writing on child rights issues, access to information is the foremost challenge and the society itself sometimes is reluctant to speak out on sensitive topics.”

Safaa Amer Al Ramhi

24%

25% Female 24% Male



Tend to agree that it is **ok for children** under the age of 14 **to be in paid labor**, under extreme poverty

100%

47%

45% Female 49% Male



Tend to agree that **unattended street children are picked up** until they are bailed out by their parents/guardians

37%

30% Female 44% Male



Tend to agree that only parents are the best judges of the best interest of their children

“If you ask enough people, you may come up with a certain guideline those people follow but I don’t think it is written down and I don’t think it is formalized and I doubt if journalists follow any kind of international standards.”

Ramsey G. Tesdell



Practice towards certain child protection issues

Practice towards certain child protection issues

31%

28% 33%
Female Male



Never or rarely reported on **violence against children**

“As compared to neighboring countries, the situation is much better in Jordan but the journalism lacks professionalism and suffers from self-censorship.”

Saad Hattar

70%

67% 74%
Female Male



Filed at least **one story on children** in past one month



3%

4% 2%
Female Male

Never or rarely covered **social issues** in reporting

“Journalists lack consciousness of many of the sensitive issues and you can see that in how they cover human-interest subjects in which voices of the people are missing.”

Mohammad Al-Fdilat

4%

5% Female 3% Male



Never keep the best **interest of the child and women** a primary consideration



4%

4% Female 5% Male

Never make certain that children are comfortable and able to tell their **story without pressure**

17%

2% Female 31% Male



Never preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of victims



11%

11% Female 12% Male

Occasionally **bribe a child** with money goods or promises of help **for an interview**



10%

9% Female 12% Male

Never change the name and obscure the visual identity of a child **victim of sexual abuse** or exploitation

12%

12% Female 12% Male



Never change the name and obscure the visual identity of a child **perpetrator of sexual abuse** or exploitation

7%

7% Female 7% Male



Never obtain permission for **taking pictures or making video** or voice recording



19%

23% Female 16% Male

Who **interview** women and children **in state of distress**

Never ensure **parents/guardian** supervision when interviewing a child

20%

25% Female 16% Male



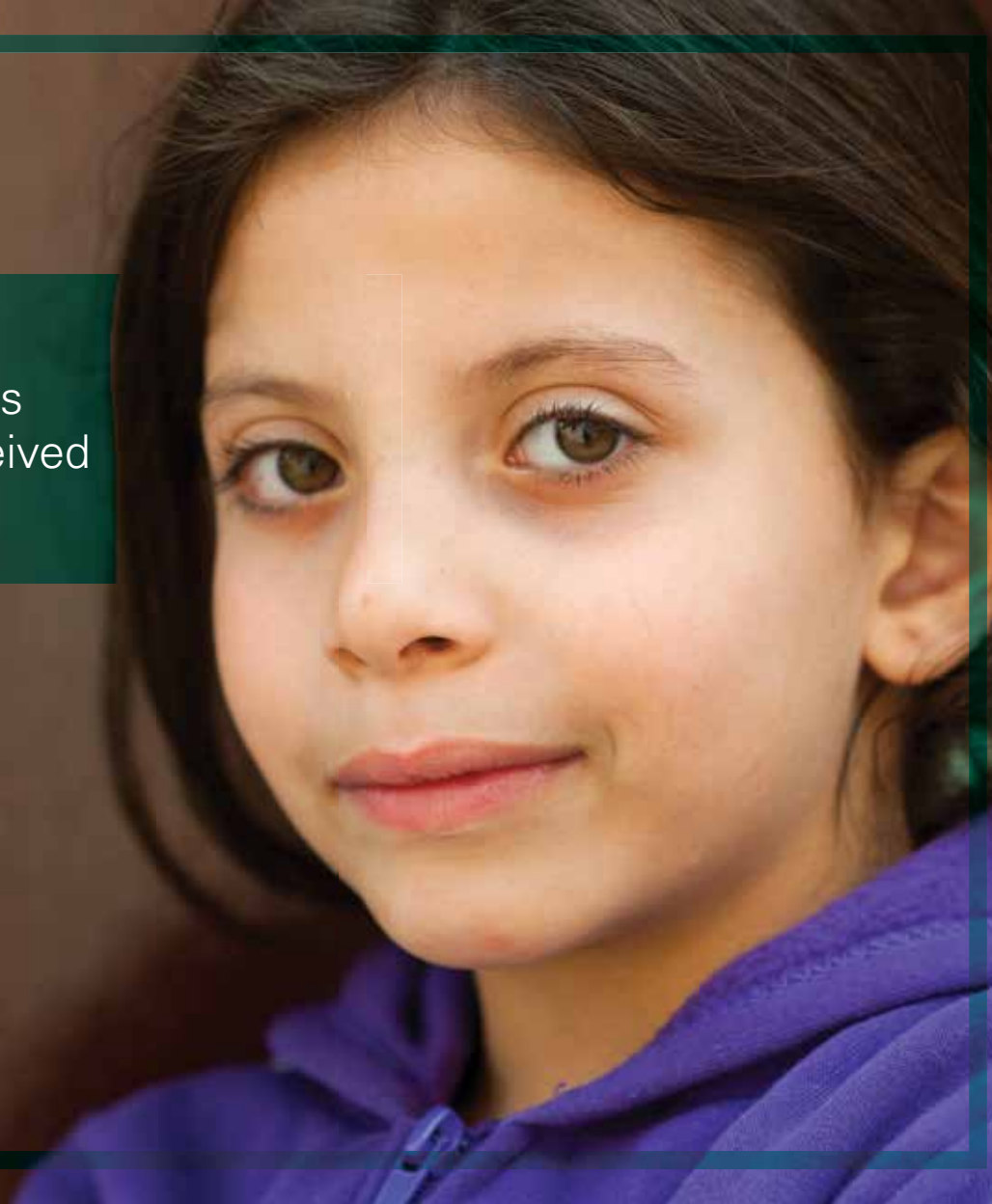
Never obtain **informed consent** and assent before interviewing women/children

16%

18% Female 15% Male



Status of trainings and rewards received



Status of trainings and rewards received

49%

49% Female 49% Male



Don't have any formal education in journalism

18%

26% Female 10% Male



Rated themselves as poor in data journalism

52%

55% Female 48% Male

Never rewarded by their organization



24%

35% Female 13% Male

Don't aspire for any journalists' awards



50%

64% Female 36% Male

Received only one training in past three years

50%

57% Female 43% Male

Who thinks that the trainings they received were not helpful at all

9%

11% Female 8% Male

Don't have any specialized training in journalism

34%

39% Female 30% Male

Whose news organization never arranged training

Perception of Journalists on the state of news media in Jordan



Perception of Journalists on the state of news media in Jordan

22%

22% Female
22% Male



Child protection came out as **most preferred** news beat

50%

42% Female
58% Male



Politics came out as **most covered** news beat

39%

39% Female
39% Male



Stories are generally **sensationalized** in news media

54%

57% Female
51% Male



Popular stories are reported more

53%

53% Female
52% Male



As news media has grown, the **quality of reporting** has deteriorated



50%

47% Female
54% Male

There is **self-censorship** on news media



42%

47% Female
37% Male

News media cover what readers / viewers / **listeners want**

Membership,
associations
and network



“I think there must be a network of journalists who are dedicated to human rights and gender issues; there are a few really good journalists who write on these issues, you can bring those people with you. You need to talk to the chief editors about the importance of child rights subject.”

Nadine Nimri

55%

65% 46%
Female Male



Don't have membership in
local network of journalists

75%

81% 69%
Female Male



Don't have membership in any
international network of journalists

53%

56% 51%
Female Male



Don't have membership in
Jordan press association

13%

16% 10%
Female Male



Not willing to join a network of journalists on
children's issues



JOURNALIST

QUOTES

"Journalists do not care about the sentiments of families of the victims or survivors when they write about human rights issues or those that concern children."

Linda Zaki Al Maayeh

"Sometime they [journalists] think it is news to publish the details of a child victim or when for instance they are writing about sexual violence sometime they sensationalize it or blame the victim."

Nadine Nimri

JOURNALIST

"In web-based news, while most of the journalists have university degrees but they lack experience and their education is not usually related to journalism."

Abdallah Alroud

"They [Government] like to play the fatherly role and want things to be less confusing for the people, it is also because of patriarchy...they don't like people to be concerned of their security so news is managed in a way that it doesn't escalate the outcomes of [such a] news."

Aroub Soubh

"We have more competition now and the freedom of expression has improved [but] we lack professionalism."

Rand Gharaibeh

"There are no training centers attached to news media organizations, there are no standards and conventional teaching in journalism is outdated and above that when a new journalist starts working it is most likely to be under an editor who also lacks professionalism."

Saad Hattar



"Journalists today are after advertisement and this affects the quality of their reporting."

Hanan Al Kiswany

QUOTES

"If I want to write about a very specific local story, no one will be interested. However if you write about a political situation that is connected with Syria and Iraq for instance, you're going to get more hits."

Rabi Hamamsah

"Most of the stories in news media in Jordan follow the same old pattern."

Majida Hassan Ashour



"I see a big difference now, when I look back most of the sensitive issues were taboo like sexual violence against women, child molestation, rape or incest and no one really wanted to talk about these issues."

Rana Hussein



"Most journalists do not have enough income to survive and be motivated about going extra mile to produce quality work. Some newspapers have even stopped paying regular salaries."

Anwar Mousa Alzyadat



"Generally, the media is 'neutral,' in a sense that it takes pro-government, pro-state perspective."

Ramsey G. Tesdell



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of the Assessment, following set of recommendations are proposed by the journalists for short- and long-term engagements with journalists community and news media in Jordan.

In the short-run, and through sustained engagement, the following set of activities are recommended:

1. Engage editors from the very onset of any intervention with journalists and the news media sector. This will help create their buy-in as well as ownership and support for such an initiative.
2. Help and assist a small group of journalists, men and women to be specialized in child-rights based reporting. This will be manageable and also help establish child-rights based reporting as a specialised beats.
3. Increase journalists understanding of legal frameworks, either in view of the international conventions and treaties or the national laws, in relation to child rights.
4. Invest in creating and sustaining a network of dedicated journalists from all sectors of news media who have interest in and willingness towards contributing to addressing the issues of violence against children in Jordan from within their respective spheres. A network's strength is its membership, which is defined by how well knitted and vibrant the community is.
5. Announce an inter-agency award on rights-based reporting.
6. Increase access of journalists to published material. This may be made a function of a network created on protection and promotion of child rights to transform relevant published material into more

readable documents, such as by creating factsheets, vignettes and summaries of the reports. This will help advancing the agenda of protection and promotion of child rights to a great extent by highlighting contemporary challenges faced by the Jordanian society and agenda setting around those for policy reforms and resource mobilization.

In the long run, and in the perspective of broad-based capacity needs of journalists in Jordan, following set of activities are recommended:

7. Build the capacity of journalists engaged with online news media. Develop a capacity strengthening package that entails short-term trainings on basic elements of principles and elements of journalism as well as more in-depth orientation to journalistic, i.e. ethical journalism, and thematic subject, child-rights reporting.
8. Organize trainings for young journalists on child protection issues, and what is that the news media can do to respond to this challenge.
9. Partner with the academia and training organizations that have courses on journalism and media, for promotion of specialized reporting; including child-rights based reporting. This will also help introduce aspiring and young media professionals to ethical guidelines and practices from the very onset. Such a partnership will also help sustain effort to instil knowledge and skills for practicing ethical journalism, and making it norm than an occasional consideration.
10. Develop a code of conduct for journalists or standard ethical guidelines.
11. Conduct case studies of successful journalists from Jordan who made reporting on social subjects their identify and form of recognition to build motivation and promote reporting on child-rights issues.



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