



المجلس العربي لطفولة والتنمية
Arab Council for Childhood and Development

Media and Addressing the Issues of Children's Rights in Arab Countries (Field Study)

“Executive Summary”

2013

Field Study
Media and Addressing the Issues of
Children's Rights in Arab Countries

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Acknowledgement

The Arab Council for Childhood and Development (ACCD) expresses its thankfulness and appreciation to AGFUND for its support to this study, and its gratitude to this respectful developmental organization for all its effective and synergistic support to ACCD's mission.

ACCD is also grateful to the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States (Department of Women, Family, Children and the Pan Arab Project for Family Health) for its technical and material support for the completion of this study, in addition to printing it and launching it on the Arab level.

ACCD advances its appreciation as well to all who contributed to the completion of this work, institutions and individuals, with special thanks to Dr. Adel Abdul Ghaffar, the senior expert of the study and his associate research team who completed this scientific work. ACCD also extends warm thanks to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Iraq and the National Commission for Childhood in Saudi Arabia, for their cooperation in the completion of this field study, and for our dear sons and daughters who shared their opinions clearly and transparently about what the Arab media broadcasts for them. Finally, all thanks and appreciation to the teams at the executive parties that contributed to the coordination, follow-up and facilitation of this important scientific work.

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NSBN: 17083/2013

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ACCD and its partners.**

The future of the Arab nation lies in its success in developing Arab children soundly, since nations' prosperity and progress are measured by the extent of their interest in and care for their children; the more expanded the space allocated for children on a society's intellectual horizon, the more it reflects that this society focuses on the future, to which communities cross through investment in human development.

Prince Talal Bin Abdul Aziz

The President of ACCD

Partners



Arab Council for Childhood and Development (ACCD): an Arab non-governmental development organization working in the field of childhood development, founded in 1987 upon the initiative of HRH Prince Talal Bin Abdul Aziz, ACCD's President, and a resolution issued by the League of Arab States.

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Arab Gulf Program for Development (AGFUND) is a regional organization based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, founded in 1980, upon the initiative of HRH Prince Talal Bin Abdul Aziz, AGFUND's President, and with the support and endorsement of leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Countries, as a contribution to the efforts aiming at achieving development.

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Women, Family and Childhood Department; Social Affairs Sector, General Secretariat of the League of Arab States: The Women, Family and Childhood Department, subordinate to the Social Affairs Sector at the General Secretariat of the Arab League, the Technical Secretariat of the Arab Women's Committee, the Arab Childhood Committee and the Committee of the Arab family, which have been established by the resolutions of the Arab Council of Social Affairs Ministers. The Department is divided into three sections; Women, Family and Childhood, where their functions are integrated in addressing issues related to women, family and childhood.

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PAN Arab Project for Family Health Project (PAPFAM); a regional project implemented by the Field and Social Studies and Surveys Unit, at the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in cooperation with a number of Arab and international organizations. The project aims to provide the detailed information and data necessary to build an Arab database on the members of the Arab family to help policy-makers and planners in policy-making and developing holistic programs.

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Introduction

The Arab Council for Childhood and Development (ACCD) works under the patronage and presidency of HRH Prince Talal Bin Abdul Aziz, with a view to create an Arab environment supportive of the rights of children in development, participation and integration by adopting a comprehensive child rights based approach and achieving enlightened citizenship and social justice, in order to build a democratic society based on the principles of social justice, freedom, dignity and capacity building. Stemming from the role media plays in the formation of public opinion and community outreach in general, and guidance to children and family issues in particular, enabling them to defend their rights and participate in the development of their communities, **ACCD, in collaboration with the League of Arab States (Department of Women, Family, Childhood and the Pan Arab Project for Family Health), and with the support of the Arab Gulf Program for Development "AGFUND"**, initiated issuing this Arab study to assess the Arab media addressing child rights issues in six Arab countries: **Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt**. The current study monitors and analyzes the content of Arab media in the field of children's rights in view of the current successive Arab political developments, in which Media plays an influential role, especially that children witnessing these political developments through media, and their involvement thereof expose them to dangers, and constitute in several occasions a flagrant violation of their rights and disregard for their best interests. This study is the first component of a large project that aims to establish a **"Media Observatory for the Arab Child Rights"**, which is implemented by ACCD in cooperation with the League of Arab States and with the support of "AGFUND", in response to the recommendations of the Arab Childhood Committee affiliated to the League of Arab States that endorsed child media as a permanent item on its agenda, in implementation of the recommendations and decisions of the Fourth Arab High-Level Conference on the Rights of the Child (Marrakech, 2010), in line with regional and international initiatives in the field of children media, and, finally, in communicating with the efforts exerted by ACCD and the League of Arab States in order to enhance the role of the Arab media in the dissemination and establishment of children rights' culture.

This Observatory endeavors to be a mechanism meant to monitor and follow-up the Arab media regarding the rights of the child, seeking professionalism to attain

further communication and effectiveness of the Arab media product and its commitment to human rights approach, to rationalization a part thereof based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child; being integrated and consistent, and that its articles are deemed practical indicators to measure monitoring process. In addition this Observatory seeks to be an effective tool in preparing studies, researches, and reports, and developing policies and media plans.

The observatory project consists of several stages; the **first stage** is based on conducting a study on the reality of child media in the Arab world, this study, which serves as a core to the **second stage**, in which the intellectual and operational trends of the observatory are being established. The **third stage** deals with setting media guidelines to support child rights, conducting research and evaluation and forward-looking studies on media and the rights of the child. All these stages will help in the completion of the **fourth stage** where periodic reports are issued to assess media performance of the media in this regard, in addition to organizing training workshops in the areas of monitoring and disseminating the culture of children's rights.

The issuance of this study serves as a road map for the media observatory for child rights, where this study aims to reach a set of professional standards and methodological tools that can be used in the observatory in the future, in addition to providing a future strategy to contribute to media development of children media performance on the Arab level.

Efforts exerted in the preparation of this study, by a distinguished research team of Arab experts and work teams in partners entities, have yielded in providing a **conclusion consisting of three subsidiary studies**: the first deals with assessing the Arab media addressing child rights issues through analyzing a content sample of the material provided to the general public with a sample of Arab media, while the second study covers a survey on a sample of children in a number of Arab countries about what media broadcasting for them, and the third study evaluates the professional environment in which the communicators work in the field of child media in the Arab countries.

The results of this study in its entirety stressed that child rights issues are weakly tackled in the Arab channels under study, as well as the failure to allocate sufficient space of time to review these issues and discuss the reality of the Arab child and his/her related vital issues, in addition to presenting the dimensions of the problems and their proposed solutions. Worth mentioning too is that the largest portion of the programs that addressed the child rights issues have overlooked allowing the children with special needs to participate - whether gifted or disabled - in

expressing and discussing their rights. The study has also indicated the apparent decline in the community's interest in children rights, where children's issues are marginalized, as especially given in the absence of a related agenda and the lack of institutional media policy in this concern.

The study has also presented a set of proposals that aims to stress Arab media's need to seek more depth in dealing with children's issues instead of the current surface approach, with a view to spot solutions to these issues and problems relating to children, with an urgent need to focus on the importance of formulating general guidelines, or code of ethics for media and child rights, to ensure Arab media practices that respect and activate the rights of the Arab child.

We hope that this study, which is the product of three Arab regional organizations, would benefit the researchers, media people and stakeholders, in addition to adding quality to the Arab library in the field of media and child rights. We look forward to subject its recommendations and outputs to implementation, in order to reach an Arab media that advocates for child rights issues.

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Executive Summary

ACCD seeks to establish a media observatory that aims to rationalize the performance of the Arab media in addressing the issues of child rights and orienting the Arab societies thereof. ACCD launches the work of this observatory by conducting the current study, in collaboration with AGFUND and the League of Arab States, to assess the Arab media's addressing the issues of child rights, as well as patterns of children's exposure to media, and their assessment to the way their issues being discussed. This is in addition to examining the professional challenges facing the existing communicators in the field of children media, with a view to draw a future vision that contributes to the development of child media performance on the Arab level.

Objectives of the Study:

This study includes three sub-studies, aiming to:

- Evaluating the addressing of Arab media to child rights issues, through analyzing a sample of television and press contents provided to the general public, with a sample of the Arab media, using qualitative and quantitative analysis.
- Surveying the opinions of a sample of children in a number of Arab countries about the patterns of their exposure to media, and their assessment to the way their issues being addressed.
- Evaluating the professional environment in which the communicators work in the field of child media in the Arab countries.

Methodology of the Study:

This study is based, in its three parts, on Survey Method in order to survey a sample of media content submitted with a sample of the Arab media, as well as a survey to a sample of children in a number of Arab countries, and a survey to a sample of communicators in a number of Arab countries.

Community of the Study:

- The analytical study focused on media contents addressing adults in television channels and newspapers.
- The field study included children in the age group of 12-15 years old, with different demographic characteristics.
- The field study included communicators in child media field in Arab states; at the level of editors, broadcasters, and directors of children television programs, as well as editors and writers of children's book in Arabic newspapers and magazines.

Geographic framework for the analytical and field study:

The study has been applied to several Arab countries, almost representing the different geographic and cultural regions of the Arab nations, including: Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt.

Sample Study:

The study included analysis of the press and television contents in a month time; from 20th September to 20th October 2012, in the six countries selected to conduct the study. The research team has identified the sample channels and programs, according to a set of criteria, namely:

Channels and Television Programs Sample:

Tunisian Channels: Channel Two in Tunisian TV– Hannibal channel.

Algerian Channels: Channel Three in Algerian governmental TV–Al-Nahar News Channel.

Saudi Channels: Saudi Arabia First Channel - MBC1.

Iraqi Channels: Iraqeya Channel Al-Sharqiya.

Lebanese Channels: Lebanon TV- LBC Europe.

Egyptian Channels: Channel One Egyptian TV –Alhayat Channel

Arab Press Sample:

Tunisian newspapers: (Al-Sahafa– Al-Shrouq).

Algerian newspapers: (Al-Khabar–Al-Sha'b).

Saudi newspapers: (Okaz–al-Riyadh).

Iraqi newspapers: (Al-Zaman – Al-Sabah).

Lebanese newspapers: (Al-Nahar – Al-Akhbar).

Egyptian newspapers: (Al-Ahram - Egyptian Today "*Al-Masry Al-Youm*").

Field Study Sample of Children:

The field study of children was conducted on a sample includes 1260 child in the age group 12-15 years, selection of which has considered the representation of selected demographic characteristics and geographical distribution of the children, as follows:

Tunisia Sample: 196 Algeria Sample: 200 Saudi Sample: 263

Iraq Sample: 150 Lebanon Sample: 201 Egypt Sample: 250

Field Study Sample of Communicators in the Field of Child Media:

This field study was conducted on a sample of 152 of communicators in the field of child media (arrangers of children TV programs – announcers of children TV programs – press children affairs editors – press children authors), distributed as follows:

Tunisia: 10, Algeria: 16, Saudi Arabia: 46, Iraq: 30, Lebanon: 10, Egypt: 40

Main Conclusions of the Study:

A) Summary results of the study of press addressing to Arab child rights:

- In dealing with children's issues, the journals included in the study have focused on press news shapes and arts.
- Government officials were at the forefront of the actors in the press material for children.
- Newspapers included in the study have mainly focused on males rather than females.
- The combination of emotional and logical inclinations was at the forefront of the used persuasive inclinations.

B) Summary results of TV addressing of Arab child rights:

- 65.6% of the total programs episodes included in the study did not address issues related to children's rights.
- The priorities of Arab TV channels have focused on the child's right to education, protection, survival, healthcare, family care, and the right of the child to play and enjoy leisure time.
- Half of the episodes that dealt with the rights of children in Arab television channels included the participation of children in the presentation and discussion of these rights, involving children of both sexes with the percentage of 62.9%.
- The largest percentage of the programs that addressed children rights has overlooked the participation of children with special needs.
- The percentage of episodes that have witnessed violations of children's rights through media practice (20%) and included children exposed to violence, abuse or accidents, in which the photo and full name of the exposed child have been presented, thus adding a social stigma or a negative impact of exposing such child to contempt or punishment in the community.

C) Summary results of a study on children's exposure to Arab media, and their assessment of addressing their issues therein:

- Television is on top of the list of media channels favorite to Arab children, while internet came in second place, along with the decline rates of reading printed media (newspapers and magazines), as well as lower rates for listening to the radio
- Results of the study have indicated that the sample Arab children have acknowledged that their parents prevent them from pursuing some media contents with an average recurrence rate of (46.7%).
- The sample Arab children have indicated that they watch media content intended for adults by an average recurrence rate of (40.8%), and that they

believe it dealt with the rights of children and their cases with an average recurrence rate of (68%).

- The sample Arab children have indicated that the media content is interested in children's rights with an average recurrence rate of (50.3%).
- The study concluded that the "right to play and recreation" is the right most focused upon in media, from the point of view of children.

D) Summary results of the study on factors affecting the professional performance of communicators in the field of child media in Arab countries:

- The use of the Internet by communicators was in the forefront of the media resources covering children rights, while was on top of the list of media method capable of addressing children rights.
- The apparent decline in the community's interest in children rights, where the marginalization of children issues in the community was at the forefront of societal challenges faced by journalists.
- The absence of institutional media policy on children's issues was the most important among the reasons of the low media addressing for these issues.
- Low rate of accessing training courses by communicators working in the field of child rights, and the absence of opportunity for accessing such courses has been the most important reason for lack of access to these trainings.

Key recommendations of the study:

- There is a need to develop a clear media policy which guides the performance of Arab media communicators, in order to improve media performance regarding the rights of Arab child as stated in international conventions.
- There is an urgent need to draft performance guidelines and code of ethics dedicated for media and the coverage of child rights issues, in order to create Arab professional media practices that respect the rights of Arab child in the context of the multiplicity and diversity of media contents which target children, the contents made through child participation, or the contents where children's issues are the main discussion.
- There is a need to implement continuous media campaigns, and investing all the traditional and modern media in society's awareness raising of child rights stated in related international conventions.
- The continuous planning for capacity building of communicators working in the field of childhood (traditional and modern media) on the Arab level, in order to develop their abilities to tackle all variables of child rights, as well as developing their skills in editing, broadcasting, and directing.

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- There is a need to continue in the assessment of performance to all kinds of media, in addition to creating an executive mechanism to activate the recommendations of developing media performance on Arab level, and those who are concerned with child's media from communicators.