

Ethics key in reporting on children

Delegates at the 5th World Summit on Media for Children (5WSMC), held in Johannesburg last week, pledged to work together with media companies to develop new strategies to enhance children's participation in media, and provide ethical and objective coverage when telling children's stories.

 Bylssa Sikiti da Silva ^{2 Apr 2007}

“The first aim of this project was to hear children speak their mind about issues affecting them in the media sphere,” Professor Tatiana Merlo Flores, a delegate from Argentina, said. “Now that we know what they like and dislike about their media programmes and issues affecting them, we will have to work together with them and media companies to find the global index and ways forward to produce media contents that will suit their needs,” Flores added.

Flores also said that this global index is in line with the priorities outlined in the Millennium Development Goals and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The 5WSMC argues that worldwide, children watch more TV and films than adults. But owing to imperative sometimes production and programming tend to appeal more to adults than children.

Ethics

The summit's research also shows that investors are well aware that commercials that target children can also reap lucrative returns. And bearing in mind that children's programmes constitute a worthy investment for production houses, Al-Jazeera Children Channel representative Mahmoud Bouneb said that broadcasters and all other media companies must look for new ways to tell children's stories – in a way that will not discriminate, misrepresent or prejudice them.

While many delegates acknowledged that the media is a very powerful tool for advancing global peace, social development and enhancing participatory democracy, they however wish that the media strives harder to be tolerant, ethical, fair, objective and responsible when reporting about crucial issues facing children, and take care not to violate their rights in order to boost their readership, listenership or viewership.

Asked to comment, Macenje 'Che Che' Mazoka, SABC head of funding, partnerships and business development, said: “I think that a gathering such as this one reminds us that we need to pay more attention to young people about their place in the world.

“We need to ensure that they are given a platform where they can voice their concerns and suggestions about issues that are affecting them. These concerns and suggestions will then help us as adults to adjust the way we treat them in society.”

The 6th World Summit on Media for Children will take place in Karlstad (Sweden) in June 2010, Patricia Edgar, chairperson of the World Summit on Media for Children Foundation said.

The 6WSMC will be supported, among others, by the World Association of Newspapers, European Broadcasting Union, Nordicom, Asian-Pacific Broadcasting Union and Alliance for the Media Literate

America.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.
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