

**Guidelines for the media in addressing the issue of
child sexual abuse**

- Media should bring the issue of child sexual abuse into the realm of public knowledge and public debate. It is important that the issue of sexual abuse is presented as a serious violation of rights, not only as an offence against children.
- Media should, through sensitive and meaningful projection and coverage of the issue, be instrumental in creating a sense of moral indignation and outrage over incidents of child sexual abuse. Media should also take care to ascertain the facts, context and circumstances. A report on such sensitive issues should not be filed based on superficial interviews with persons supposedly witnesses to the incident.
- Media should desist from the temptation to sensationalize or exaggerate a particular incident of child abuse.
- When media reports an incident of sexual abuse it should also report subsequently on actions taken by concerned authorities and continue to report till action is taken to punish the abusers.
- Media should not unwittingly glorify the act of sexual abuse by giving undue prominence to the perpetrator.
- The victim should not be further victimized or made to relive the trauma he/she has been through.
- Under no circumstances should the media disclose or reveal the identify of the victim. Masking techniques should be used wherever the victim is made to give a first person account of his/her experience. The victim, relatives and concerned persons must be assured of confidentiality.
- Media should not create a prurient interest in the sexuality of the child by image or innuendo
- The child should not come across as a passive entity.
- Besides drawing attention to the problem of child sexual abuse, the media also needs to enlighten the public as what can be done to prevent such incidents, and what needs and must be done if such an incident has taken place, including providing information on legal or other remedies.
- Media should provide its target audience with full knowledge about the rights of the child and the legal remedies available to a child in the unfortunate event of a case of child sexual abuse occurring.

- Media needs to develop a system wherein viewers/audience can comment/evaluate on the quality and impact of the programmes being aired and telecast.
- Media should document and widely disseminate Best Practices on Prevention of child sexual abuse, action taken against abusers, work of selected NGOs, etc.
- In all reporting, the media must be guarded by the principle of best interest of the child as required in the Convention on the Rights of the Child