

# The Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics

## Coverage of Children's Issues in Media

Report

April 1- December 1



Tbilisi 2016

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## Introduction

The Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics implements a UNICEF supported project-“Ethical Coverage of Children’s Issues”, with the media-monitoring of children’s issues coverage being one of its components.

The monitoring studies materials published in the electronic, online and printed media with respect to children’s issues and provides analysis of their compliance with children’s rights, ethical norms, and professional standards of the comprehensive coverage.

The present document reflects the conclusion of the media-monitoring carried out between April 1-December1, 2016. The project has also issued the interim report that doesn’t cover the August period.

The document has analyzed the shortcomings and trends revealed in the coverage of children’s issues, as well as the materials produced by children-oriented channels and the children’s programs featured by central channels. The report includes the recommendations and a separate sub-chapter evaluating the coverage of children’s issues on June 1-International Children’s Day.

## 1. Monitoring Methodology

The monitoring team has analyzed all the materials published in the printed, online and broadcasting media directly or indirectly concerning children. That includes the analysis of the coverage of children’s issues with respect to separate topics in terms of context, highlighting and interviewing of children, and the compliance of those materials with ethical standards.

The report includes both the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The quantitative component studied and calculated children-related materials on the following topics:

- Education
- Health care
- Social issues
- Sports
- Culture
- Children’s rights
- Domestic violence
- Suicide

- Crime
- Advertising
- Charity
- Religion
- Tragedy/accident
- Other

The “events” section was included on June 1 due to the abundance of such materials on that day.

The number of materials with and without the participation of children were calculated and classified in terms of the following types:

- Short news/voice-over
- Article/story
- Comprehensive material
- Program

The qualitative analysis was carried out on the basis of the guideline principles prescribed by:

- The Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics.
- IFJ approved recommendations and principles concerning children-related publications
- The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child
- Guideline principles of the coverage of children’s issues in media
- Code of Conduct of Broadcasters

The research also studied children’s content produced by the television to reveal the types of materials offered to children and their compliance with high media standards. The entire broadcasting net of two children-oriented channels-“Basti-Bubu” and “Enki-Benki” has been observed, as well as certain children’s programs featured by the central channels.

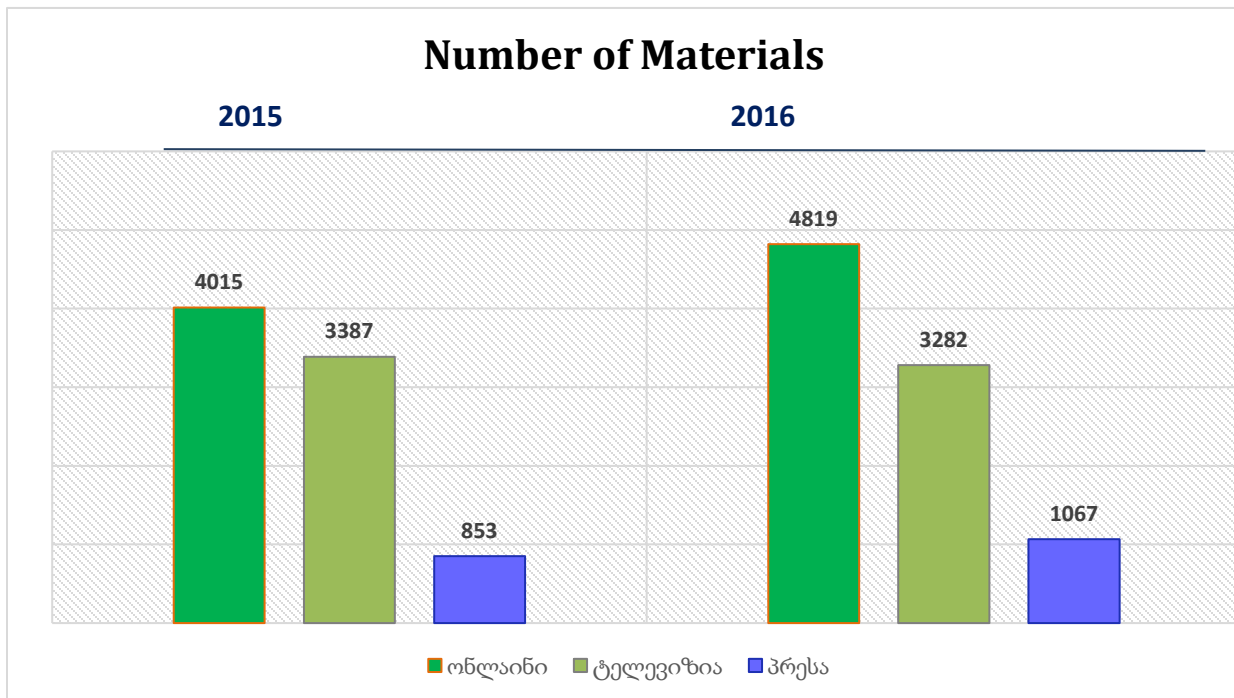
## 2. Main Findings

- The coverage of children’s issues in the online media and press has increased compared to 2015, while the number of materials on TV has remained unchanged.
- Children mostly appear in educational and crime topics.
- The comprehensive journalistic product discussing children’s issues only constitutes 1% of the overall number of children-related materials, with the majority of the content being superficial and fragmentary.

- Compared to the March-October 2015 monitoring results, the number of materials featuring children as speakers have increased from 12 to 25%.
- The voice of children mostly appeared in sports materials.
- There has been a number of cases of journalists veiling a child's face when either unnecessary or no longer reasonable due to the disclosure of other relevant details.
- Children-related legislations are mostly considered in terms of political confrontation, and the audience remains unaware of the influence those changes may introduce to child's life.
- The use of children as objects of advertising of charity still remains an issue. In such cases various media outlets often publish the same texts without specifying that the text has been sponsored and not prepared under the editorial responsibility.
- Politicians/state agencies readily use children's hard social condition for promoting themselves, which is supported by the media.
- Children are often used in materials reflecting social issues as emotional intensifier.
- The issue of children with health problems is mostly covered as part of the charity effort, with the media trying to itself raise funds for helping purposes, and making no emphasis on the systemic issue, which results in a situation where children rely of the aid of ordinary citizens.
- The violation of ethical standards in children-related materials has been expressed in terms of the identification of the violation victim or the alleged minor offender.
- Another round of published materials stigmatizing children in various ways
- The majority of general broadcasters dedicate at least one program to children
- Programs offered by children channels fail to provide versatile content to minors of different age group.
- Materials prepared by children channels have a poor visual quality, and doesn't use various forms of information conveyance and innovative methods for attracting audience.
- The majority of programs presented by children channels carry multitudes of gender stereotypes, e.g. boys playing with weapons, girls minding their business in the kitchen or beauty salon.

### 3. Quantitative Data

Compared to the previous year 2016 has seen the increase of the coverage of children’s issue in the online media and press. 4015 materials directly or indirectly involving children were published in the online media between March 1- October 20 2015, and in 2016 the number reached 4819 between April 1- November 30 2016. The volume of materials featured by TV-media remains the same. The number of materials increased in September, and doubled in November compared to October, which happened in the absence of any special minor-related events.



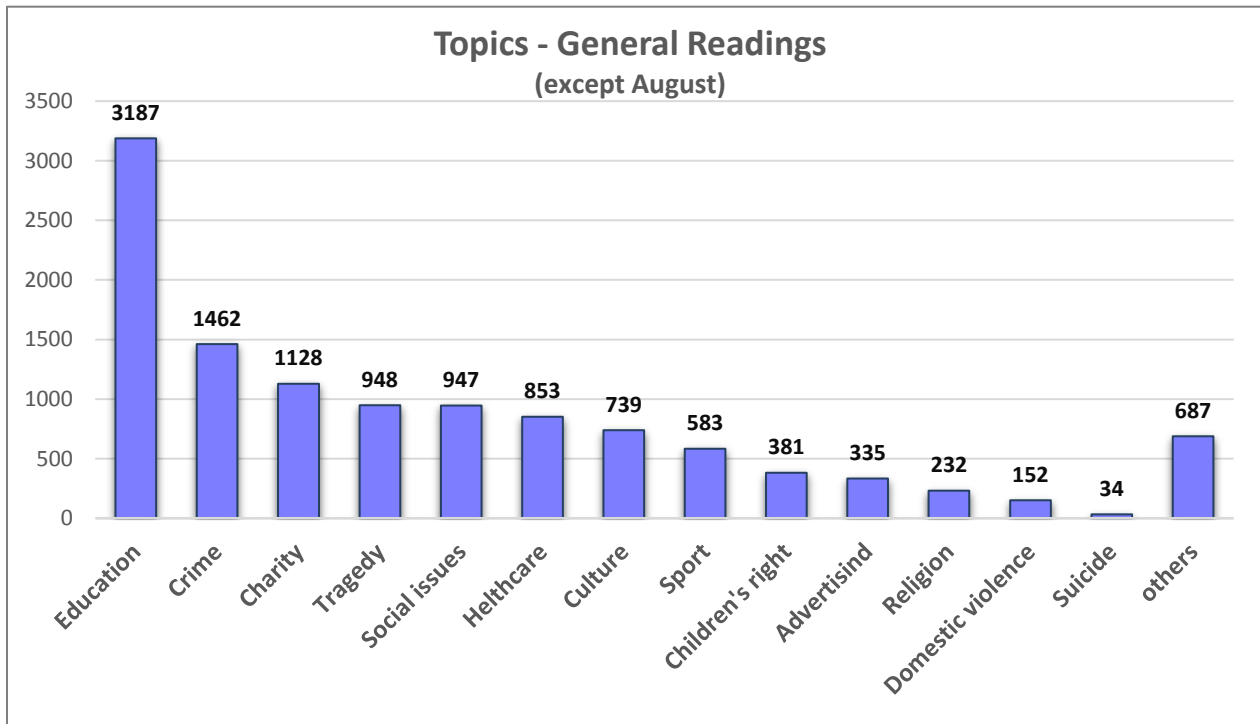
Children topics given most coverage in the media are education(27%) and crime(12%), followed by charity(10%) and tragedies and social issues(8%).

**The high number of education-related** materials isn’t determined by the comprehensive coverage of the education issue or media’s interest for the topic, but rather by the coverage in the news format of topics such as the beginning/ending of academic year in schools, unified national examinations, statements of the minister, etc.

**The crime** category discussed materials dealing with crimes involving minor offenders (accused, witness, victim). **The charity** encompassed materials concerned with the charity events and reports of various organizations, as well as the charitable events as part of Easter and June 1 efforts conducted by certain politicians, foundations or institutions

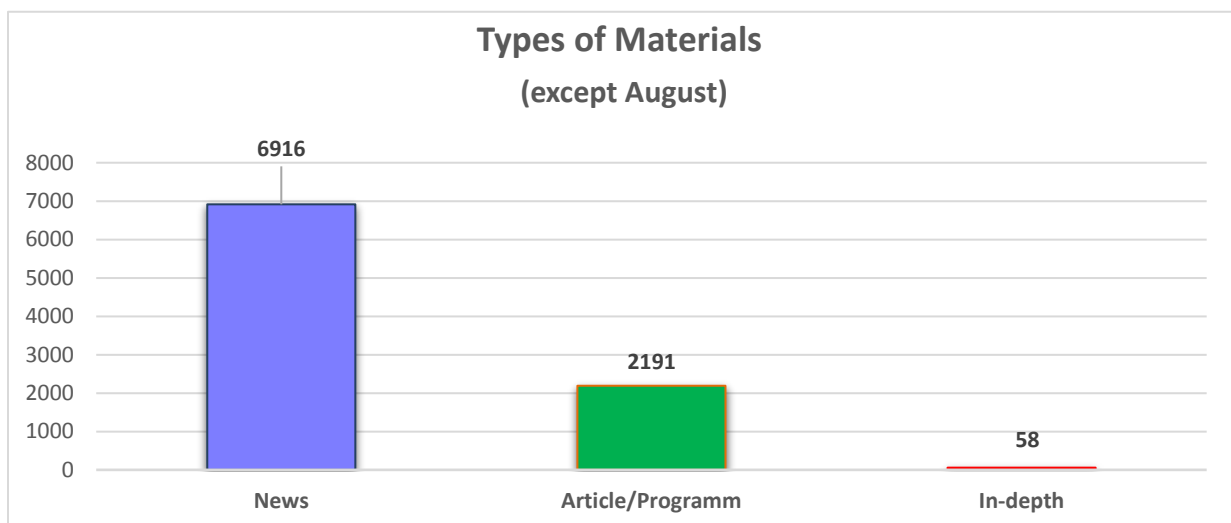
**The tragedies** brought together all the accidents involving children.

The **other** category embraced events featuring children on holidays such as Easter, the Independence Day of Georgia and International Day for Protection of Children.

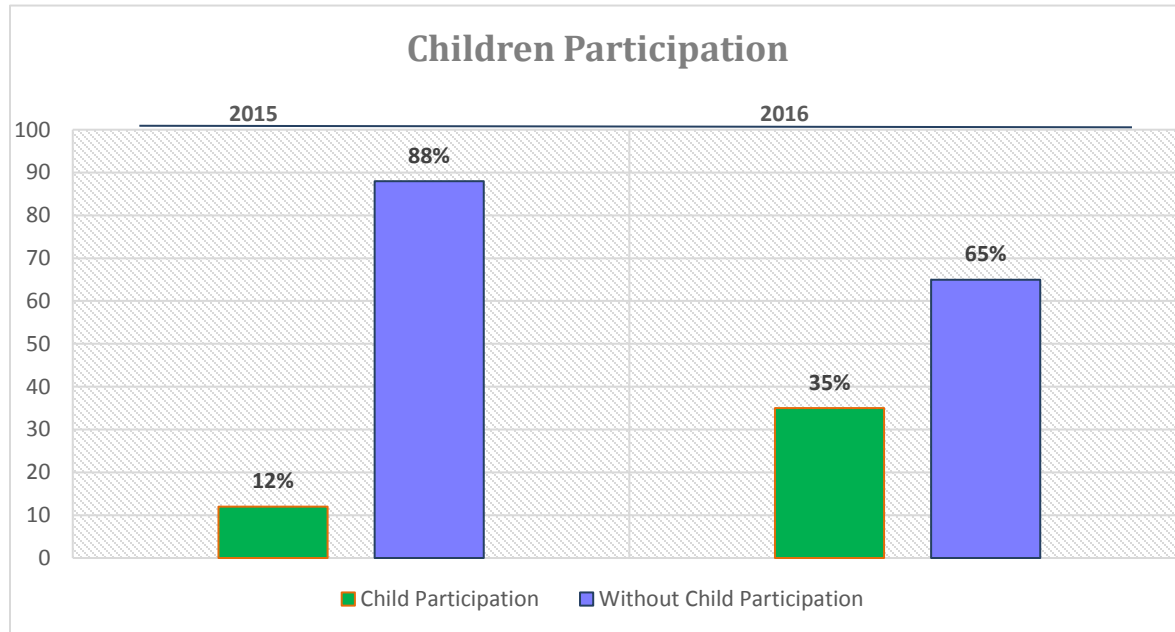


The quantitative data reads that short news constitutes the overwhelming majority of children-related materials.

Extensive materials (articles, stories, programs) also discussed the issue superficially. Only 1% of the materials prepared in the reporting period provided comprehensive coverage of the topic.



The materials featuring children as speakers have increased 12-35% compared to the monitoring results of 2015. However, the issue of children’s representation still remains unresolved, which is expressed in terms of very poor presentation of minors as either information sources or respondents.



## 4. Qualitative Data

### 4.1. Lack of In-depth Reporting

The majority of children-related materials is superficial and fragmentary, and only provide retrospective coverage of news. In most cases media outlets/journalists do not seek topics on their own initiative.

In addition, in the majority of cases there are no materials highlighting children-related news in the context of systemic issue and holding accountable certain institutions and individuals with respect to taking care of children’s welfare.

The media makes no attempt to bring new problematic topics to the foreground, with the exception of few media outlets.

Children issues are often considered separately from other topics despite that some of them do affect children.



With participation of children/without participation of children

A good example of the superficial coverage of the issue is highlighting of children-related legislations in the context of political confrontations, without explaining to the audience the positive and negative influence the changes may entail.

Despite that media covered the national exams and the beginning of school year in its news, there has only been a very scarce coverage of the topical issues linked to the new term of studies and education, which was limited to congratulations from various politicians and officials, as well as the events of them accompanying children to school.

The same issue manifests itself in children's rights reports published by various organizations, when the events held by these organizations get the most attention, while the issues discussed in the reports fail to become a source for inspiring the media to provide a broader coverage of the issue.

There was some flashy coverage of children's issues in the monitoring period. For instance, Palitra prepared a material on October 8 reporting the falling of a one-and-a-half-year-old child from the ninth floor, which caused the mother the jump after the child. Both of them died immediately. The footage showed the journalist's [attempt to reveal details](#) such as the mother's and child's name, their age, whether the mother had jumped from the balcony or out of the window, etc. The next video also showed, among other irrelevant details, the cries of the family members, with the journalist telling the audience the exact location of the bodies.

## 4.2. Children as Respondents

The quantitative data suggests that despite that the number of materials featuring children as respondents has increased compared to 2015, it still remains an issue that their voice remains silent in the coverage of children-related topics, as adults usually speak instead of them.

Culture and sports represent 2 categories that have the highest number of materials that involve children. This partly props the stereotype that we should only let children speak on light topics, such culture and sports. Materials reflecting children's rights, meanwhile, offer the smallest space to children.

The majority of daytime programs use children merely as decorative elements. For instance, June 16 GDS's Afternoon Show featured a section educating minors about the necessity of sorting and recycling of garbage, and had children among the guests. But they only remained silent while playing an educational application designed to raise the level of awareness on the topic at issue.

[TV 25's story from September 20](#) covered a photo exhibition prepared by children with limited capabilities where adults were the only respondents. The monitoring revealed many such cases.

It should be mentioned that there are many cases where children are asked questions inappropriate for their age, which portrays them as “silly” creatures. Ilo Beroshvili's Show-Imedi's comedy program- has a special section where children are asked questions like “who's stronger between Tamaz Mechiauri and Natsarkekia?”, “what's the current condition of Georgian people?”. Naturally, children cannot provide adequate answers to such questions, and become objects of ridicule. Some online editions also convey that types of video materials.

Similar material was also featured in Rustavi 2's Nanuka's Show on October 13. The program had a section with 4 children invited as experts giving funny responses to the host's questions on politics. Therefore, the children were apparently used to entertain adults by expressing their opinion on issues too complex for their age.

- **Recommendation:** let children speak along with adults on the relevant topics. Their interest covers a broad range of issues, and apart from the light topics described above they can also discuss the whole spectrum of children-related issues. Learn their opinion on the every change and reform that affects them, and try to protect their interests on the one hand, without restricting their freedom of expression on the other.

### 4.3. Stigmatization of Children

Similar to the previous year, the current reporting period has seen stigmatization of minors and associating those wearing non-standard outfit with various sects.

Rustavi 2's Nanuka's Show and Imedi's Gia Jajania's Show featured children gathering in an underground passage, the so-called morgue. The program says that children with family issues

congregate in underground passages, participate in certain rituals, torture cats, follow satanic cults, commit suicide, wear unusual hairstyle, use heavy makeup, etc.

We should mention as well that Gia Jajanidze had invited incompetent people to discuss the issue: actors, singers, clergymen, etc. which added to the flashy atmosphere of the program.

The footage showed the places of congregation, which sent a hidden message to children with family issues as to the places they may come to. Also, the program endangered the minors whose appearance is similar to the kids' described in the show. Parts of the program were also spread by online media.

Some printed editions also covered the so-called minors' sect in one of the issues, reporting children with unusual outfit as animal abusers. Certain suicide cases were associated with the sect (for instance, in the Alia newspaper). More importantly, these articles hadn't relied on the evidence proving the existence of the satanic or whatever sect.

Another examples are New Post's news linking [without due substantiation](#) the disappearance of 2 girls to a sect and a [material from Ambebi.ge](#) reporting minors wearing non-standard clothes as potentially dangerous people for the society.

[Imedi's October 4](#) Day Show stigmatized children born as a result of artificial impregnation by showing the female guest that used bio-material of her deceased husband to give birth to her child. Despite no serious ethical violation, the episode boosted the stereotype of such children being strange creatures.

The title of the program's section read "strange story of childbirth", followed by the footage of the mother's conversation with doctors speaking about the ordinary nature of such children, etc. At the end of the section the host emphasized the general negative stereotypical attitude in the society towards children born with the aid of artificial impregnation. We believe, though, that the program itself supported a sterotypical attitude for the child.

The danger of stigmatization also came from the coverage of events conducted by other organizations. We should stress one such material reporting that Gino Paradise hosted children of convicts and ex-convicts. The materials showed the children's photos, thus identifying them and promoting their labeling as children of convict parents.

Kvira.ge published an advertising article reporting that show-biz celebrities are to hold an event in support of children with limited capabilities. The clichéd nature of the article promotes further stigmatization of children, despite the intention to help them integrate into the society, by regarding them as those needing special care, which is an allusion to their unhealthy social condition. The

sympathetic article contains the following passage: “we feel certain anxiety as we’ll soon meet the children and try to make them feel normal people, which requires a very delicate approach.

GPB’s morning program highlighted children with excess weight in a story that may reinforce the stigma around such people. The program opens up with a narrative about 7 year-old Lazare with much stronger appetite than his 10 year-old sister, Barbare. “Mother always told me not to overeat, but I can’t help it, I just love eating”- said the kid.

- **Recommendation:** avoid flashy and stereotypical highlighting of children-related topics, as well as the categorization and description of a story that may inflict additional physical and psychological harm to child the child, and resulting in humiliation, discrimination, and seclusion from the local society.

#### 4.4. Re-traumatization

Undue coverage on the part of the media may cause re-traumatization of a child by evoking the memories of painful past events. The reporting period has seen many such instances. For example, “Ertsulovneba” program hosted a mother with her child that spoke about how the child had lost hearing allegedly as a result of antibiotic treatment.

In the course of the program the mother asked the child: “tell them about the surgery, you remember it, right? Go ahead, tell them”, to which the child responded: “when I was little my ear started to hurt, and my mom and dad took me to the hospital where grandpa Shota performed surgery on my ear”. The mother explicitly demonstrates the outer implant on the child’s ear. Such disclosure of the details of the child’s health state may bring to the past suffering to the surface.

The story dedicated to the victim children of the June 13, 2015 tragedy, featured June 13 by Rustavi 2’s Afternoon Program, contained the danger of re-traumatizing those children as the past experience made them undergo a psychological rehabilitation course. The journalist asked them about their memories of the fateful night, the feelings they experienced, the depression they went through, etc.

Another similar instance came from the Day Show from [October 31](#) showing live a piercing procedure performed on the ear of one of the guest’s baby child, which resulted in the child’s crying throughout the whole program.

It seemed as if the child was more of a sample model than a living human person that feels the pain from unwanted physical intervention the same way as adults do.

- **Recommendation:** try to avoid bringing up of events that may have a negative impact on the child, forcing him to relive the suffering associated with the past trauma, with the exception of cases with prevailing public interest.

#### 4.5. Unnecessary Identification of Minors

The identification of the child's identity is unacceptable in cases when the disclosure of information may potentially be harmful to the minor, which is especially important with respect to alleged minor victims and offenders. The monitoring revealed a few instances of the indirect identification of the victim and the child charged with the crime.

The materials covering homicides in Khelvachauri prepared by Kviris Palitra, kvira.ge, and Imedi identify the minor whom the mother of the murdered child accuses of the killing. An article published in the Alia newspaper identifies the minor victim in a story about a clergyman's alleged intention of sexual nature for the minor. Despite that the article only provides the initials of the minor's full name, it nonetheless discloses the name of the boy's mother. The topic is rather sensitive and deals with entering into sexual relationship with the minor, therefore the journalist should have avoided the identification of the minor.

There have as well been several cases of indirect identification of minors involved in criminal activity.

For instance, the detention of members of the nationalist movement "Georgian Power", during a rally, with minors among them. TV company Pirveli then showed comments of one of the detainee's brother, and the First Channel showed the mother's commentary, which resulted in the indirect identification of the minor.

The coverage of an event in Phonichala also showed the mother of one of the parties of the crime, when a dispute between two minors resulted in the killing of one of them. The mother said: "I personally testified on behalf of my son, as a witness". The story was also covered by Palitra, Imedi, Rustavi 2, and the First Channel.

Rustavi 2 dedicated a story to school bullying. The host didn't reveal the number of the school and the parties of the incident, as the case involved minors. The story despite having veiled the alleged victim, nonetheless identified the mother, which constituted the indirect identification of the child and frustrated the journalist's attempt to keep confidentiality.

November 7 the Akhali Taoba newspaper provided the full identification of the minor detainee charged with the murder of 76 year-old woman by publishing the minor’s name in a social network. It also said that Nina Ch. grew in the family of famous dramatist, which can be considered as another component of the minor’s identification. The Gza Magazine did similarly in the coverage of this case.

- **Recommendation:** the minor’s identification is only prohibited if the case in any form deals with the offence, crime, or in a situation of potential danger to the minor, e.g. bullying, all kinds of abuse, and anything that may further complicate the existing condition.

#### 4.6. Undue Blurring

Blurring of a child is only required in special instances. The monitoring, however, revealed the trend that Georgian media often veils a child when unnecessary. A good example is the issue of Rustavi 2’s [Noon Program](#) in which it discussed if nannies walk children in the cold or not. The story showed Archil Sologashvili talking to several nannies. One of the nannies is identified in the story, but the babies’ faces were blurred over.



[June 18](#) the Public Broadcaster covered the Public Defender’s report with the footage of children completely blurred

It seems that the shooting is poorly planned in a number of cases, when a journalist and cameraman do not have a clear understanding as to the



appropriateness of the child's identification in the footage they prepare.

[November 11](#) Imedi covered the issue of a family with children living in a train car in Zestaponi. The children are veiled in the footage. Their faces are also blurred in the interview with the father, where they appear on the background. If the intention was to hide children, it remains unclear why the journalist had decided to feature them on the background in the veiled form.

A number of cases with undue veiling have been featured by the Public Broadcaster, with the majority of them concerning children living in harsh social conditions. For instance, October 6 GPB's Moambe newscast showed a story of a family living in such conditions that had a minor suffering from health issues. The minor's face appeared covered while other details providing full identification had been disclosed, therefore the reason behind the decision of the editorial staff to cover the face remains unclear.

- **Recommendation:** covering of a child is only required when identification may possibly impair his current condition. This is an exception. So when other key details have been disclosed, covering the face doesn't make sense any more, as the identification is already possible.

A better approach to the planning of shooting to learn beforehand whether it's necessary to cover a child. Inform the cameraman of the editorial staff's decision and shoot accordingly- show details that wouldn't result in the identification while preserving the visual quality of the material. Using of versatile details works well in this situation.

#### 4.7. Children with Health Problems and Children Living in Poverty

It's especially important to stress the trends in the coverage of children with health issues and those living in harsh social conditions. Media outlets use children as a means to illustrate poverty. Usually social conditions of such families are shown with the children in the background, which puts improper emphasis on minors, when the media tries to intensify emotions by showing their feelings and tears.

Imedi TV's Imedi's Dro launched a [story](#) dedicated to a socially vulnerable family in Lanchkhuti. The journalist doesn't stress the systemic shortcomings of the government and the full representation of the issue, and instead only speaks about harsh social conditions and uses the minor's story as a cliché to evoke sentiments in the audience.

Another very important issue is showing of materials on children's health state. In this respect the online media deserves special attention. The primary goal of such materials is to help children by showing a child's sentimental story or a personal family tragedy.

The issues-why a child needs the aid of citizens, reason behind the state health care system's failure to provide medical care, which link doesn't function properly, who is responsible- remain unaddressed. Instead media outlets try to raise funds themselves to help the child, or cover charity efforts of other organizations.

It's also common practice to show announcements attached with bank details for money transfers as an effort to help certain children with health issues.

TV Imedi showed a story "[mother's elegy](#)" about socially needy family. The mother suffered the loss of one child, and the second had been diagnosed with the same disease. The family needs accommodation and money for treatment. The final part of story shows the donation of apartment to the child's family. The journalist gives sentimental narrative of Giga's condition: "[Mariam's dreams have now become Giga's dreams, her wheelchair is now Giga's, her diagnose is now Giga's too. Giga spends the entire day in the wheelchair, dreams of walking outside. Meanwhile months pass in waiting at the window, while the room preserves the glimmering dream of school, teachers, and classmates.](#)"

Another story featured by ITV shows the humiliation of a formerly singer child's self-esteem that cannot sing anymore due to sickness, while people around him "persuade" him into singing.

[Kronika](#) dedicated a story to a hospice for children with chronically incurable disease. It starts by showing a semi-naked identifiable child diagnosed, according to the author, with cerebral palsy. The story says that the hospice would provide them with good conditions while they're alive: "we create an environment alleviating the pain and intolerable conditions of children whose time is running low".

April 21 Rustavi 2's Profile showed children with severe sickness, where the parents in the presence of their children told stories of the kind's lethal diagnoses. The host mentioned a few times that such coverage may constitute an ethical violation, but that it was important to inform society of the issue, and asked the audience to help children suffering from grave medical conditions.

In that kind of programs journalists often say that though children are represented as charity object, they receive financial aid from citizens that had learned about the story. That "kindness", according to journalists, serves as counterbalance and justifies the flashy and sentimental nature of the events.

The given issue is really a dilemma that has to be resolved by the journalist- to select a concrete case while similar condition affects many other children, prepare the relevant story, raise funds, help the



victim, choose between covering a particular event or emphasizing the issue on the whole, which doesn't yield quick results, meaning that the child's condition may get worse in the meantime.

Instead of covering separate cases and dedicating a charitable program/story to those people, it would be better to understand the overall issue and speak about the state's systemic deficiencies, and not put the entire responsibility on the shoulders of citizens and organizations that make donations. Such approach takes longer to yield results, but provides the media better chances to help people with similar diagnose.

Materials reflecting the health condition of Shorena Begashvili's minor daughter, Eva Barbakadze, should be discussed as well. The topic remained on the agenda throughout the whole period of the child's treatment, and the reports relied on the information published by Shorena Begashvili and her family members in social media.

- **Recommendation:** try to expose the systemic issue as the primary goal- why does saving of a child's life require aid of the society and the reasons behind the government's failure to provide medical care to them. Remember, that the character of a single story has a condition that many other people have as well-those whom you failed to reach. Avoid showing heavy emotional scenes in the presence of children, and don't make the parents speak about the possible complications or lethal outcome that follow the progression of the disease.

#### 4.8. Coverage of Minors' Suicide

Despite that the unethical coverage of minor suicide and crime has decreased, the reporting period still revealed a few problematic materials. For instance, [a story](#) by Imedi's Dro program dedicated to the minor suicide discussing several events, reasons behind and methods of suicide. One of the stories plays a tune in the background that the person that committed suicide referred to as the soundtrack of his last letter.

Such coverage of the suicide creates the atmosphere of romanticism around it. The host describes the act of suicide with phrases like "disturbing, alarming".

Another case dealt with the coverage of a tragic event in Samegrelo (suicide by a 16 year-old girl).

Newpost published the details of the girl's family life, presenting them as being the reason behind the suicide. The content reports how they learned the details of her private life, marital status, the mother private life, and also stressing the detention of the girl's brother charged with theft, which bore no clear relation to the incident.

Kvira.ge and [frontnews.ge](#), meanwhile, described methods of suicide.

- **Recommendation:** according to the suicide coverage guidelines, coverage of suicide events should be substantiated by the editorial staff, as the relevant researches suggest that the superficial coverage of certain facts of suicide may encourage new acts of suicide.  
It's not necessary to disclose the scene and details of a suicide, as such description can serve as a guideline for people with suicidal intentions. Covering of the suicide from the romantic point of view, making flashy news out of it, or attributing it to merely one simple reason, is also unacceptable, as people under pressure of difficult circumstances may interpret such message as a solution to their issues.

#### 4.9. Children as Objects of Advertising

Using children as advertising and charity objects still remain as issue. In those cases various media outlets often circulate the same text without specifying that it has been financed and prepared under editorial responsibility.

Children are readily used in this manner during holidays for PR purposes. This year has seen a profound abundance of politicians and election candidates appearing with children before the parliamentary elections. It should be stressed, though, that children weren't involved as elements of political activity and meetings with the voters, etc. However, there were many cases of using children in general.

Imedi's Morning Program featured an additional block that showed family pictures of politicians mostly surrounded by children, which served as attributes enhancing the human image of those politicians.

GDS newscast [2030 showed a story](#) of Alexi Petriashvili's and Irakli Alasania's meeting with citizens in Digomi. The material was supposed to highlight the issue of cushioned ground, but the emphasis was instead placed on the politician's visit. In the course of the interview Alexi Petriashvili spoke with children in the background that hadn't been given opportunity to express their opinion on the issue. The monitoring has revealed many such cases.

For instance, a story by [Maestro](#) showing Georgian Dream Adjara MP candidates' visit to St. Matthias Gymnasium-Boarding School to meet beneficiary children.

Politicians also use children of PR purposes outside the election period.

Example of that is the [material](#) showing how Gori Municipality Board and the Head of Gori Municipality Council fulfill the “dream” of 12 year-old Giorgi by buying him a bicycle, Kutaisi Mayor, Shota Murgulia’s [presenting a child with limited capabilities with a wheelchair](#), as well as the news that the [Head of the Council is to pay for children’s holiday from his own salary](#). Material published by [www.newpost.ge](#) called “[kids in expectation of hugging patrol police officers](#)” serves the same purpose.

Apart from politicians, commercial companies also use children for advertising purposes. For instance, Outdoor G gave presents to children with limited capabilities, which was highlighted in Rustavi’s [Morning Program](#).

- **Recommendation:** Avoid representing children in the journalistic product as charity objects and beneficiaries. If politicians speak on issues concerning children during pre-election period, make focus on the issue rather than the politician’s statement and visit. Do not assist these groups to conduct their PR companies with the use of children.

#### 4.10. Improper Terminology

In the reporting period the media used improper terminology in several cases dealing with children:

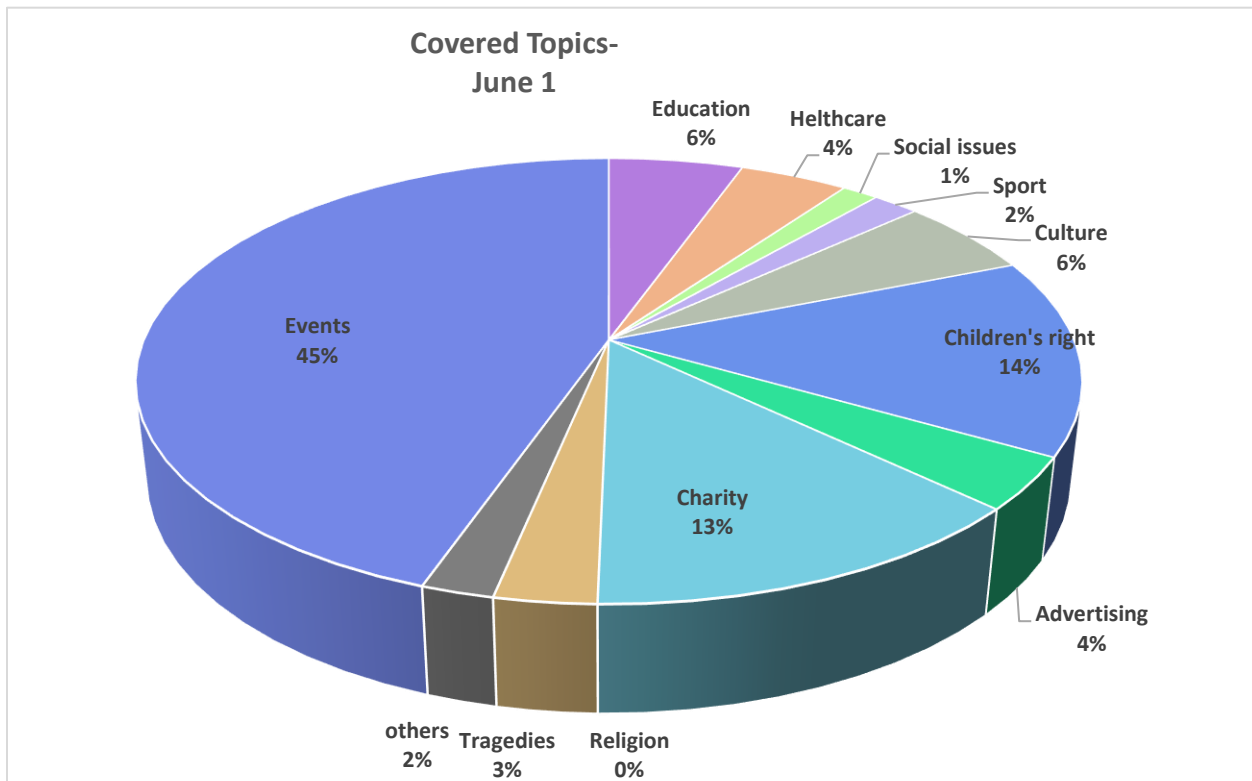
1. 7 June 7 GDS’s Noon Program dedicated its first block to a team of campaigners prepared by the Crime Prevention Center consisting of children with limited capabilities. One of the program’s hosts regarded the Center’s beneficiaries as “offenders” after having been corrected by the Center’s representative that the kids weren’t offenders.
2. June 18 [First Channel](#) showed a short news saying that “socially vulnerable Luka Godiashvili became member of ten-year school of the talented”. It’s not necessary to stress a child’s social condition while mentioning his success.
3. Some media outlets (Maestro, Newpost) used the term “street children”. A better option is to regard that group as “living and working in the street”.
4. “[Adjara Newspaper](#) called a group of minors “disabled” instead of using the term “with limited capabilities”.

## 5. June 1

June 1 celebrates International Children’s Day. However, it has become a trend that the Georgia media gives that day priority to covering activities and charitable events held by various organizations, state agencies, or companies over children’s rights. Children get the least coverage, with psychologists, teachers, ministers, politicians, and parents speaking instead of them.

The printed media very reluctantly covered children-related topics, with only one material with child speaking from the overall 11.

June 1 media mostly highlighted children as event participants and charity objects, showing ministries, municipalities, administrations, council members, mayors as the donors. The media covered David Bakradze’s [visit to Khurvaleti](#) to congratulate internally displaced children on June 1. The story showed him cutting a cake together with children, how [kids got ice-cream](#) from Akhaltsikhe Municipality members, how the Minister of Agriculture [hosted ID children](#), Paata Burchuladze’s meeting with pupils, etc.



Despite international organizations reporting children being among the most vulnerable groups in Georgia, the press hasn't dedicated a single article to children's rights and social, educational, health care issues.

Online media outlets published their materials with nearly identical texts and photos, which suggests the high probability that the majority of children-related materials prepared June 1 hadn't been prepared by them but the organizers of the events. That means that the media outlets only publish unchanged press-releases.

Materials on the activity of private company mostly contain signs of hidden commercial advertisement, as major part of such news were published as editorial materials without advertisement notice.

The same trend emerged in TV media, with similar materials highlighting children events held by various companies and state agencies.

Imedi's Noon issue entirely dedicated to a charitable program-marathon and the activity of "Dimitry Tsintsadze Foundation" was rather interesting. These events were also covered in the third block of GDS Noon Program. Imedi's Morning allotted some airtime to children, yet without raising serious issues, and mostly filled with various musical performances and hosting children of Imedi Morning and Radio Imedi representatives, with main focus on associating June 1 with children's entertainment.

Newscasts covered reports of the Public Defender and UNICEF. Also, there was not attempt on the part of online media to provide comprehensive analysis of the issue. Instead of discussing the issue itself the media focused primarily on highlighting the Public Defender's and UNICEF statements, and didn't touch upon the trends suggested by the report.

In contrast to the online media and press, some televisions paid more attention to the topic of children in some of the programs.

The monitoring showed that First Channel had the most serious approach to June 1, as it discussed interesting topics in its morning programs and made an impression that the day represents an event entirely dedicated to children's entertainment and charitable acts. It should be stressed, though, that children weren't really shown in the programs.

Online edition Netgazeti essentially happened to be the only online edition having published June 1 materials on children's rights and social issues.

## 6. Examples of In-depth Reporting

The already established practice of ensuring the confidentiality of the accused or the victim in the media's coverage of criminal events should be considered as a positive trend.

A number of materials prepared by Batumelebi and Liberali deserve mentioning from the point of view of the comprehensive coverage of children issues, as well as GPB's Real Space—especially the issue that comprehensively discussed the issue of education, letting pupils express their opinion on the topic.

The Batumelebi newspaper published a good education material that allowed children to speak and highlighted the issue around the [teaching of arts](#) at schools. The edition also prepared a material on the [economic expenses](#) on leaving school. That provided the topic's coverage of a different angle. Netgazeti, meanwhile, spoke on the [difficulties](#) of parents and their children that moved abroad, and dedicated a [material](#) to the involvement of children in politicians' pre-election campaigns.

Liberali too raised a [different topic](#) publishing a comprehensive article on parental participation in school life. Its article "[school and community: relations, issues, challenges](#)" gave a broad description of issues existing in the area and had children speak on the subject. The edition also published Levan Jobava's post "[I want to be rugby player](#)" describing how he cultivates passion for rugby in kids, and touches upon the issues the sport currently faces in Georgia. The post appears among the scarce number of quality sports and children materials in the media

[Indigo](#) magazine made an in-depth review of youth literature trends in a positively written article. The Georgian printed media has a shortage of articles dedicated to the literature taste of youth and analysis of the current trends.

Tabula's [Conversations on Religion](#) thoroughly discussed the issue of religious indoctrination at schools.

Imedi TV's [Imedi's Dro](#) showed a comprehensive story on the fathers' role in the upbringing of children, stressing the issues children endured due to insufficient paternal involvement.

There were two noteworthy stories about education in inadequate conditions- the first, dedicated to the hard infrastructural conditions in the Lambalo school, shown by GPB's [Moambe](#), and the second by Rustavi 2's [P.S.](#) about pupils receiving education in transportation containers in Gundaeti village, without lights and lavatory, and water penetrating in the classrooms. Both materials focus on the child's education rights.

The same channel prepared a material on the [mutilation of genitals](#) among children. The story doesn't disclose the identity of the minors, observes ethical standards, and provides the opinion of all

the parties concerned. It should be mentioned that IWPR was the first to highlight the topic of mutilating women's genitals.

Adjara TV's addressed a material to the child's labour by showing stories of children selling cold drinks and corn on the beach, accentuating the hard labour of those kids which is dangerous for their health. The same topic was reflected by Liberali in its "children from the beech" story.

It's important to note that various programs dedicated an entire section to children's issues. For instance, October 22 TV Pirveli's Business Morning quite comprehensively covered in its first block selective abortion and girl's rights condition, as well as their challenges both locally and internationally, and featured competent guests that discussed the given social issue.

October 5 Rustavi 2's Morning Program allotted a section to the children and cybersecurity issues, and came up with rather interesting and comprehensive story followed by the relevant discussion with the guests.

## 7. Programs for Children

The central channel has scarce children content. There are only few broadcasters that have at least one program for minors. At the end of the day we can say that broadcasters fail to satisfy the needs of that social group.

Georgian TV market has two children channels that mostly cater for younger kids and can't really afford anything to adolescents. The monitoring analyzed the broadcasting network of both channels.

### 7.1. General Broadcasters<sup>1</sup>

#### 7.1.1. First Channel

GPB's First Channel features three programs more or less reflecting children's issues- "Bookshelf", "We Take Rugby to the Mountains", and "Play of Words".

According to the Channel's webpage, **Bookshelf** shows twice a week, every Sat-Sun, at 16:30, i.e. non-primetime. The program represents a literary competition primarily involving 15-16 year-old pupils from various schools. They split in three-person teams and start competing. The winner then goes to the next stage through Olympic system. Eventually, the winner of the finals goes to a summer

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<sup>1</sup>Broadcasters making social-political content

school in Britain for two weeks. Pupils also participate in the program as viewers by submitting questions to the competing teams.

The program has semi-educational/entertaining format, which together with the informative component makes it more attractive for the viewers. The format and questions fully comply with teenagers' interests and knowledge, and also allows for the interests of the potential audience.

We can say that Bookshelf is an exception completely satisfying the target audience both in terms of format and content, which serves informative purposes, enhancing knowledge and promoting erudition. Apart from the programs, the broadcaster's webpage presents pupil's blog-posts on topics of their interest, providing a good opportunity for their self-expression.

**The channel's website describes the "Play of Words" as an entertaining-intellectual program** showing twice a week, every Sat-Sun at 11:25 a.m. The program's not just oriented on children, but also involves families that have at least one minor (between 9-10 or 14-15 years of age) that act as team captains. The families play several rounds of the game of guessing words based on various principles to collect points. The successful team makes it to the next stage, and the finals winner goes to Disneyland. Play of Words is a game for both children and adults.

The program doesn't represent children as objects of ridicule and amusement, but hosts them as true participants, and offering thematically neutral (not controversial) and accomplishable tasks. It cannot be really considered as an intellectual program in the absence of purely informative and educational format, and only implying writing of correct words in a limited period of time.

Journalist Levan Jobava's project "**we take rugby to the mountains**" was a series of three-part programs popularizing sports lifestyle among kids of the mountaneous regions. A GPB group together with active rugby players visited Pshav-Khevsureti, Svaneti, and Racha to teach the local children rugby rules. The project fully considered children's interests, allowing them to be respondents expressing their opinion both on the importance of the project and the overall value of rugby and sports.

The program was supposed to cater for both minors' and adults' interests. Additionally, the project's team actively tried to avoid the clichéd approach associated with the power nature of rugby, making sure to engage girls from the regional centers and villages equally with the boys in the training process.

The project is really interesting from the point of children's coverage, as besides the popularization of rugby among children it also implied educational component and positive representation of children.

The Law on Broadcasting binds the Public Broadcaster to provide children's content in proportion to the children's and adolescents' interests.



Despite of the aforementioned programs, the Broadcaster still has to do a lot to successfully cater for the interests of various minor groups and provide them with versatile and interesting content.

### 7.1.2. Rustavi 2

Rustavi 2's Equivoque showing 11 a.m. every Sunday is a game of chances with popular people (mainly adults, but sometimes participating together with children) contend in guessing words. The participants watch videos of small children explaining the meaning of a word and try to make a guess. Also, in the bonus stage children listen to various tunes through headphones and later reproduce them with humming for the participants to guess.

Equivoque is clearly not a children's program, but rather a program with the participation of children. It's a classic example of showing kids and amusing, cute and funny objects explaining words at times completely incompatible with their knowledge (e.g. helmet, pyramid, loudspeakers).

During its course the program shows videos of children providing funny or unsuitable explanation of a certain item or term. The presenter and invitees mostly laugh at the kids' clarification, stressing, for instance, the [illogicality](#) of the child's logic.

The program's description on Rustavi 2's website confirms the clichéd consideration of the child's logic as strange. It says – “the final score reveals the week's expert in child's logic. It also tries to underscore the strangeness and peculiarity of infant logic, openly declaring that children's participation defines the funny nature of Equivoque's content.

## 7.2. Basti-Bubu

The channel's entirely dedicated to children. All the programs are prepared with their participation. There is an impression, though, that they only target the participant kids and their relatives, and do not have the core concept, thus only serving the purpose of highlighting children on the screen.

Part of the programs doesn't have a format or structure, and focus primarily on infants and fail to provide any meaningful content to older children. Also, the programs teem with clichés that promote distorted perception of male and female roles.

For instance, Basti-Bubu's daily Fashion BB pickes out some children, mostly girls, does them profound hairstyle, makeup, and takes to the shooting location to perform photo session. The pictures

are shown at the end the program. Besides implicitly suggesting children that posing before camera is solely for girls, the target audience potentially interested in such content also remains unclear.

Around 80% of the programming net is filled with musical clips featuring children. The criteria of children's selection for the clips are once again uncertain, leaving the impression that one's simply supposed to buy his participation.

These musical clips also contain gender clichés. Girls usually do dishwashing, sprucing themselves up in a beauty salon, or looking after “babies”. “Baking is my hobby”- says the beginning of one of the little girls' songs in a clip showing her with an apron fussing in the kitchen.

Boys are shown as manly. In contrast to girls' washing, ironing, babysitting, cooking, etc. boys sing of the importance of school and education. One such clip had a military-patriotic content showing children in the military uniform holding weapons.

The program's poetry has a lot of similar clichés. The poets write verses for the children for them recite. In them girls usually emulate their mothers or other adults. One such verse reflected “the heavy dole” of maternity and showed a mother's exhausting attempts to put the baby (doll) to sleep to later join her friends in a café and have a chat, but her merriment didn't last long, as the baby's cries had soon made her rush back home.

Head over Heels is another program of uncertain format. It sometimes hosts celebrity couples together with the children, makes the parents tell the story of their meeting (the child appears completely forgotten at that time), and other times teaching children how to make various items.

For instance, the first December issue was dedicated to teaching kids how to make birthday invitation cards. The viewer learns from [the program](#) that the cards have a gender, having the boy and the girl version to them (blue, vehicle shaped for boys and pink, heart-shaped for girls).

November 26 issue featured a clergyman speaking about the time of the child's commencing the school life. “A girl is first supposed to be a housewife, and after that she may think of masting whatever profession, which is a prerequisite for a strong future family, so to speak”. The program's presenter later addressed the invited child with these words.

Absence of the program's format makes it hard to define the target audience- a group of children interested in a clergyman's opinion as to when they should start their church life, or the time of certain couple's meeting.

It's also strange that the program's presenters sometimes greet the audience from Imedi TV: “we've been meeting on Imedi for three months now”- the presenter said November 30. Perhaps because Basti-Bubu shows the content of an archive program featured on Imedi in the past. However, the

program doesn't carry the "archive" notification, therefore it's hard to tell the new content from the old one.

The Private Recordings program mostly focuses on adults, with the guest celebrities speaking about their life.

The Faces program is hosted by minors. However, the overall content consists of a single topic (reading, pop-art) followed by showing of the corresponding photo-session and pictures.

Basti-Bubu's website describes the channel's Dreamvision program as educational. The preparatory stage consists of selecting a certain child, meeting his family and learning about his daily life, in order to pick out a single moment of the child's life and capture in a cartoon. For instance, during one such family visit the mother said that the kid was jealous of his little sister. That was followed by the footage suggesting the child's dislike of his sister Elene, and asking Budgadjana (a scary evil character) to take her. Then the villain showed up, the hero of the dream regretted his wish and saved the little sister from captivation. But the connection of dreams with the program and the reason behind naming it Dreamvision remain unclear.

The program Carlson, hosted by Carlson himself, also deserves positive credit. The character of Carlson rather amusingly tells tales and accompanies them with corresponding songs and involves children in the process.

In Natural Lessons Zura Shevardnadze teaches children in Gardenia how to look after plants.

Educational category of the programming net is represented with two programs-one teaches English through singing, the other teaches reading. In the program kids sing the appearing lyrics. It's actually a karaoke where both the participant and viewer children are supposed to sing, but it's hard to imagine to learn reading in this way. Furthermore, the program implies making least amount of stylistic and grammar mistakes in the singing of lyrics for better learning.

### **7.3. Enki -Benki**

Enki-Benki is another children channel that repeatedly shows the same programs not just throughout a week, but also during a day. Major part of the programs is not adapted to children, and doesn't provide the audience with news in an innovative way. The channel has a lack of educational content and their own programs with active involvement of children. It also has a clichéd approach to showing the roles of boys and girls.

The channel mostly features children songs with stereotypical representation of girls as gentle, coquettish, tattling creatures with flowers, sunshine, butterflies, and pink colour in the background.

Boys usually sing about constructing and vehicles, accompanied by the corresponding background. For instance, one of the girls' songs is called "slimming diet", followed by preparation of food and serving it to a boy that's reading a book.

Educational programs TV Atlas/Once in a Certain Country are intended for children, but provide texts unadapted for their age category. You can hear texts like:

Honoré de Balzac "created an epopee of two thousand characters; a whole society with personal genealogy, geography, and life philosophy. The latter takes origin from the author's world-view that partly reflects the medieval mystical materialism". "Johann Sebastian Bach represented the rich spiritual world of an ordinary man is his art", etc.

It also shows a few foreign programs translated into Georgian, with one of them teaching origami skills and magic tricks, which is rather interesting compared to other programs. In the Crazy Cover program a woman and a toy called Datuna show how to make various toys with apparently useless items.

Children Dances is another foreign program dedicated to girls: pink surroundings, teachers and apprentices-all female.

The company produces a youth-hosted program Multi-filmography dedicated to people and events that have changed the world of movies and animation. Happy Objective program also has a kid presenter and provides a collage of entertaining videos. Both programs have minimal involvement of minors, using them primarily for uttering transitional texts. The programs have scanty visual side, which hampers attraction of children.

The channel's image is represented by a dog Rudolph (toy), magpie Tuka (toy) and professor Khrink (person). It shows small miniatures during a day (often the same materials) featuring these characters, and daily Enki Benki's lullaby program in the evening. The basic idea is that Rudolph and Tuka can't stand one another and quarrel all the time, but the overall purpose of the miniatures remains uncertain.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the media-monitoring of children's issues shows the increase of media outlets' sensitivity towards children's issues over the recent period. They very cautiously cover these topics, and there is an impression that such approach has resulted in excessive veiling of children, even in reports of casual topics that do not pose a threat to the child.

Despite a significant increase of materials expressing child's voice compared to the previous year, the media has still to do a lot in order to engage minors in discussions and address the relevant topics together with them.

Fortunately, ethical violations have reduced in the coverage of children in conflict with the law and victim children of violence. There, however, still remains relatively small amount of standard violations in the coverage of other topics.

The comprehensive coverage of minors' issues persists as a challenge. Children's issues like childcare, upbringing, etc. are often considered in dissociation with the general context of the issues existing in the society. The media should pay more attention to covering issues affecting children's development and improvement of their current condition.

Examination of children's channels suggests that the majority of broadcasters don't produce minor-oriented content at all. Major part of children channels' programs deserve criticism, as they fail to provide children of various age category with interesting and useful content, while heavily promoting gender stereotypes.