

July 2017

Unicef UK submission: Ofcom consultation on Holding the BBC to Account for the Delivery of its Mission and Public Purposes

Attributable to Lily Caprani, Deputy Executive Director at Unicef UK and Trustee at the International Broadcasting Trust.

Unicef UK is writing in response to the Ofcom consultation on Holding the BBC to Account for the Delivery of its Mission and Public Purposes.

Working in 190 countries and territories, Unicef is the world's leading organisation for children, promoting the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do.

We have had the privilege of working with BBC teams on non-news factual content. For example, *The Boy on the Bicycle*, a BAFTA awarding winning exploration of Zaatari Syrian refugee camp in Jordan, which aired on CBBC.

Given that, we would like to support the call of the International Broadcasting Trust for Ofcom to measure the volume of new non-news international factual content the BBC broadcasts annually in its performance framework.

This will demonstrate that the BBC is delivering Purpose 1 which includes factual programming to build people's understanding of all parts of the UK and the wider world and also acts as an indicator of the BBC's distinctiveness (Purpose 3).

We agree with the International Broadcasting Trust, that factual content is one of the most distinctive aspects of BBC delivery. For example, our collaboration with the BBC, *The Boy on the Bicycle* offered a "child's eye view of life" in a refugee camp – told entirely using children's voices. This was an unusual and unique project and resonated with adults as well as children. With other broadcasters reducing the amount of international factual content they broadcast, we feel it's crucial that the BBC continues to provide this vital window on the world.

While news and current affairs are, of course, essential, factual programmes add additional context, humanity and detail and very often are able to provide viewers with a more nuanced picture of the wider world. Viewers who fed back to Unicef UK after *The Boy on the Bicycle* was broadcast said that the film felt very insightful and had given them a way to talk to their children about Syria and refugees.

UK originated international programmes cost more than domestically made programmes and are likely to be at risk at a time when the BBC's budgets are constrained. The volume of non-news international content has been in decline across the main channels since 1989 when International Broadcasting Trust began tracking such content.

The BBC is already delivering this content but it is not quantified as a genre so it is unmeasured. BBC Trust Purpose Remit Surveys have consistently shown that international content is one of the most important priorities for audiences. Channel 4

measures the amount of non-news international content it broadcasts each year to track delivery of its remit. We believe that the BBC should do as well.

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