**SAMPLE:**

**ETHICAL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES**

Communicating with family, friends and supporters about STM/volunteer activities is an important part of the volunteer journey. Similarly, for organisations, maintaining the interest of donors, building public awareness, and generating understanding and support for international missions, development and relief is essential.

However, ensuring that we communicate an accurate and balanced picture of the

complex social and development issues we engage with overseas, whilst ensuring we protect the rights, dignity and interests of the communities, families and individuals we are working with, requires us to apply an ethical

## PORTRAYAL OF LOCAL PEOPLE:

It is essential that we are conscious about how we portray local people both with the language and images we use. Language and images should not only recognise the challenges and issues but also show a positive way forward where the community/individual is the key participant in their own transformation.

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| In all communications, you MUST: | In all communications, you MUST AVOID: |
| * Present people, both adults and children, in a dignified and respectful manner. * Give due respect to the values, history, religion and culture of the people portrayed. * Represent people in a holistic, accurate light with a sense of hope, highlighting their capacity and agency to impact their own future and act as key determinants in the development process. * Use language free from labels and stigmas. * Take care to avoid stereotyping certain groups (e.g. Beware of the repeated use of images of particular ethnic groups, nationalities or genders when illustrating particular issues). * Comply with local traditions and national laws in taking or reproducing images of people, children, objects or places. | * Presenting people, including children, as helpless, dependent or to be pitied; where the donor or project is portrayed as ‘saving’ the subject. This requires assessment on an individual basis, but will generally eliminate images with crying, or unclad children which are deemed to be emotionally exploitive. * Using any images or language which may be derogatory, discriminatory or violent. * Using only images which contain just children to represent issues that affect the broader community. This is to avoid giving the false impression that the response to the issue needs to be directly targeted towards children in isolation from the rest of the community. Children should be shown with their families, their communities and/or siblings or other groups of children. |

## TRUTHFULNESS:

Promotions and communications provide us with a platform to inform and influence the views and understanding of those around us. However, it is essential to ensure that we truthfully represent the context and issues facing communities overseas, and not exaggerate the impacts of the activities we are involved in on STM/volunteer trips.

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| In all communications, you MUST: | In all communications, you MUST AVOID: |
| * Ensure information, images and captions are truthful and represent the issue, person and community accurately. * Ensure mages are used in context and are correctly attributed to programs and photographers. Disclosures should be used where there is risk of misunderstanding. | * Oversimplifying the diversity of communities, individuals, the context in which they live, and issues, their causes and solutions. * Presenting any misleading or deceiving information or images that may create a false impression or misunderstandings. * Exaggerating facts, sensationalising issues or making claims which cannot be fulfilled. * Editing photos or film to alter context. \*Photos edited to protect identities, this must be noted and explained. * Using images in a ‘generic’ fashion to illustrate subject matter when there is no connection between the image and the material. * Using images of nationals from one country to represent nationals from another country. * Evoking a donor response in a manner that is manipulative and does not align with values of integrity and transparency. |

## CONSENT FOR STORIES AND IMAGES:

As a part of showing respect for the people and communities we engage with, we should always seek permission from individuals before taking photos, posting images or filming and distributing people’s stories.When taking photographs or recording stories of a child, consent must be gained from a parent or guardian.

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| Informed Consent |
| Where information about a person will be made public, informed consent must been obtained. Informed consent requires you explain to the person where the image/story will be used, what information will be revealed and give them an opportunity to place stipulations around their story (E.g. such as not revealing identity, time limitation, not uploaded on internet or social media).  Informed consent ensures:   * Respect for the individual’s autonomy and privacy, and avoids harming the individual through the inappropriate publication of their image/story. * Images and interview content will be used within the year they are obtained, and for a maximum of 4 years only. Please note: In the case of survivors of abuse or exploitation, content will be used for a maximum of 2 years unless otherwise specified by the interview subject. * Subjects have the right to withdraw permission, even after a story or photo is published. |

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| **Written Consent** |
| There are two different levels of consent - verbal and written. The level of consent required depends on the nature of the story, and the final output of the story or accompanying images.  Written consent is required if:   * An individual is photographed in the context of culturally sensitive, politically sensitive, taboo or high-stigma issues or may be put at risk or stigma. * The photograph or accompanying story clearly identifies and provides substantial information about a particular child or adult. * The individual is the sole focus of a story (E.g. One Life story or interview). * A child is the sole subject of an image which accompanies a story of a sensitive nature and implies the issue pertains to the child. * Taking images or film of individuals in clinical settings (e.g in a hospital, clinic, with midwives/nurses) or private settings (e.g in a private home, within a classroom).   In order to comply with the written consent requirement, it is recommended that consent forms are translated into the local language, and an interpreter is engaged and used for extensive photographic shoots in order to explain and communicate the purpose of the photographs and to gain informed consent. |

## PORTRAYAL OF SENSITIVE ISSUES:

Care should especially be taken when addressing sensitive issues such as trafficking, domestic violence, vulnerable children, families in crisis, etc, so the issues are portrayed accurately, using language and images in accordance with relevant guidelines specific to these issues, and to avoid depicting people into over simplified victim or villain roles.

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| Portraying Children (incl. orphaned, vulnerable and unaccompanied children) |
| Children’s situations often evoke particularly strong responses. We must be careful not to exploit this and instead put the child’s best interests and safety above the desire to share an impacting image or story.  In all communications, ensure you:   * Respect the rights of every child including their rights to protection, privacy, have their opinions heard and participate in decisions affecting them. * Protect the best interests of each child over any other consideration, including advocacy for children’s issues and rights. * Present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive. * Take a child’s views into account in accordance with their age, level of maturity and development. * Assess and comply with local laws, traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images of children. * Interview children in a sensitive manner and only when a parent or guardian is present. * Present the context of the child accurately and the role or impact of the project in context of other supporting factors in the child’s life (e.g. family, community, local church or support group). * Ensure children’s private information is not made publically available, including details of their specific location (e.g. disable GPS tracking function on equipment used to film/photograph children. * Avoid publishing a story or an image which might put the child, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used. |
| Portraying people who are survivors of abuse or exploitation |
| Media and communication has the ability to be used as a positive tool for advocacy, but can also be used to inflict a “second victimization” upon victims or survivors by re-enhancing their feelings of violation, shame, disorientation, and loss of control.   1. If reporting on children and adults who are survivors of abuse or exploitation, adhere to Chab Dai’s Media & Communications Policy. 2. When interviewing adult or child survivors of violence, abuse or exploitation the interviewer must be trained in psycho-social counselling. |
| Portraying affected by disasters |
| During a disaster, especially in the initial response stage, extra care and sensitivity should be taken when collecting information, images and stories. We must be conscious that people affected by disasters are especially vulnerable during this time and may be experiencing trauma and shock.   1. Extra consideration must be taken when asking survivors for informed consent, as due to their vulnerable state they may feel compelled to give consent and incorrectly presume that declining may impact their ability to access benefits. 2. During the initial response to a disaster, it will often be inappropriate to ask survivors to share their stories. Generally, stories should only be recorded during this initial stage if a person tells their story without being asked and when you can ensure that they have freely given consent for the information they have shared to be used. The recovery stage of a disaster is a much better time to collect stories from survivors. 3. t is also often very difficult in disaster situations to adequately assess risk of harm or stigma (for more information see below). When in doubt, stories and images should not be used. |

## MANAGING RISK IN COMMUNICATIONS

Individuals or groups may be put at risk of stigma, reprisal, violence or rejection in their communities as a result of exposing their identity or story. A person’s safety, privacy and reputation should always be put above the value and importance of using their story or image.

You should always assess the risks of harm or stigma to the subject and only reveal information based on the level of risk of harm and stigma:

* + **Low Risk:** Faces, full names and geographical location revealed.
  + **Medium Risk:** Faces, pseudonyms (limited cases first names will be permitted) and vague geographical location revealed.
  + **High Risk:** Faces/ visuals concealed, pseudonyms used and locations changed.
  + **Significant Risk:** Do not publish, unless the subject strongly expresses a desire for their story to be told as an act of advocacy. In these cases, the subject must give written consent and fully understand the risks and how the story will be used. Great caution should be exercised in these situations.

\***Please note:** Children are much more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. For this reason, they are always ranked as medium or high risks.

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| Social Media |
| Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs, are a regular part of life for most people. While they can be powerful tools for increasing awareness, generating support and fostering community advocacy they can also increase the risk of harm or exploitation to children and vulnerable communities.  There are a few simple rules that we ask you to follow when sharing your STM/volunteer activities online:   1. Private doesn’t mean safe: Even if you have strict privacy settings, these may not stop others from accessing and sharing your posts. 2. Show respect: Be alert to the views, beliefs, cultural norms, etc. of others and do not post anything that may cause offence, risk or harm to others. 3. Think before your share: Remember even if you share something in context (e.g. an image with a caption), it can be taken out of context and misused by others (e.g. image cropped/manipulated and text deleted) 4. Be mindful that sharing images of children increases their vulnerability. |