

Statement of ethical practice for NGO story production and use



This statement, written by members of Bond, the UK network for organisations working in international development, outlines our responsibilities for and commitments to ethical practice when producing and using images and stories to communicate our work. A set of guidelines accompanies this statement.

We rely on the images and stories of the people we work with to communicate the importance and impact of our work. These contributors¹ generously share their time as well as their images, experiences and opinions and make our communications powerful and effective. Respecting their contribution means recognising them as key actors in our communications and working to ensure that our content production upholds their rights to participation and protection.

We also have a responsibility to understand the wider impact of our communications. Our communications should improve public understanding of the capabilities/capacities and agency of the people we work with, alongside the realities and root causes of the challenges we are working to overcome. The global nature of our communications mean that our outputs can be seen by anyone, anywhere and so we must create communications with this in mind.

Adhering to the **commitments** below will result in NGO storytelling that works well for everyone: contributors, their communities, audiences, and our own organisations.

- We recognise **contributors as key partners** in our communications. The accompanying full [guidelines](#) outline the different ways that we aim to put contributors first and ensure that their rights to participation and protection are respected throughout story production and use.
- We will adhere to the humanitarian principle of **Do no harm** when recording and using images and stories. We recognise the difficult contexts of many contributors – particularly children –, and we will fully assess, and respond to, the risks to contributors of sharing their personal data (their images and stories) through our communications.
- We will undertake meaningful and appropriate **informed consent** procedures that support contributors to fully understand the implications and outcomes of their contribution and to freely give (or withhold) their consent. Informed consent is the cornerstone of ethical practice.
- We will gather and communicate images and stories that **accurately** document the distinct realities of the different people we work with. In our communications, images will always be accompanied by **captions**.
- We will **communicate the background and context** to the challenges and circumstances facing the people we work with. Our communications aim to support understanding that issues of poverty and global inequality are a result of broader historical, social, economic, political and environmental factors such as colonialism, extractivism, and white supremacy.
- We will **reflect critically on positionality, power and privilege** when it comes to leadership and decision making on media and communications work. We will use this critical awareness to consider ways we can shift power towards local actors and contributors themselves.
- Images and stories must **avoid perpetuating negative and racist stereotypes** of the people and places where we work. We will work to create fuller stories that generate compassion, solidarity and understanding and use contributors' own words in their stories wherever we can.

¹ The term 'contributors' refers to the people who feature in films, photographs and accompanying interviews. It is a deliberate alternative to 'subject' to better acknowledge their active role in, and contribution to NGO communications/storytelling