



Communication & protection

Guidelines consent, dignity and safety

The goal of the programs is to ensure a better situation for children and families in need. It is crucial that during the process of working towards that goal we do not harm children and families in any way. In collecting communication materials, it is important to be aware of protection. A story or photo should not violate the rights or dignity of the ones described or portrayed.

Permission: consent is crucial

Children and families who tell their stories should give their consent. ***Be aware: consent is not just a 'yes'.*** It also includes explaining how the story and photos will be used. People have to understand that their story and/or photo might be published online or offline and might reach a global public.

- Do not assume consent.
- Be aware of power distance when asking consent.
- Ask consent in the mother language when possible.
- Use examples (show magazine or (online) end products) in order to make people understand the use of the pictures and stories.
- Always explain to children/families that they have the right to refuse and that they are the ones in charge of what they want to share.
- When you are talking to a child, you need consent from the child, but also from their caregiver(s)

Consent can be given verbally, but we strongly encourage to also use consent forms. With the note that it's way more important that people understand what they are saying yes to and feel free to refuse than to have a consent form just pro forma.

An example of a consent form you can find below. The hard copy version of the consent form needs to be stored by Help a Child International.

Consent is always for a certain amount of time (depending on the purpose of the photo) and can also be withdrawn if the person who gave consent changes their mind about it.

'Consent is not just a 'yes'. It's important that people understand what they are saying 'yes' to and feel free to refuse'

Permission: no damage but dignity

The story and photos should contribute to the dignity of the person(s) described or portrayed. ***Ask yourself: If I was in this situation, how would I like the story to be told?*** Or: If these were my children how would I want to show them?

About photos

- People on a photo should be respectfully portrayed, adequately clothed and without any sexually suggestive poses.
Tip: 'Think like a bad guy'. If for example a baby or child is not wearing pants, or a minimum of clothes, do not take a picture.
- Ask how the person wants to be portrayed. Show the photo you took and ask if they feel comfortable with the way they have been portrayed.
- In some cases it's better to portrait someone unrecognizably (even when the person is okay with being portrayed!) because it can harm the safety of the person. See also the paragraph *Privacy*.

'Show the photo you took and ask if they feel comfortable with the way they have been portrayed.'

About language:

- Write respectfully about the person. Do not use words that belittle the person you are writing about like 'pathetic' or 'helpless'.
- When it comes to medical conditions or and physical or mental disabilities: write respectfully, do not mention personal details. Keep in mind what you yourself would or would not share about you or your child with someone you do not know.
- Again, ask yourself: would I like to be described like this?
- Be accurate: don't exaggerate, generalize or downplay. Do not stereotype by telling an incomplete story.
- Be aware that stories are powerful, make sure its contributing to the dignity of the person and the religious or cultural group he or she belongs to.
- Stay away from victimization and stigmatization, instead protect vulnerable groups in the way you are writing about them.

If possible, share the story and a copy of the photo with the person portrayed, and include a confirmation of consent –verbal or written– of this person before passing on this particular photo to Help a Child International.

Privacy: safety and storage

To ensure the safety of children and families, it is important that stories and photos cannot be tracked back to their house or town.

1. **Use only first names and do not mention details of the location** (village name, address etc.)
2. When describing sensitive issues, never use real names, but a pseudonym and make sure the person in the picture is not recognizable. You can think of the following cases:
 - i. Preparators or victims of (domestic) violence or sexual abuse
 - ii. Refugees or internally displaced persons
 - iii. People who deal with stigma (for example hiv/aids)
 - iv. People who are traumatized (this varies from loss of a child to being war victim etc.)
 - v. Child brides, teenage moms or (former) child combatants.
 - vi. People with a physical or mental disability
 - vii. Children below the age of 3 (in areas with a high risk of child mortality).

'In some cases it is better to portrait someone unrecognizably. Even when the person is okay with being portrayed!'

Personal information and images should be stored in a safe place, to which only authorized persons have access.

Electronic information and images should be stored in a protected folder with a password. Be aware that also on portable equipment as phones, memory sticks and laptops are encrypted.

Annex 1: consent form children: page 5

Annex 2: consent form adults: page 6

The consent forms can be downloaded separately on the howto-portal.

Photography and filming consent form children



In accordance with our child protection policy we will not permit photographs, video or other images of young people to be taken or stories to be shared without the consent of the parents/caregivers and the child.

..... (organisation) and Help a Child will take all steps to ensure these images are used solely for the purposes they are intended. The images will be used for no longer than 5 years, unless another timeframe is mentioned on this consent form. The organisations will not depict any negative images of the community/person and will always try to picture decently. If you become aware that these images are being used inappropriately you should inform immediately.

To be completed by parent/caregiver

- ✓ I consent to (organisation) and Help a Child photographing or videoing my child.
- ✓ I can confirm that I have been made aware of how the organisation's will use these images or videos in future.
- ✓ I can confirm that I have been made aware on how these images or videos will be stored within the organisation.
- ✓ I listed below any additional wishes on the use of these images (for example the period of time used, or the purpose):

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name parent/caregiver signature of parent /caregiver date and place

To be completed by child

- ✓ I consent to (organisation) and Help a Child photographing or videoing my involvement in the project.

name child signature of child date and place

Photography and filming consent form adults



In accordance with our policy we will not permit photographs, video or other images of people to be taken or stories to be shared without consent.

..... (organisation) and Help a Child will take all steps to ensure these images are used solely for the purposes they are intended. The images will be used for no longer than 5 years, unless another timeframe is mentioned on this consent form. The organisations will not depict any negative images of the community/person and will always try to picture decently. If you become aware that these images are being used inappropriately you should inform immediately.

To be completed by the person portrayed

- ✓ I consent to (organisation) and Help a Child photographing or videoing me.
- ✓ I can confirm that I have been made aware of how the organisation's will use these images or videos in future.
- ✓ I can confirm that I have been made aware on how these images or videos will be stored within the organisation.
- ✓ I listed below any additional wishes on the use of these images or videos (for example the period of time these images can be used):

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name

signature

date and place

