



Integral:

OUR
Storyteller's
GUIDE

Our Mission

Integral exists to see God's Kingdom demonstrated by uniting our Members. We champion, encourage and facilitate collaborative working across the Alliance, particularly in disasters.

Values

Our Kingdom values unite us in prayer, Christian reflection and collaborative action. We work to create and sustain a community of trust among our Members in which collaborative work can thrive.

Unity

We are committed to Jesus' call to unity, and believe unity is God's gift to us outworked through the power of the Holy Spirit. We unite in order to enable all people in need to flourish as God intended.

Relational

We put people first, and desire to see each person fulfil their God-given potential. We want all our interactions to be marked by servant-heartedness, generosity, openness, integrity and mutual respect. We believe that by expressing organisational humility we demonstrate the character of God to a suffering world.

Accountability

We strive for professional excellence and are mutually accountable for the quality of our work to each other, those we serve, our supporters, and to God. We are a learning alliance, committed to transparency, reflecting on and evaluating our joint work, and assessing our collective impact.

Christ-centredness

We practise the presence of God in our midst through listening, Biblical reflection and prayer. We strive to provide space for the prophetic voice of the Spirit to shape and guide us as an alliance and inform our actions.

Impartiality

We acknowledge the image of God in every person, therefore we adhere to core principles of the Red Cross Code of Conduct and the Core Humanitarian Standard. Aid is given regardless of the race, religion, creed or nationality of the recipients, and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.

Complementarity

As Christ has called us to be the many parts of one body, we believe that when our Members combine their strengths and work interdependently, we have greater reach and impact. By working together, we provide a more complete response to the needs of those we serve.

In a world that is often cynical, fragmented and hostile, we are Christians who believe that disaster and suffering are not the end of the story.

Our Vision

Christian agencies uniting globally, alleviating suffering, and restoring hope, in disasters and beyond.

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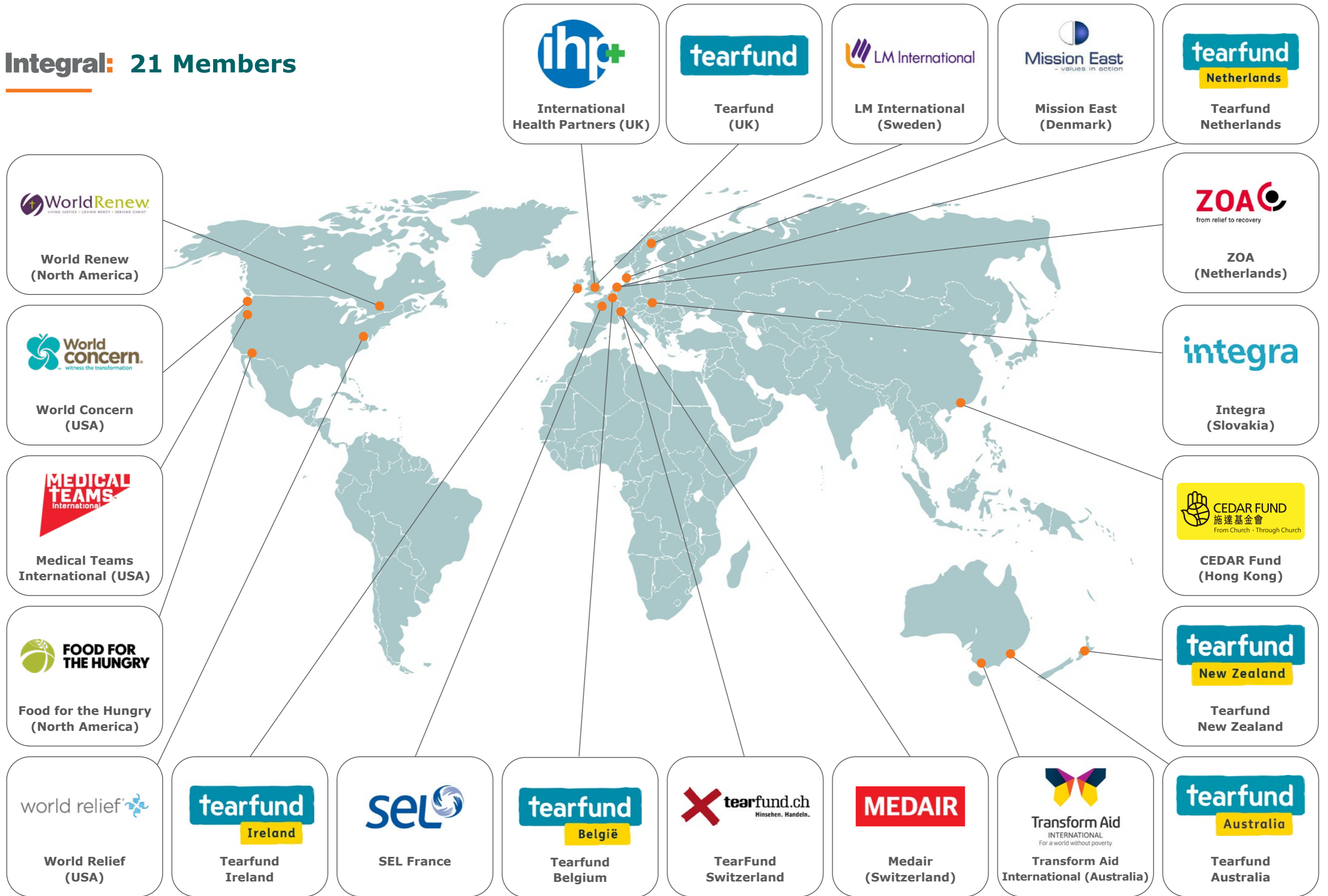
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Integral is a global alliance of 21 Christian relief and development organisations.

Integral's goal is for all its Members to become more effective and efficient in their work and to see greater impact and reach as a result of working collaboratively, especially in disasters.

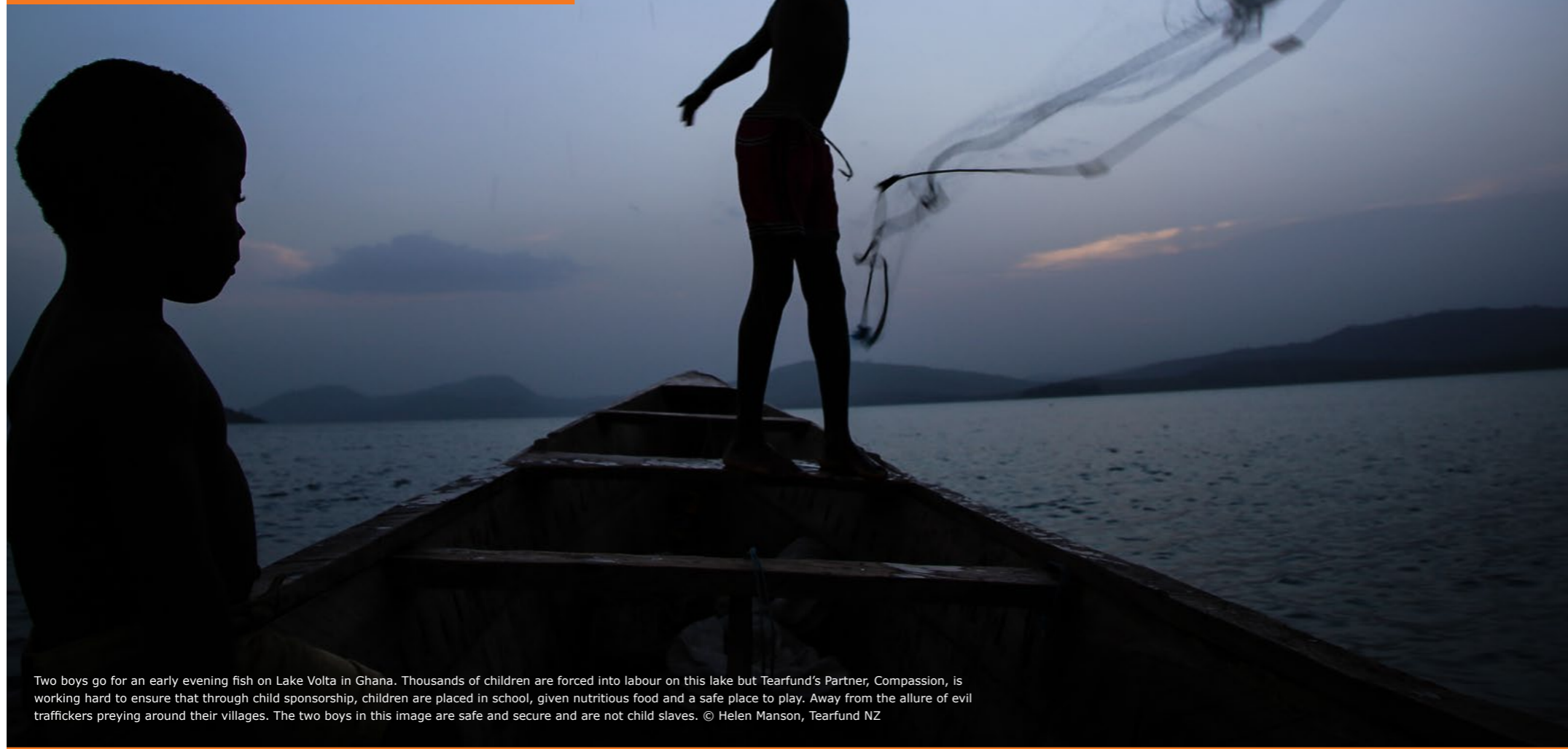
For more information about Integral see www.integralalliance.org

Integral: 21 Members



“ Communicating ethically centres on one key question – who has power? Every human interaction is affected by power dynamics, which depend on personal characteristics – like gender, race, ethnicity or age – and how they are valued in the interaction. Anyone sharing their story will always feel these power dynamics, as will the person gathering their story.

Girls Not Brides Guidelines for Ethical Communications Around Child Marriage



Two boys go for an early evening fish on Lake Volta in Ghana. Thousands of children are forced into labour on this lake but Tearfund's Partner, Compassion, is working hard to ensure that through child sponsorship, children are placed in school, given nutritious food and a safe place to play. Away from the allure of evil traffickers preying around their villages. The two boys in this image are safe and secure and are not child slaves. © Helen Manson, Tearfund NZ

Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of Integral's Storyteller's Guide! It is the collaborative result of Integral Members talking about the ethical dimension of storytelling and reflecting on how that relates to the localisation of aid. Our intention is that this Guide is a 'living document' ensuring that we keep up with the developments and best practices in our sector.

Integral Members are all Christian organisations who share the belief that everyone is made in God's image and intrinsically worthy of honour or respect. This is reflected in [Integral's Commitments to Quality and Accountability](#) which all Members sign up to and which states: *We believe that by working together, expressing organisational humility and servanthood, we can demonstrate the character of God to a world in need... And that God cares deeply for people living in poverty, illness, hunger, conflict, alienation and oppression.*

This Guide aims to help those involved in humanitarian communications to tell the stories of the people and communities they work with accurately and honestly, with dignity and respect. It brings together best practice and learning around ethics and dignity in humanitarian communications. We hope that you will find it full of practical tips that will guide your practice, and be a resource for you to use with your staff and all those who gather communications for you.



Florance stands in the garden of banana trees and cassava leaves behind her home in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement, Uganda in 2022. After losing her father to violence in the DRC, she and her family fled to Uganda in 2012. © Lauren Odderstol, Medical Teams International

History

In 2019 an Integral Working Group of marketing staff worked to understand how our 21 Members gained informed consent for their photographic work. This is important because Integral Members frequently share field photos, interviews and stories with one another in their disaster relief collaboration.

Building on the informed consent work, seven Integral Members formed a new Working Group to share learning and best practice around the importance of dignity in our humanitarian storytelling. The Working Group reflected on the marketing and communications contribution to localisation and collaborated to produce this practical Guide. They also shared their capacity to gather communications using recommended local talent.

You can read more about Integral's commitments to locally-led action [here](#).



Telling Stories with Dignity

In field communications work we recognise that there is an imbalance of power between a photographer and the person having their picture taken. Uneven power dynamics, as well as unconscious and conscious bias, mean we have a responsibility to present people's stories in the most accurate and honest way we can.

As NGOs, we rely on the images and stories of the people we work with to communicate the impact of our life-changing work. Our contributors

“ Humanity has shown time and time again that when we come together for a purpose, we excel. We are at our best when we work together. To use pictures where particular human conditions like poverty and sickness are given individual faces, usually black African children, one distances these issues. Poverty and sickness become a remote African problem, to be seen through a charity lens instead of as a problem encountered by humans in general and which should be tackled in this way. Unfortunately, this ensures that the people in need within the countries targeted by these images, usually western countries, do not recognize when they encounter these challenges within their own countries and instils a lack of empathy and unity. This is not helpful at all.

Grace Uwineza Gatera a seasoned lived experienced mental health advocate, living in Kigali, Rwanda.

generously share their images, experiences and perspectives to make our communications, fundraising and advocacy more powerful. Respecting their contribution means recognising them as key stakeholders in our communications and working to ensure that our image-making upholds their rights to participation and protection.

We also have a responsibility to better understand the wider impact of our communications. Our storytelling should improve public understanding of the capabilities and resilience of the people we work with, alongside the realities and complexities of the challenges we are working to overcome. In all our

communications we strive to balance a commitment to accurate representations of the realities faced by the people we work with, while avoiding the perpetuation of negative stereotypes.

By considering the role our stories play in the representation of people, places and activities, we can better avoid 'the dangers of the single story'. We hope this Guide can help you to tell the amazing stories of the people we serve and convey people's experiences in ways which generate empathy, respect and understanding.

Integral Dignity in Humanitarian Communications Working Group
April 2024



© Food for the Hungry



Determined not to leave her home despite constant shelling - a rural community member in the Mykolaiv Oblast, southern Ukraine. © Natasha Kravchuk, Integra



“ We will adhere to the humanitarian principle of ‘Do no harm’ when gathering and using personal stories and images.

Preparing for cold weather - winterisation project participants in the Kharkiv Oblast, eastern Ukraine. © Natasha Kravchuk, Integra

Our Commitments

The following commitments, written by the Integral Dignity in Humanitarian Communications Working Group, outline our responsibilities for and commitments to ethical practice when gathering and using images and stories to communicate our work. These commitments are accompanied by a set of guidelines, which we hope will raise our collective awareness and consciousness of the challenges and issues our work entails.

Our commitments to ethical practice on NGO content-gathering and use

We believe that adhering to the commitments below will result in NGO communications that work well for everyone – our contributors, their communities, our audiences, and our own organisations.

- We recognise contributors as Partners and as stakeholders in our communications. Our guidelines outline the ways in which we aim to put contributors at the forefront of their own stories, working with them to amplify their voice and wherever possible, giving them full oversight of their story and image within our communication materials.
- We will adhere to the humanitarian principle of ‘Do no harm’ when gathering and using personal stories and images. We will work with contributors to understand their individual situations. We will assess and respond to the risks taken through sharing their stories, and ensure this is expressed clearly to contributors at the point of story collection, and when possible, reiterate this throughout the process through to publication.
- We will undertake informed consent procedures with all contributors to ensure that they fully understand the purpose of collecting their story, our intention for use, the format this will take, and the possible risks associated with sharing their story. We will express clearly that they are free to give or withhold their consent at any point during the process (even after a story or image has been collected). We believe that informed consent is the cornerstone of ethical storytelling practice.
- We will accurately document and depict the realities of the different people we work with through our communication materials. We will not omit elements or ‘stage’ photos in order to further our own fundraising agendas, nor will we use images or stories that are out of date. We will strive to work with participants to ensure they are happy with how they are being portrayed. Wherever possible, images will be accompanied with captions.
- We will strive to communicate the context to the challenges and circumstances facing the people



When you meet Obedi, it's easy to see that he's a kind, loving father whom his family adores. What you can't see is the mental illnesses he is managing after surviving violence in the DRC. Thanks to ongoing support and medication from a Medical Teams psychiatrist in the Rwamwanja refugee settlement, Obedi is able to manage his mental health and support his family. Uganda, 2022. © Lauren Odderstol, Medical Teams International

we work with in order to better communicate the whole story. Our communications aim to support and improve understanding that issues of poverty and global inequality are a result of broader social, economic and/or political factors.

- We will ensure that our images and stories do not perpetuate negative or incomplete stereotypes of the people or places where we work. We will use contributors' own words wherever possible in our stories and seek to contextualise stories as much as possible to create a fuller picture and narrative.

- We recommend storing photos, stories and consents together. Best practice would be to have an expiry date with images and stories, and ensure that they are deleted or archived. We want to be careful that images and the stories that go with them are reflective of current reality.

The Integral Communications Standards for working together in disasters can be viewed [here](#).

“Moving forward, we should listen keenly to the descriptions that the local communities use, take time to understand the cultures and ways of life of the people, and follow their lead on decision-making. We should honor their stories by depicting them in a way that retains their dignity and truth, and eliminates misunderstandings as much as possible.”

Chilande Kuloba-Warria, Warande Advisory Centre, Nairobi, Kenya. Quote taken from Better Conversations About Ethical Storytelling

Informed Consent

A good consent process is a vital part of any content-gathering exercise and a cornerstone of ethical good practice. **Informed consent is not strictly a form, it's a conversation.** And it takes time.

Furthermore, as Christian organisations, we recognise that the informed consent process (and indeed the entire story-gathering process) is an opportunity for incarnational Christian ministry to those whose stories we are sharing. We model how Christ treated everyone He met with dignity, every time we enter into the conversation about consent.

Before gathering and using any content, you must get the informed consent of the individual. This means they must understand why you want to photograph, interview or film them and how you will use the content you gather.

Why is it important?

Not only is informed consent industry best practice, but it also builds trust, develops resilience and voice among those we work with, and ensures that staff avoid doing harm, damaging reputations, invading personal privacy and potentially incurring libel and copyright issues.

You must also make sure that you do not raise expectations that the person/s will benefit directly from the use of the photo. However, they and other communities may benefit indirectly through the work of your organisation. Achieving this is much more of a challenge than it seems.

Before arriving at a location for image and story collection, we need to carefully explain to our local staff or Partner why the consent process is important to us. We desire people to only provide consent if they feel comfortable and are not pushed



© Daniel White

into agreeing. We also desire a good understanding amongst the community of what we intend to do with the content we gather.

The consent process is vital to ensuring that anyone sharing their story with us is respected and treated with dignity. Everyone in your organisation and your Partners should understand the importance of consent.

What makes it informed consent?

Consent is informed by ensuring the potential contributor(s) understands:

- Why your organisation wants to film/photograph/interview them

(for fundraising/communications/campaigning purposes etc).

- What the resulting communications will be (advert/publication, etc).
- How and where it will be communicated (through what channels/mediums and to whom).

TOP TIP: Wherever possible bring hard copies, or have examples of digital content on your phone, of how their image may be used e.g. previous campaigns

In addition, let contributors know:

- How long their image and other personal information will be kept by

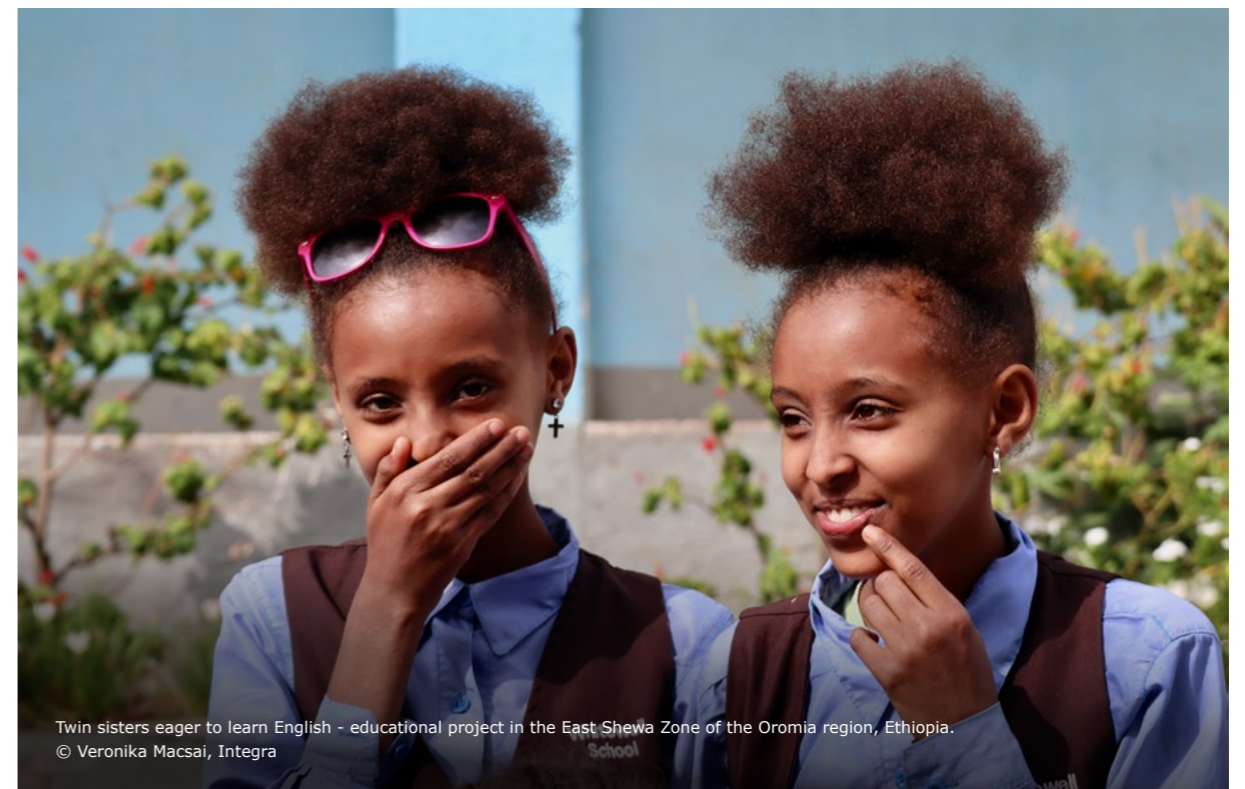
your organisation. Please note: This is especially important in rapidly changing contexts. Having signed consent from someone a month ago in Afghanistan for example should not let us assume that the person would still allow their image to be used today. Consent only remains valid if the context has not significantly changed since consent was granted.

- That they have a right to withdraw consent for further use, at any time.
- How they can withdraw consent.
- That they will not be compensated monetarily for their interview.

It is important that organisations do all they can to ensure that informed consent is freely given (and this is also a GDPR requirement). Many contributors are likely

to feel obliged to agree to requests to film/ photograph themselves or their child, so it is important that your informed consent process is one that engenders dialogue with the contributors. They should feel comfortable and be encouraged to ask questions and share any concerns in the language they are most comfortable using. You must reassure them that there will be no negative consequences for them or others if they choose not to be filmed/photographed/interviewed. You should provide multiple opportunities for contributors to say no or express their concerns.

Any information collected outside of this process is considered off the record and cannot be used or disseminated in any media produced without consent from the Partner or programme staff.



Twin sisters eager to learn English - educational project in the East Shewa Zone of the Oromia region, Ethiopia. © Veronika Macsai, Integra



Role of good translators and interpreters in informed consent:

The information shared during the consent process must be clear and in a language contributors can understand. Best practice is to send your consent form to the Partner to translate into the local language (or the national language) of the contributor, ahead of any trips.

When interacting with contributors via an interpreter, be sure that your interpreter fully understands the importance of informed consent, especially if they play a role in obtaining consent. Be clear with the interpreter that you would like to know if the contributor begins to display emotional discomfort during the process of obtaining

consent, and indeed as the story interview progresses. Prior to story gathering, give the interpreter explicit permission to comment on levels of comfort or distress.

Interpreting only works well if everyone involved trusts the process. Ask interpreters about what challenges may occur during an interaction with contributors, and how to mitigate them ahead of time. Ensure interpreters are available to support interactions with anyone who needs it, including women, older people and people with disabilities. Consider discussing sensitive topics and inclusion issues with them beforehand, such as how and where to communicate sensitive topics or how best to include women or people with hearing or visual impairments.

Integral Alliance work on informed consent:

- A survey that is updated annually regarding what Member's informed consent standard is.
- The sharing of each other's informed consent policies.
- Articulating a minimum consent standard, as well as a 'golden standard' as part of the Integral Disaster Relief Process. (See Integral Photo Standards on page 38 for more details).

Recording informed consent

Good consent example



While the key element in consent is ensuring the full understanding of the contributor, it is also necessary to have a record of their consent. A hard copy consent form is generally used but keep in mind that often people can't read and may also fear signing something. Filming the consent is also possible, or using a consent app. Check with your local staff or the Partner about the cultural context to see what's most appropriate.





© Tearfund NZ, Nikki Denholm

TOP TIP: Consider downloading and using a consent form app on your phone. For Apple try Easy Release or for Android Model Release Maker. But ensure it meets your organisation's consent requirements.

Before you turn your camera on, don't forget to explain:

- What are you asking the contributors to do.
- Who you are.
- How you use their information.
- Their rights.
- How much time it will take.

The evidence of consent that you gather (either a signed form, recording verbal

consent, or completing a consent app) must demonstrate that the information outlined above has been shared with the contributor in a language they understand.

Other points to note

Make sure that the person has understood they can decline to have a photo taken of themselves or their child before you click the shutter. And ensure they know there will be no impact on their relationship with your organisation as a result of declining.

Responsible content gathering requires time. Building in sufficient time allows for contributors to properly consider your request for their story. Short visits can be unsettling and potentially harmful to vulnerable people, especially children.

If using a false name (pseudonym) to protect the person's identity, choose one with them and note it on the consent form. Save the photos and stories under the false name. Check your organisation's guidance on when pseudonyms should be used.

Key figures in images will be informed of what the image is being used for. Show them an example of how you might use the image and why you want their photo.

If taking photos of children under 18, make sure you have the consent of their parent or guardian, as well as the child or young person. Be sure to gauge whether the child is being pushed into an image against their will.

If photographing a woman, it may be appropriate to have consent from her family/household member(s) and allow

time for this, especially in regions such as South Asia and the Middle East where some may use a hijab or burqa. In some cases, a woman may want to place a head covering or avert her eyes from the lens—use sensitivity and allow time for this before the shot. If it is difficult to acquire this agreement, do not collect images or stories from this woman.

Partner staff and the community in which content is being gathered should understand the purposes and intentions for which the materials are being gathered and how they will be used, known and seen by others outside the community.

Immediately delete images that rob people of their dignity or do not meet your organisation's guidelines. This includes images you may have taken and the person in it declines their consent for its use.

Pre-Arrival Checklist:

Before your arrival at the location, don't forget to:

- Explain to local staff or Partner why the consent process is important.
- Send your consent form to the Partner to translate into the local language.
- Prepare hard copies of the consent form or download a consent form app on your phone.
- Prepare hard copies, or examples of digital content on your phone, of how the images may be used.
- Make sure that your interpreter fully understands the importance of informed consent.

If during the content gathering the contributor shares traumatic or very personal information, or details that might place them in danger, it is best practice to always re-consent at the end.

Emotional reactions

Be attentive when asking for informed consent during times of extreme shock and distress. There's a high probability or risk that the contributor has experienced something traumatic or emotional and even the simplest of questions (e.g. How many people live in this household?) can lead to an emotional response.

Allow a reasonable amount of time for consideration of the contributors and be responsive if they later regret something that they agreed to in the heat of the moment. Don't forget that your contributors' wellbeing should take precedent over your communications requirements.

Cultural awareness and how you present yourself in the field.

It is helpful to be aware of how you present yourself, as the photographer/story-gatherer, to the individual. Remember that there is a power dynamic at play, both in representing the organisation who can offer assistance and in carrying a camera that can record or capture the likeness of this individual.

Dress according to cultural norms. For example, some customs require that women not wear trousers or their skirt

lengths may be expected to fall below the knee. Other customs may require head coverings.

Pay attention to your body language. Learn what cultural norms are at play before entering the country so you know how to politely approach and introduce yourself to someone. If possible, put yourself at the same eye level as them (standing over them can feel intimidating/have an implied dynamic if they are sitting down). Speak calmly and clearly. Make sure your arms and hands are open (if culturally appropriate) rather than being crossed.

When there are language barriers, a warm smile (if culturally appropriate) is a good way to develop ease and trust between two people.

Pay attention to their body language. Do they seem uncomfortable – looking down, crossing their arms, expressing concern with their eyes, seeming nervous? Do they seem reluctant or are they hesitating? Or do they seem pleasant, receptive, open, in agreement? If you sense doubt, talk with them openly and do not try to convince them to give consent. It is important to reassure them that they have the right to their own likeness and the power is in their hands. This part of the conversation is one where a translator is so important, so that sensitive subjects are approached in a culturally relevant way. Since the power dynamic also may exist between the comms person and the translator, it's key to ensure the translator knows that they can advise you of any time you may be culturally insensitive/unaware.

Cultural, political and religious contexts are essential aspects in gathering respectful images in our Partner country's setting. It is wise to follow all cultural cues and advice from the Partner or local staff representative. For example, the photographer needs to understand gender norms in the setting where they are working. In some cases, it can be inappropriate or unacceptable for a man to photograph a woman. In Afghanistan for instance, a woman photographing another woman may also not be appropriate. In cases of conflict and emergencies, there will often be people who do not wish to be photographed for various reasons.

In cases where people have been traumatised, it is advisable to disclose all interview questions the subject will be asked at least one week **prior** to the

interview. Our local staff and Partners should be given the right to modify or delete questions.

The Partner, country staff and participant all have the right to halt interviewing, filming or photographing if they feel it is causing distress or is inappropriate.

The participant should be aware that they are allowed to halt the interview at any time, as well as withdraw consent even after it is over. Re-traumatisation can occur when someone is sharing their story, especially for the first time. Ensure you take your time with them, paying close attention to their emotional comfort. Take breaks if needed and before proceeding, ask if they feel comfortable going forward (reminding them that they are free to stop at any time).



© Tearfund NZ, Jared Buckley



A woman who was trafficked as a young girl to India tenderly holds a photo of her precious Father who has since died. After nearly a decade in India, they were finally reunited. He had no idea where she had gone or if she'd ever return. © Tearfund NZ, Helen Manson

Other points to note

Show the image to the people in the shot on the back of the camera. This may put people at ease.

Manage expectations - tell those you are photographing about the relationship between your organisation and the Partner and that we're not directly going to help them. Explain that we may use their image/story to raise support to help the work. Also, tell them that we may end up not using all the photos. This will ensure that they will not be as disappointed that we didn't use it or wonder whether it was used or not.

Don't send images directly to the person in the photo, rather keep the communication through the Partner or local staff.

If asked by a programme participant to take photos of situations that don't meet our guidelines, take the photo anyway to build the relationship but try to work with the person to make it appropriate for use. For instance, if you are asked to take a photo of an infant distressed by malnutrition, try to get the parent to hold the child in their arms. If it still doesn't meet our requirements we can always delete it later.

TOP TIP: Bring a polaroid camera and offer to give the person/family some photos to keep.

Collecting good story information

Examples of good and ethical storytelling:

- The story highlights the subject's skills and expertise.
- The story does not rely on pity to engage the audience.
- The story is centred on the subject's work and drive rather than the organisation.
- The story is told in the first-person narrative – has ownership of their own story.
- The story doesn't rely on pity but rather focuses on aspirations.
- The story doesn't put words into the subject's mouth, i.e. 'Standard operating procedures.' Technical language feels unnatural.
- In a call to action don't push your own agenda - simply allowing the subject's story to be enough.

Things to avoid in storytelling:

- Positioning your organisation as the saviours and without your intervention, action from the subject is unfeasible.
- The subject being consistently presented as 'frail' and weak, perpetuating the idea that they have no agency of their own and must rely solely on external humanitarian intervention.
- The only words said by the subject

perpetuating helplessness and the whole story relying on pity.

- Downplaying the role of local actors in their own communities who bring about change and instead focusing on outside 'heroes'.

Good storytelling:

1. Personal Data

Name, country/village, children, spouse's name.

2. Feelings

How did the person feel before your organisation arrived? During? After?

What was life like before the crisis? Immediately afterwards? How were you affected?

3. Country Background

Conflict, war, government involvement, etc.

4. Personal Struggle

Disabilities, low/no education, domestic abuse, abandonment, death of a family member, external issues-protests, war, climate change/poor growing land, etc.

5. Role Of Your Organisation's Partner

Specific names of people and staff members who helped the person, specific things they received or did.

6. Church/God Connection

What has the person learned about God through your organisation?

Was/is the church involved?

7. Future Plans

What is the next step for the person?

What dreams/goals does the person have?

(This is important because a person who plans ahead has confidence and hope for their future, which for donors and development agencies is a sign of sustainability!)

8. Pay It Forward

How is the person sharing the knowledge they learned with others? Neighbours? Children?

9. Quotes

Anything shocking, strange, or extreme said by the person or someone related to them; also uplifting, relating to resilience, with the aim of defining the person as more than their crisis.

10. Updates From People Who Have Already Had Their Story Told

This makes donors feel connected to someone because they already know

them (relationship-building). It also demonstrates sustainability in the community.

TOP TIP: Always allow room at the end of an interview to ask if the person has any questions or thoughts. Perhaps even ask, what would you like to say to the world?

Remember that you are in a relationship with the person and you are potentially talking about traumatic events or subjects which may be 'taboo' in the community. Be sensitive to the non-verbal communication, find a quiet spot away from people who may overhear, and allow the person to lead the discussion. The questions are a good 'fall back' but the conversation/interview will be more impactful if the person leads you where they want to go. This also preserves their dignity as an individual.



Macadamia farmer involved in Integra's livelihoods project in Taita-Taveta County, south-eastern Kenya, proudly presenting his future plans.
© Veronika Macsai, Integra

Tips for taking high-quality pictures

Photography is the only language that can be understood anywhere in the world.

The *technical* art of a good photo

Light – Light is probably the most important thing to think about when trying to take a great photograph. Where possible, try shooting in the golden hours – early morning and just before last light. Avoid shooting in the middle of the day as the shadows are particularly harsh. Natural light comes in four basic varieties: soft light, front light, sidelight and backlight.

Daylight has varying forms: Clear, bright daylight is considered “hard” light because of its intensity. Daylight can be diffused by elements like pollution, haze, and mist to what is known as “soft” light. Directionless, diffused light (the kind on cloudy, overcast grey days) is known as “flat” light.

Consider different camera angles

Front lighting is when the subject is lit from the front; i.e. the light source is coming from behind the photographer. Backlighting is when the subject is lit from the back and is great for silhouettes. Side-lighting, means that the light source is coming from a side angle to the subject.

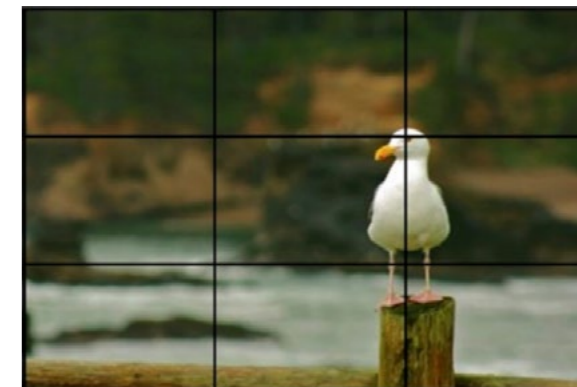


Beautiful light on the face of subject



Poor lighting

Composition – Rule of Thirds – The basic principle behind the rule of thirds is to imagine breaking an image down into thirds so that you have 9 parts. Avoid placing everything in the middle. With this grid in mind, the rule of thirds now identifies four important parts of the image that you should consider placing points of interest in as you frame your image. The theory is that if you place points of interest in the intersections or along the lines that your photo becomes more balanced and will enable a viewer of the image to interact with it more naturally.



Simplify the scene – When you look at a scene with your naked eye, your brain quickly picks out subjects of interest. But the camera doesn't discriminate – it captures everything in front of it, which can lead to a cluttered, messy picture with no clear focal point.



Leading lines – Lines exist everywhere, in the form of walls, fences, roads, buildings and telephone wires. They can also be implied, perhaps by the direction in which an off-centre subject is looking. Consider trying to use leading lines in your imagery to help bring your viewer into the photograph.

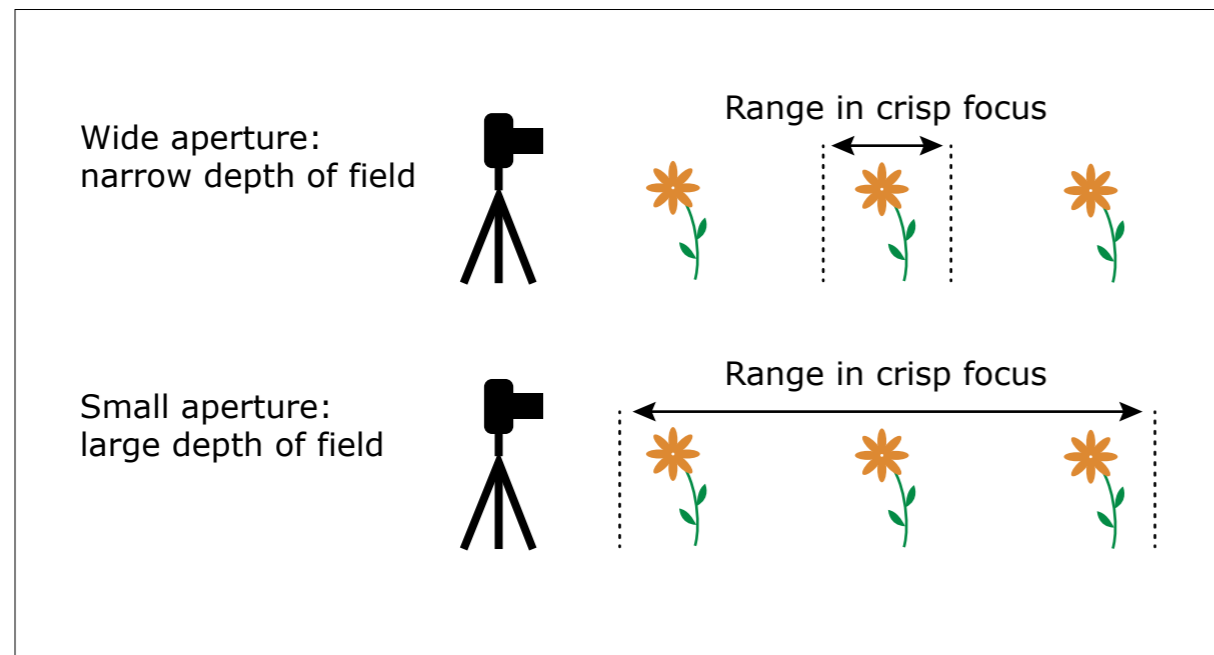


The empty space next to the primary subject is called “copy space” and ideally gives designers lots of room to include stories or other text next to the image.

Texture – consider using this in your images. Look for cool backgrounds and if you find one, place your subject a body length away from the textured door or wall and use a 50mm lens to capture a gorgeous shallow depth of field look.

Shoot up – Shooting from a lower level than your subject empowers the subject, so give that a try, or at least get on the same level as your subject, shooting at their height (especially important with a child or a small person).

Depth of field – is the amount of distance between the nearest and farthest objects that appear in acceptably sharp focus in a photograph.



Focus

One of the first rules of photography is that the subject should be sharp.

So what do you focus on? Easy – the eye closest to you! To achieve sharpness and reduce handheld camera shake, your shutter speed should be high. Raise your ISO to get a sharper shot in darker lighting. If you're still struggling use Manual over Auto.

Context

Put your subject into the context of the place that you're photographing them e.g.: work/daily life:

- Foreground – frame the shot with the meal that they're eating in the foreground or with a sign in the background that's in the language of the place you're in (rather than a tight headshot).
- The timing of the photo is also critical to context. Should you press the shutter when the subject is interacting with another person? Should you shoot during a light-hearted or serious moment? What expressions or body language are most communicative?



Wide angle Landscape Format gives greater flexibility in final use, as there is more space around the subject to play with.



Portrait format

Number of shots

Often, just one image will be used with a project for a campaign, but having the choice of different shapes and compositions is important. Always take a few shots of your subject, moving around to try different angles, and holding the camera in different positions (portrait and landscape).

Try and tell a story with your images, show where they live/sleep, eat, where they work or learn, what their surroundings are like – keeping them in the image.



Landscape format

Engagement

Try not to pull out your camera and start shooting straight away. We really encourage you to spend time interacting with the people you will be photographing. When you invest time into getting to know the people you will be interviewing and photographing the results are better for everybody.

- Take the time to get to know the person you want to photograph, see where they live, where they get water etc. Tell them about your life too, and when you've had some conversation and talked through the consent process, ask their permission to take photos.
- If you are in a large group setting where it is not possible to ask for individual permission, make sure you

don't walk into the room/space and start automatically snapping away. Take the time and effort to introduce yourself and what you are there to do. Ask for permission wherever possible.

- Always ask before taking an image, if language is a barrier, you can always ask with gestures and a smile. Most people will say yes.

PRO TIP: When a person views an image with someone looking in one direction or the other, their eyes also are drawn in that direction. In a sense you're giving the subject of your image some space to look in to and in doing so create a natural way for the viewer to flow into the photo also.



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Auto versus Manual

The basics of a good photo in Manual Mode:

Shutter speed is how quickly your camera takes the photo. It's the opening and closing of the "shutter". The longer the shutter is open the more light is let in.

Aperture – A lower f/stop lets in more light. A higher f/stop lets in less light.

ISO – refers to your camera sensors' sensitivity. Higher ISO = More Grain = More Exposure e.g: 1200 – 6400

- Lower ISO = Less Grain = Less Exposure 50-400
- Use a low ISO for outdoors
- Use a high ISO for indoors

PRO TIP: If you want to do a hybrid between Auto and Manual consider AV or TV. In AV, you control aperture and the camera autos the rest. In TV, you control shutter and camera autos the rest.

When you know you need to take photos in a dimly lit room like a mud hut, you can change the settings on your camera to compensate for the lighting.

Try upping the ISO to a higher setting so that the camera shutter will be able to take advantage of any available light in the room.

AND/OR decreasing your shutter speed.

AND/OR decreasing the aperture to let more light in.

General Tips

- Hold the camera steady and tuck in your elbows.
- Use a stable support e.g.: railing/pole/table/wall.
- Carry a microfibre cloth to clean your camera lens regularly throughout the day.

PRO TIP: If one person is looking awkward or uncomfortable, two is always better. They often loosen up if another friend or child can join them in a shot!

PRO TIP: It's best to shoot in JPEG FINE because that is a file type accessible to many operating softwares. However, if your camera has the ability to shoot both JPEG FINE and RAW with two separate SD cards, please opt for that.

When doing a beneficiary story for a special feature, it's a good idea to:

- Take close-up shots
- Far-away shots
- Relaxed/happy shots (if appropriate)
- Reflective shots
- Shots with the beneficiary's family
- Photos of the beneficiary in different relevant settings to help provide context (such as church, on the field, etc.) Any beautiful textures/walls/doors/fields in the surroundings (your graphic designers will love you for this one).



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Bonus Tips

- **PRAY** before you begin photographing. Ask God for insights as to how he sees the person and how he'd like you to capture them.
- **GIVE HEAPS OF ENCOURAGEMENT** to your subjects – not many people like having their photo taken....be encouraging and warm and tell them they are doing a great job as this helps them and you loosen up.
- **REVIEW** as you go. Not just for focus but for lighting and everything else in between.
- **ALWAYS BESTOW DIGNITY.** Dignity rules. Shoot for the people and the Partner, never for yourself.

Storing Images

We recommend storing photos, stories and consents together. Best practice would also be to have an expiry date with images and stories and ensuring that you or someone deletes or archives them.

The rationale is that as time moves on and people's situations change, to reuse someone's photo and/or story some years on may show that there has been no progress in their lives and the work has not been successful. The exception would be if you are planning to pick up their story again to show progress.

Also, if old images are kept, new staff members may use them for other "generic purposes" rather than their intentional purpose or they may require photo credits that they are not aware of, which may bring copyright issues.

Portrait and image use

When photographing subjects, maintaining dignity of the subjects is essential. You may find yourself in situations that are quite harrowing, but do not photograph the worst situations. The subjects are not to be treated as visual aids to assist fundraising. These images may initially generate income but they do a disservice to the organisation and perpetuates possible negative perceptions. Images such as 'Poverty Porn' enables the idea of the 'White Saviour', creating the notion that certain countries and their citizens are incapable of solving their own problems. There are many variables that occur that create some of the challenging and complex situations where

a photographer might be shooting; but it is important to represent the situation and the people involved in an honest and dignified manner.

When faced with an opportunity to photograph a subject, try to imagine how you would feel in their shoes. How would the image represent you and the situation you're facing and would you be comfortable being photographed as such?

Re-victimisation

It is important to take caution when photographing a subject and be aware of the impact your image may have on their wellbeing. If images are false or sensationalised, this can impede the subject's recovery process. You might encounter subjects who have faced severe trauma, such as refugees and vulnerable children, and you want to ensure that you are careful to be accurate in your portrayal of the situation. An image can recreate a traumatic event and trigger difficult memories that may hinder their progress. If an image of a vulnerable person is sensationalised, the subject may not feel comfortable with how they are portrayed. Children are particularly vulnerable to how the perception of themselves is viewed.

Stereotypes

Images that perpetuate stereotypes must be avoided. It is important to understand that your image can represent truth to those viewing your photographs and you need to be aware of how your image portrays others and avoid negative prejudices. For example, if you are taking



Florance's son Thiery is screened for malnutrition by Medical Teams nutritionist Dr. Ahab in Rwamwanja refugee settlement, Uganda, 2021. Florance rushed Thiery to the clinic when he was experiencing high fevers and not eating. © Andrew Onapito, Medical Teams International

images of an emergency situation in a country where there are foreign agencies assisting, do not only photograph those actors being the main source of aid and work. Many disasters see the local community immediately jumping in to address the problems and if you show images where only foreign agencies are taking the lead, it leads to the negative stereotype that local communities rely on the handout and assistance of NGOs or charitable organisations to come in and fix the problems.

Another example of how images can create or further negative stereotypes are trafficking victims. Sex trafficking victims

are often portrayed solely as females while labour and agriculture trafficking are focused on being male issues but male and females can be victims of both.

Reality/Need

How do we capture the reality without robbing the dignity of the subject?

Images should portray subjects accurately, with recognition that the situation in which they might be photographed is not often a consequence of their actions but part of a larger and complex situation in which they are doing their best to navigate. We should

not show images where people are in distressed or helpless states. There should be an awareness and care to not re-victimise subjects. Images will be valuable as they will tell the world about a situation in order to create understanding and gain assistance. If you would not like to see your parent, spouse, child, et al. photographed in such a state, find another way to use an image to tell their story. It is important to question motives as a photographer. Your main motivation should be to share an image that accurately represents the subject and the situation. If the reason for taking an image is because it would be a great photograph for a portfolio, generate media buzz or be a good fundraising image, then the image should not be taken or used. Ask a subject for their approval of the photograph.

- Images will respect the dignity, values, history, religion and culture of the people portrayed.
- Images should be an accurate portrayal of the situation that show enough context in the image.
- Do not use images that are distressing or show people in distress.
- Images should not be staged other than making sure subjects are in the right light etc. or for other technical aspects of image-making.
- Capture images that convey the entire picture. Do not focus only on certain actors in stereotypical roles. Demonstrate the wide range of those assisting and affected; demonstrating leadership, hard work and skills from all actors. This can convey that there

is not a reliance on Partners for all needs but that the skills and qualities are there. It stops the portrayal of endless need and demonstrates the partnerships between local actors and organisations.

- Ask the participant how they feel about image use.
- Think about capturing the potential and hope as well as the need. The situations that will often be photographed are complex and so are the emotions of those living within them. Take care to show a wide range of emotions in an accurate and dignified manner. Do not focus solely on positive or sad images as that can be one-dimensional.
- Care will be taken to ensure that the identification of or use of images of local people will not endanger the people they portray.
- As a general rule, try to take shots of people fully dressed. In instances where this is not possible, there should be no shots that show breasts, genitalia or underwear. For images where people are not fully clothed, additional approval would be required for use.
- Infant/toddler covering the bottom half.
- Female children (over 4) must be clothed top and bottom.
- For males, it is ok to be shirtless, but adequately clothed on the bottom half. Please remember to use judgement when determining to photograph a male subject who is shirtless.

Important to note: these guidelines are to ensure the dignity of the people who wish to provide their stories. Please do not insist on a person to add clothing in order to take a photograph that can be published, and instead, look elsewhere in the scene for others who are fully dressed at the time. Integral standards that are included in the Integral disaster relief process:

Integral Communications Standards



Integral Photo Standards



Examples



Yes: Shows need and help offered. Doesn't rob dignity.



No: Shows need but no help offered. Also robs dignity – invites pity.



Yes: Shows need and help offered. Doesn't rob dignity. This is the same child as above.



No: Shows need but no help offered. Also robs dignity – invites pity.



Yes: Shows help. Smiles.



No: A bit gory. Shows person in distress.



Yes: Subject has clear agency, demonstrates local knowledge and expertise.



No: Intrudes on grief and shows distress.



Ok: Shows help and need.



No: This formal image is disengaging and does nothing to tell the story.



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Tips for taking quality videos

To capture a quality video, you should consider five key things: planning, camera settings, shot types, interview setup, and sound.

Pre-Video Planning

When preparing for your video, here are some tasks you can do before filming to make sure your video is a success.

- Determine the purpose and audience for your video. Knowing your audience and the goal of your video will help shape the creative direction for your video prior to filming. Are you sharing it at an event or on social media? Is it a 1-minute advertising video or a 5-minute story video? Knowing this information will shape your creative.
- Decide what type of video you are filming. Are you interviewing someone for their personal story? Will you be creating a scripted video using voiceover? Knowing the type of video will help your video take form.
 - If you are interviewing someone, do some prior research on their story to prepare for the interview. We suggest capturing B-roll after the interview, as some ideas may come from the interview.
 - If you are doing a scripted video, create a storyboard to shape the video and what footage you will need.

- Build a relationship, establish rapport, and be certain of consent. Prior to filming, it is important to be certain of your subject's consent. Make sure they have a good understanding of how the film may be used and where it will be shown. It's best practice to establish trust and rapport with your subject prior to pulling out your camera. Be aware that the person who holds the camera comes with a certain power dynamic.
- Plan your filming schedule. Estimate about 3 hours for an interview for setup, interview time, and takedown. Ensure you have plenty of time to capture B-roll and that you have mapped out the different locations and situations you would like to film, coordinating with anyone you are filming or who needs to be involved.

Camera Settings for Video

1. Shoot in 60fps (*frames per second*) whenever possible so that the editor can slow down footage if they need to.
2. When shooting manual, set your SHUTTER SPEED to about double the frames you are shooting in. For example, when shooting at 24fps, set your shutter speed to 1/60th of a second. For 60fps, set your shutter speed to 1/125.
3. If shooting one person, it's best to keep the APERTURE low, such as 2.8f or lower for a shallow depth of field. When



Brothers Andrew and Isaac play on the sidewalk in front of their home in Santa Marta, Colombia. Their mother Nelimar left Venezuela with her children to afford food and medicine for her family, 2023. © Lauren Odderstol, Medical Teams International

shooting multiple people, or landscape, raise the aperture to f4 or higher to keep everyone/everything in focus.

4. Use a stabiliser whenever possible, such as a GIMBAL, a GORILLAPOD or TABLETOP TRIPOD; anything that helps keep your footage as smooth as possible.
5. Keep the footage steady for an extended amount of time. Keep recordings at least 20 SECONDS long at a minimum to give the video editor enough to work with. If at a certain point you realise the angle would look best or make the most sense zoomed in, then zoom in, and leave it there for the 20 seconds. But otherwise, it's best to not zoom in and out nor move around. The long, steady shot gives your editor much more to work with.

6. Plan ahead of your shoot by walking with a shotlist of the footage you need or creating a storyboard. Use drawings if needed.
7. Collect plenty of B-ROLL. For example, if recording a conservation agriculture field:
 - **take video of each crop**
 - **people harvesting**
 - **people using tools**
 - **group members conversing with each other, etc.**
8. Subtle movements are key. Have a bit of natural movement when recording people, as long as it isn't shaky. For landscape shots, using panning and dollying (on a car, bike, etc.) to show the setting.
9. Use a combination of ZOOM and PRIME LENS during your shoot. A prime lens is

usually sharper and allows for shallower depth of field, which is great for more cinematic shots (creates more blurry bokeh in the background). Zoom lenses are great for getting a variety of wide to close-in angles, with strong compression on the longer focal-length lenses. Make sure you have extra support to steady the camera for longer lenses (200 mm or longer).

10. Upload files as MP4 or MOV when possible, avoid uploading MTS. If possible to upload RAW content when shooting with more professional gear, that works well, too.

Shot Types

Consider the type of shot you are capturing and what it conveys.

- Extreme wide shots (XWS) and wide shots (WS) are good for scene-setting and environmental shots – they tell the story of the location or setting where the story is taking place.

- Medium wide (MWS) and medium shots (MS) are good for character development – they literally zoom in on the individual a bit more to show an action and how the character is moving through the setting. These are great for showing who the person is through their actions. Medium shots are good for interviews.
- Medium close-ups (MCU) and close-ups (CU) are great for detail shots, scene-setting, and capturing emotions. When interviewing a person, they can help draw you into what that person is feeling. When setting a scene, close-ups can beautifully highlight an action or a detail that is important to the person or the story.

Interview Setup

Setting up a camera interview.

- Set your subject up for success. Make sure your subject is comfortable and, if possible, has access to a glass or bottle



of water. Set expectations with them for what the interview will be about and approximately how much time it will take.

- Camera set-up. Set up your camera following the Rule of Thirds (your subject should be on one of the vertical thirds). Use a tripod. Set your frame to be a Medium Wide, Medium or a Close-Up shot (depending on the subject matter). Pay attention to the background – make sure there aren't lines going through their head, clear out clutter.
- Lighting. Pay attention to lighting – make sure your subject is well-lit, that the background isn't brighter than your subject, which will blow out the background and darken your subject.
- Sound. If possible, use a lapel mic or a Zoom recorder positioned toward the subject's mouth. Ensure the microphones are unobstructed by anything that may cause noise. Use a wind muff or dead cat if outside. If recording on a separate device from the camera, clap before the interview to help with sound editing.

Sound Quality

Consider your sound quality.

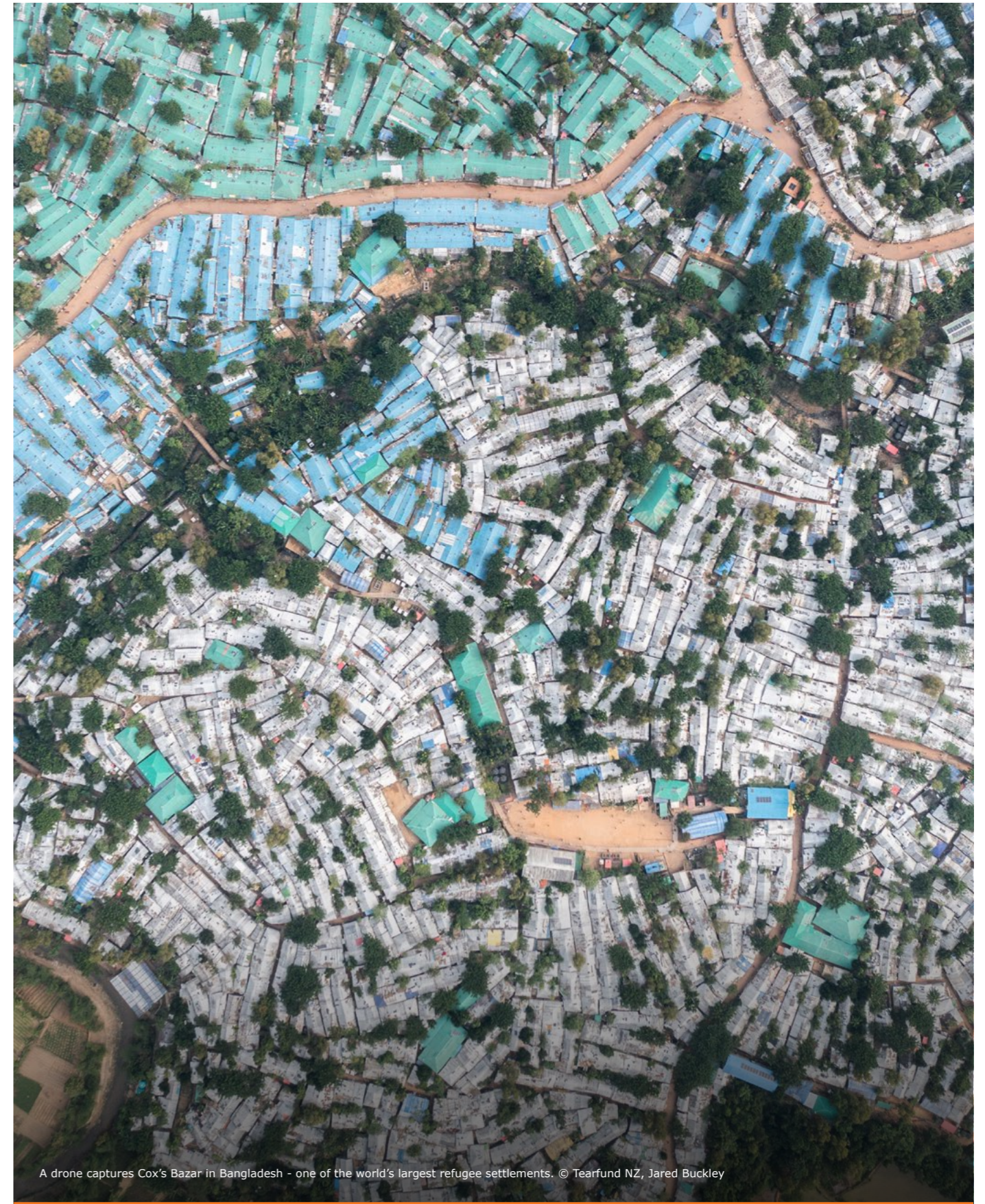
- Sound equipment. When interviewing someone, when possible, it is best to use an external sound recording device such as a lapel mic, boom, or a Zoom recorder. Make sure the microphone is pointed directionally toward your subject's mouth from a lower or higher

diagonal angle (lapel vs. boom) and that the microphone is unobstructed/ not touching other things that will cause it to pick up unwanted sound. If at all possible when interviewing in a language that requires field interpretation and later translation, try capture audio from the interviewer, the subject and the interpreter. In most situations it is possible to set up so that the interviewer and the interpreter are close enough together to share a mic, so only two may be adequate.

- Try to avoid using built-in camera microphones. The camera's built-in microphone tends to pick up noise, especially if the person filming is holding or touching the camera. If you don't have another option than to use the built-in mic, try to film in a quiet space and use a tripod. Using your hands to hold the camera while filming can lead to obstructed sound. If it is your only option, be mindful of where you place your hands so as to not obstruct the microphone.

Planning and Prep

- Build a relationship, establish rapport, and be certain of consent. Prior to filming, it is important to be certain of your subject's consent. Make sure they have a good understanding of how the film may be used and where it will be shown. It's best practice to establish trust and rapport with your subject prior to pulling out your camera. Be aware that the person who holds the camera comes with a certain power dynamic.



A drone captures Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh - one of the world's largest refugee settlements. © Tearfund NZ, Jared Buckley

When you get back from the trip

Telling stories is an important part of our work. The most effective way to concentrate and compel the human brain is through the use of story. Stories connect us to one another.

Successful storytelling allows our audiences and Partners to feel connected to the work they are a part of around the world. We can harness the power of simple storytelling to benefit our brand and increase our fundraising.

HOWEVER, telling stories comes with a great deal of responsibility because stories create realities - the way we talk about people, places and events shapes the way others view and engage those people, places and events.

As storytellers, we have the power to create change by challenging old and even false narratives, shifting power dynamics and using story to create a more equitable world.

Gaining consent is one step in the process of telling stories with dignity. The process continues when we get back from the trip and start to craft the story for blogs, newsletters, donor reports and more. The following section contains suggestions for framing stories with dignity as well as a list of words and phrases that we can use to communicate about our work with dignity.

“The way we communicate the issues we work on impacts how people think, feel and act on them. It is time that we move away from the damaging language and imagery of aid, charity and so-called “international development”, and instead create a new narrative – one that builds solidarity and demands social justice.

Health Poverty Action

Stewarding the Story

As non-profit storytellers, the stories we tell do not belong to us. Rather, we are stewards of the stories that others have allowed us to share.

One of the ways we can steward the story well is by asking ourselves a few questions as we write, edit and share the story:

- What kind of world do we want to create? How do the stories we tell point us toward or away from that world?
- Am I telling this story in a way that exploits or empowers?
- How will this story lead donors and other audience members to view the people in the story?
- Does this story perpetuate negative or incomplete stereotypes?
- Would the person in the story be proud of the way we've written or spoken about them?

Going further, we can consider the kinds of stories we tell. Are we presenting people and communities honestly and fully? Or are we watering down their experience to achieve our organisation's goals?

In her Ted Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie says: “If you show a people as one thing over and over again, this is what they become... If all we see is how poor people are, it becomes impossible to imagine them as anything else, their poverty becomes the single story... The single story creates stereotypes, and the problems with

stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”

When we tell stories, we want to communicate in a way that both tells the truth, and also shows people as more than one thing. All of us are complex, and our stories are complex, so we want to do our best to communicate the beauty that is found in that complexity. We can do this by:

- Telling more than one kind of story — share stories of programme participants, volunteers, Partners, staff and more from the communities in which we work. Many of our programme participants are also volunteers or go on to become staff and volunteers. Our stories should reflect a spirit of equity, that we are all in this together, and each one of us has a role to play in bringing change and transformation to our world.
- Not over-exaggerating — tell the story as it was shared. Don't over-exaggerate a need, and also, don't under-exaggerate to avoid hard topics. Use discernment and discretion.
- Honoring the voice of the storyteller — share quotes as they were said. Occasionally, edits will need to be made in the translation process but do not alter the meaning of what the person said.

We do not own the stories we are telling. Rather, we are stewards of the stories.

“It’s important that language we use reflects our values and work. Language has the power to reinforce or deconstruct the systems of power that maintain poverty, inequality and suffering. Choices in language can empower us to reframe issues, rewrite tired stories, challenge problematic ideas and build a radically better future based on a survivor-centered, intersectional, anti-racist and feminist vision for equality.

Oxfam Inclusive Language Guide



Nelimar’s son Andrew sits on a table outside their family’s front door in Santa Marta, Colombia, 2023. © Lauren Odderstol, Medical Teams International

Suggested words and phrases to avoid and what to say instead

We recognise that the language we use to describe the work we do and the people we work alongside matters greatly. Much like the stories we tell, the words we use have great power to shape our world.

We also recognise the need for continuous learning and improvement when it comes to shifting the words we use so see this as a springboard and a starting place.

To help you be mindful of the words you are using in both written and spoken communications, we’ve drafted a list of words to avoid and what to say instead.

In addition to this general language, we recommend working with your country offices to create your own list of country-specific guidelines as well.

Words or phrases to avoid	Reason	Alternatives
Vulnerable/most vulnerable	Are we making assumptions? Why are they vulnerable? Is there a more specific way to describe the “vulnerable situation” they are in?	People in vulnerable situations; those living in conflict zones.
Life-saving	Be aware of using phrases like “life-saving programmes” or “life-saving information.” Sometimes things are life-saving, but often they are not and we should use a different word.	Call it what it is.
Marginalised people		Those who have been marginalised; people who have been excluded; under-resourced people.

Victims		Human trafficking survivors, domestic violence survivors, survivors.
Homeless people	Being without a home does not define a person.	Those experiencing homelessness.
Disabled people	This encourages the idea the world is split into "them and us" whereas the reality is more complex.	People living with disabilities, people with sight loss, being part of the deaf community.
Tribal conflict, ethnic conflict	This term is generally no longer acceptable; shallow understanding of the actual conflict and perpetuates the idea that different ethnic groups are inherently at conflict; goes against our Christian understanding of unity and reconciliation.	Instead, speak to what the conflict actually is. Examples: interpersonal conflict; conflict over (land, water rights, etc...).
Third world country, developing nation	This encourages the idea the world is split into "them and us", whereas the reality is more complex.	Low-income countries, middle-income countries, fragile and conflict-affected states, "the countries/regions we/NGOs work in".
Religious practice terms: pagan, witchcraft, shamanism, witch doctor	Refrain from judgemental language that assigns non-Christian practices in a way that paints the practitioner as guilty of something bad, or in need of saving by foreigners.	Traditional religious practices.

Beneficiary		Programme participants, the communities we work with.
Migrant	Negative connotations	Refugees, asylees, asylum seekers, those seeking refuge, those seeking asylum, IDP (internally displaced people). The importance of giving context to the situation is really important here e.g. People fleeing the crisis in Venezuela.
Poorest of the poor, world's poorest		Those living on less than \$2/day.
People who have been left behind	Implies that they have no agency.	
Capacity-building		Sharing learning and knowledge, community organising and movement building, community-led development.
Localisation, shift the power		Locally led, shifting power and resources to communities.

* Please note that if we're talking about a specific person or a group of people, and they have indicated a preference to be described in a certain way, this should be respected and upheld. For example, if someone wants to be described as a "person with disabilities", we should describe them that way.



Florance's family portrait, Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement, Uganda 2022. After nearly losing her son, Thiery (right), to malnutrition and malaria, Florance learned to grow vegetables and feed her family nutritious food from Medical Teams staff. Now, she teaches a weekly nutrition class to mothers in the community so they can keep their children safe and healthy, too. © Lauren Odderstol, Medical Teams International

Bonus content

Last Word

As all of us take steps to tell stories with dignity, it's important that we each maintain a posture of humility, flexibility and a willingness to keep learning and getting comfortable in the gray. While we can follow the guidelines in this guide, there will always be room for nuance and variation within the stories we tell.

Let's give ourselves and each other grace as we continue learning. Don't be afraid to ask questions. And be open to giving and receiving feedback.

To continue your learning journey, here are a few resources we recommend:

- [Ethical storytelling](#)
- [Africa No Filter](#)
Webinar How to Write About Africa
- [The Danger of A Single Story](#)
Ted Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- [Ethical Storytelling: Communicating Without Exploitation](#)
Article by Deborah Swerdlow

Locally-led Action

Integral Members have discussed the question of how locally-led action is relevant to the areas of marketing and communications. Here is a summary of the themes that arose from the discussion:

Language and messaging

how we refer to Partners in our communications.

- How do Members refer to Partners in fundraising to mass audiences?
- Finding the balance between the role of the donor and the local Partner in delivering impact, e.g. who do you hero in your stories?
- To show that local organisations are trustworthy equal Partners. It gives them dignity.
- How do we make sure we give voice to local Partners instead of using their voices to place our agenda?
- How do we credit other Partners in our marketing techniques?
- Ensure comms reflect the dignity that we would wish for local Partners while also not complicating the message for our donors.
- How to balance what we want to say to donors vs. what implementing Partners might want to say when it comes to "representing their voice."

Communication

how we communicate with Partners.

- How can we prepare relationally to work with local Partners, especially in disasters? (Making expectations known for quality of media assets, training if needed).

Acting locally

how we use local talent.

- Utilising local in-country talent for sourcing images, video and story writing.
- Creating a list of local videographers and photographers in countries around the world so we can leverage relationships for media-gathering while under "no travel" rules.

Capacity development

how we help Partners increase capacity to communicate, fundraise and advocate.

- What can our Partners learn from us as marketers to fundraise themselves?
- How to help Partners to develop fundraising capacity?
- Two-way street: how to build local fundraising and comms capacity of our local Partners.
- Local fundraising / advocacy.

Integral Members will continue to explore how to best localise the communications and marketing agenda with the understanding that the local context is a key component of dignity.



Selam with son Jemba and daughter Tirunesh who has malaria. Selam brought Tirunesh to this health facility 185km from her home in Ethiopia because their local clinic was looted due to conflict, and didn't have the available medicine to treat her. © James Buck, International Health Partners

Have a question?

We'd love to help answer that!

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With tremendous thanks to the people who wrote this guide.

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Cheryl Bannatyne (Tearfund)

Rachel Clair (World Relief)

Lauren Odderstol (Medical Teams International)

Sue O'Connor (Medair)

Beth Allen (Food for the Hungry)

Amanda Prather (Tearfund Ireland)

Helen Manson (Tearfund New Zealand)

Further reading

- **DEVEX**
[Better Conversations about Ethical Storytelling Guide](#)
- **Girls Not Brides Guidelines**
[Ethical Communications Around Child Marriage](#)
- **Change for childhood**
[They take pictures of our pain graces story](#)

You can watch the Integral Storyteller's Guide Film [here](#).



“This is an excellent and very practical guide. The detailed explanation of informed consent is clear and well presented. I think sometimes we forget that updates are good in demonstrating success, so it is helpful to be reminded of that. Also, I am a huge believer in paying it forward and including this as a deliberate element in storytelling is brilliant ... Paying it forward is an excellent way of making the most of the resources collected.”

Lute Maekaeka Kazembe, Communication Manager, Medair (based in the Middle East)

“This field guide provides a comprehensive look at what it means to steward storytelling well—not only as a skill to elevate quality storytelling—but in a quality methodology that is thoughtful and honoring of the stories we are privileged to amplify. This guide centers the wellbeing, dignity, authenticity and beauty of stories from the field.”

Krystel Mumba, Program Advisor, Child Development and Protection, World Relief (based in the USA)

“This guide is really well done! As keen as we are to share what we see, hear and experience in the context of our work, what we communicate needs to faithfully respect the values and ethics that we share with the Integral Alliance. No communication should impair the dignity of the people we serve. As fellow human beings created in the image of God, they must feel respected, and their opinion valued, every step of the way.”

Sophie Nasrallah, Communication Manager, MERATH (based in Lebanon)

“I believe this excellent Guide will be an extremely valuable resource for Integral Members, especially in the training of new staff members. I’m looking forward to using it as part of the training I provide to content gatherers and image library users. A lot of hard work has obviously gone into it.

I especially love this document’s great summary that ‘informed consent is not strictly a form, it’s a conversation’, and also the creative solution of the Polaroid camera for making images available to communities during a visit.”

Margaret Chandler, Image Library Co-ordinator, Tearfund (based in the UK)



A woman living high in the Nepalese mountains of Nepal greets visitors with a huge smile as she sits down to join a workshop being run in the village about child marriage and trafficking. © Tearfund NZ, Helen Manson

Integral:

“By applying the useful tips and guidelines in this Storyteller’s Guide, we will be able to increase our knowledge and skills to produce good stories, photos and videos of transformed people and communities.”

Share and Care Foundation (based in India)



A group of Nepalese children joyfully play together in a corridor high in the mountains. Tearfund New Zealand's Partner works in the area to provide education and awareness around human trafficking and child marriage. They also provide farming and enterprise training that is helping to lift thousands of families out of poverty. © Tearfund NZ, Helen Manson