



Guidelines for Ethical Development Communications

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These guidelines apply to civil society organisations' ethical development communications, including fundraising communications. Organisations committed to the guidelines strive to adhere to them in their operations. Key terms are explained at the end of the document.

In a constantly changing operational environment, it is impossible to define a clear-cut set of instructions for all communication situations: the most important thing is the effort to act in accordance with the guidelines. Advancing the ethics of communication is an ongoing and collaborative learning process for organizations, and these guidelines are a living document that is reviewed and updated annually.

This version of the guidelines is from 2024.

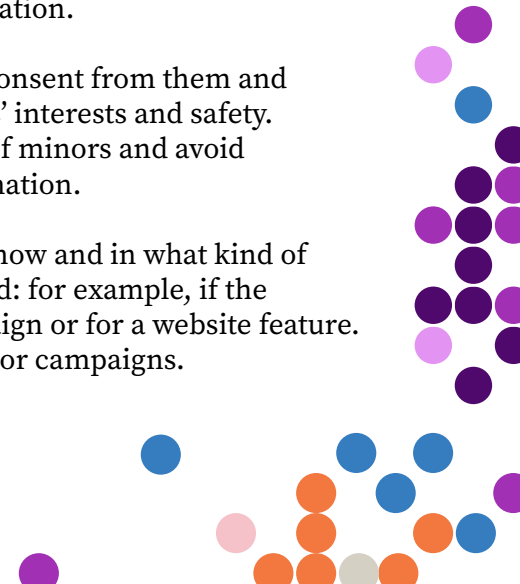
A Cross-Cutting Value Proposition

*Our communication is based on respect and promotion of human rights and the Do no harm principle.
Our aim is to promote global solidarity and reduce inequalities.*

Three Commitments

1. *We Put People First*

- 1.1. Our communication prioritises the rights, safety, and interests of individuals and their communities. It must not harm the person or the community they belong to.
- 1.2. We tell people's stories with as much dignity as we would want our own or our loved ones' stories to be told in a similar situation.
- 1.3. Persons featured in our materials consent freely and have a genuine opportunity to refuse. They also have the right to withdraw that consent if circumstances change significantly. We always ask for clear permission and provide our organization's contact details to the interviewees.
- 1.4. The person featured in the communication materials has the option to decide whether they want to appear with their full name and picture. We respect the decision made. If the situation involves reasonable risks for the interviewee or their community, we will not publish identifiable personal information.
- 1.5. When interviewing minors, we ask for consent from them and their guardians – prioritising the minors' interests and safety. We pay special attention to the privacy of minors and avoid publishing unnecessary personal information.
- 1.6. People interviewed are informed about how and in what kind of format the material is planned to be used: for example, if the material is used for a fundraising campaign or for a website feature. We provide examples of similar content or campaigns.



- 1.7. We aim to prevent and mitigate communication-related risks to individuals and their communities. We discuss with them about what kind of effects presenting the content may have on them and their community.
- 1.8. We use competent interpreters when we do not have a shared language. Our interpreters work reliably, ethically, and with an understanding of the local context. Where necessary, we use augmentative and alternative communication methods, such as picture boards.
- 1.9. We prepare for changing risk levels. We are ready, for example, to retract materials depicting people or communities, if the presentation of these materials poses a threat to them at a later point.
- 1.10. We differentiate clearly between communication activities and other collaborations, assuring individuals and communities that declining from an interview does not affect other collaborations in any way.
- 1.11. Information and materials for communication are securely stored by the collecting organisation to prevent third-party access.

2. We Actively Tackle Stereotypes and Perceptions that Perpetuate Inequalities

- 2.1. We proactively tackle harmful stereotypes linked to attributes like gender, skin colour, religion, disability, and geographical location.
- 2.2. We use language and images that promote the equality of people.
- 2.3. We portray people, communities, and situations in their home countries with truth, accuracy, respect, and inclusivity, and explain the context of the events.
- 2.4. We acknowledge and represent our interviewees as active, adaptable, and knowledgeable actors, even in unexpected roles. We do not frame people merely as victims, but neither do we do sweep the challenges they experience under the carpet.
- 2.5. Whenever possible, we provide a comprehensive background and avoid unnecessary generalization and simplification of complex situations. We highlight the underlying causes of the challenges people face and help our audiences understand the bigger picture. In short content forms, we direct our audiences to additional background information.

- 2.6. We are open and transparent: we do not create false images in which our organisation, supporters, or donors alone play a decisive role. We also bring forth the challenges in our work.
- 2.7. We appeal to universal belongingness, solidarity among people, and the desire to promote justice. Our communication offers our audience the opportunity to relate to people, communities, and the challenges they face.
- 2.8. We are solution-oriented and present perspectives based on hope: we do not only focus on showcasing challenges. However, we also debunk positive stereotypes.
- 2.9. We actively seek to identify our unconscious biases and privileges and how they affect our communication – we understand this is an ongoing process that requires self-reflection: reviewing our own thinking patterns, experiences, and actions. We foster an anti-racist atmosphere that encourages reflection and learning.
- 2.10. We critically and regularly evaluate our communications from various perspectives. We involve people from diverse backgrounds in this evaluation.

3. We Plan and Work Together

- 3.1. We respect and adhere to the "nothing about us without us" principle in our communication.
- 3.2. We plan and implement our communication equitably and in collaboration with our local partner organisations and the communities featured in our communication materials.
- 3.3. We actively consult our local partners, experts, and interviewees on the type of communication we should deploy in Finland.
- 3.4. We highlight the crucial role of our local partner organisations, experts, and communities in addressing development issues and crises within their societies.
- 3.5. We favour local networks when subcontracting experts such as photographers, videographers, communication specialists, and graphic designers. We prioritise inclusivity in subcontracting, for instance, by employing experts from minority groups.
- 3.6. Our partners, experts, and interviewees tell their stories in their own words in our materials. We do not dictate the communication for example with a precise, pre-prepared script.
- 3.7. We stop using jargon and professional terminology that may confuse our audience, interviewees, or colleagues. We use language and ways of working that are easily understandable to all.
- 3.8. We aim to democratise public debate through our communication by showcasing a range of voices and stories from both Finland and abroad.





Glossary

Ableism

Ableism describes a perspective where typical abilities are considered standard; consequently, a disability is deemed "abnormal," and the disabled individual is viewed as an outsider, differing from and inferior to others. Ableism often manifests in attitudes and pervasive structural discrimination.

Anti-racism

Anti-racism is proactive and conscious action against all forms of racism. It involves activities that reduce ethnic discrimination, the impact of discriminatory practices, and negative prejudices. Increasing personal awareness of racism, understanding one's own role, and actively opposing racism are essential in anti-racism.

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)

Augmentative and alternative communication methods refer to devices, systems, strategies, and tools that supplement or replace spoken language when there are impairments in producing or understanding speech.

Do no harm

The "do no harm" principle is a commitment to ensuring that actions, whether intentional or unintentional, do not cause harm. One's well-intentioned actions must not cause harm to people in a vulnerable position even by accident.

Inclusivity

Inclusivity means an equitable and non-discriminatory approach that encourages and values participation from all stakeholders, resulting in a situation where all parties feel welcome. Inclusiveness is tied to diversity, which recognises the varied identities within a group, such as gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and ethnic or national background.

Nothing about us without us

The "nothing about us without us" principle asserts that communities and individuals should be actively involved in decisions and planning for issues that affect them. The principle aims to ensure that decisions are made fairly and collaboratively and not without the participation or consultation of the individuals and communities that are impacted by the decisions.

Positive stereotypes

Positive stereotypes are favourable but oversimplified beliefs about a group, such as being "hard-working" or "cheerful." These can be as limiting as negative stereotypes, constraining individuals to narrow categories and potentially leading to unrealistic expectations or solutions.

White saviour complex

The white saviour complex refers to a phenomenon where a privileged person (usually white) helps people in vulnerable positions (usually non-white). Helping may serve the helper more than the person helped, and the long-term effects can be very harmful. The phenomenon problematically places the white saviour in the role of active helper and the non-helpful persons as passive objects of help. As a result, the role of local people and communities and structural challenges are ignored.

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