



ETHICAL CONTENT GUIDELINES

Upholding the rights of the people in the pictures in content gathering, management and use

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Cover image

Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Officer Bernard Odola fielding question on Oxfam's flood responses in Garissa and Tana River, Kenya.

(Credit:Peter Irungu/Oxfam)

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Marinel is vlogging for Oxfam's Campaign "Make Polluters Pay" in front of a ship that is now a monument to commemorate the typhoon Haiyan in Tacloban, Philippines.

(Credit: Stories4Change by Climate Tracker)



1 Our stories will **respect contributors and their experiences.**
We will tell stories in the words of the people we work with and wherever possible show their agency and resilience.

Oxfam will ensure that its content gathering is **sensitive to different contexts** and circumstance.

3 Our stories will **accurately represent people** and their environment. We will reflect the reality of those featured – never limiting their representation to being victims, but instead striving to portray a fuller picture of individuals and their lives.

Our stories will **challenge existing stereotypes** and problematic power relationships and will reflect the diversity of people Oxfam works with.

5 Oxfam will always **consider and respond to the potential risks** facing those who share their images and stories with us.

Oxfam will only tell stories with the **full, free and informed consent** from contributors

7 Oxfam will be **accountable to contributors** after story gathering – wherever possible seeking contributors' feedback on the content and the story gathering process and returning content to them.

Oxfam commits to **processing & managing content responsibly** and in line with data protection laws.

9 Oxfam has a commitment to its contributors and its audiences to **use stories accurately and with integrity.**

Oxfam will **ensure that these guidelines are adhered to** in full by its own staff and freelance service providers and we will strive for compliance by the media we work with.

10 commitments

Introduction

Terminology

Contributor(s)

Individual(s) who contribute their image or story to Oxfam.

Image maker

Filmmaker or photographer who captures contributors' stories through photography or film.

Writer/interviewer

Person who leads on the interview with contributors and captures their stories in writing and/or as an audio-recording.

Story gathering/content gathering

The process in which a writer and/or image maker documents contributors' stories, either in writing or through images or a combination of both.

Content

Images and stories (first-hand accounts) that result from story gathering and form the core ingredients of Oxfam's public engagement work. These can consist of still and moving images, audio-recorded interviews, and written notes from interviews.

Communications

Catch-all term to describe the edited and produced materials based on content gathered from contributors that Oxfam uses for its public engagement work.

Content lead

The Oxfam staff person who has the overall responsibility over the content gathering assignment, including ethical aspects. This would often be the producer, writer or image maker.

Contributor focal point

The Oxfam or partner staff person who has knowledge of, or experience of working with, the contributors, their community and/or situation, and who is the single point of contact with (potential) contributors, before, during and after the story gathering. This would often be a country team member.

It is the responsibility of the content lead to ensure that the contributor focal point is identified and appointed as part of the story gathering ToR.

DAM

Digital Asset Management system. This is a database used to store and curate content. Oxfam's DAM system is [Inuru](#).

Purpose & scope

These guidelines cover the gathering of content, the management of content, and the use of content by Oxfam for its public engagement work.¹ The main purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that content is gathered, managed and used ethically, in ways that uphold contributors' rights to participate and be heard, to experience respect and dignity, to make free and informed decisions, and to be protected from risk and harm. The guidelines also cover Oxfam's commitments to audiences and to the staff and others involved in story gathering.

Ethics & content

The key driver for committing to responsible and ethical practice in content gathering is to uphold the rights of the people Oxfam works with and to deliver the humanitarian principle of Do No Harm.

Responsible and ethical practice should also result in high quality content, enhance Oxfam's relationships with the people it works with, and mitigate reputational risk. If a community has a bad experience in relation to Oxfam's story gathering or the way contributors are represented in Oxfam's communications, they will not welcome Oxfam back in the future. If Oxfam fails to present its audiences with honest and accurate representations of its activities and the people it works with, it risks losing the trust and support of those audiences. Non-ethical content gathering can also put us in breach of national legislation or other relevant regulations, which could jeopardize our access to institutional funding.

Building blocks

These guidelines have been informed by current Oxfam safeguarding policies, most notably the [Oxfam Child Safeguarding Policy](#), [Oxfam Youth Safeguarding Policy](#), [Oxfam Digital Safeguarding Policy](#) and Oxfam's Responsible Program Data Policy. The guidelines have been designed to reflect recent legislative requirements (most notably resulting from the EU General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR) as well as other relevant regulatory frameworks (such as our commitment to the [Pledge for Change](#)).

Scope

These guidelines apply in full to all production of content commissioned by Oxfam and intended for public engagement, curation of content on Inuru, and use of content on Oxfam's internal and external communications channels or those of third

parties which we have granted the rights to use our contents.

Exemptions to these guidelines may apply in those cases where third parties engage with Oxfam's programs in order to produce and distribute their own content – as opposed to Oxfam commissioning their work (e.g. media, influencers, user-generated content). In those cases still, Oxfam has a responsibility to brief third parties on its code of conduct and its ethical approach to content gathering.

These guidelines apply to content production, management and use by Oxfam's affiliates, country and regional offices and the Oxfam International Secretariat. Affiliates and country teams are free to develop or continue to use their own guidelines in addition to these global guidelines, provided they do not undermine any of the guidance presented in this document. The Global Ethical Content Guidelines presented here are the guidelines that must be adhered to as the minimum standard across all of Oxfam.

It is the responsibility of the content lead to ensure everyone directly involved in storygathering is familiar with these guidelines. Content for Oxfam should always be gathered, managed and used according to the guidelines presented here, and with the obligation to respect and guarantee contributors' rights as a priority.

Adherence to the guidelines will ensure mutual trust across the confederation that content is being produced in accordance to the ethical standards everyone has signed up for, so that content can be accessible for use across the confederation.

Stories reflecting our values

Stories are central to Oxfam's public engagement.

Oxfam is committed to enabling people to tell their own stories and ensuring that the stories of the least powerful are heard. Oxfam recognises its responsibility to ensure its stories challenge and inform and contribute to determining a view of the world that does not accept the status quo and existing stereotypes.

The stories gathered and used by Oxfam must reflect its values: empowerment, accountability and inclusiveness. We do not want to perpetuate the stereotypes of people living in poverty, but instead show a full and accurate account of the ways in which people live and act. These values must inform decision over which content we choose to gather as well as decisions over captioning and use in final communications including fundraising materials.

Images and stories that reflect the value of empowerment must show people as dignified human beings. We don't portray them as submissive or helpless, nor as victims, objects of pity, or incapable individuals waiting for help from others. People are survivors, not victims; they can be empowered, active participants in work, in life and in bringing about change in their lives. Images and stories that reflect the value of accountability would include those that accurately convey the realities of individuals' lives, with the aim of improving the understanding of audiences to the complexities and realities of the injustice of poverty. Images and stories that reflect the value of inclusiveness would include the diversity and range of people Oxfam works with in terms of age, gender, background, and culture. Outlined below are a series of commitments to how Oxfam will uphold these values in terms of the images and stories it chooses to gather and use.

1. Our stories will respect contributors and their experiences

- We will tell stories in the words of the contributor, using direct quotes wherever possible.
- Where possible, our stories will show people's agency and resilience: people helping themselves, supporting or caring for each other, assuming responsibilities, having specific skills or being capable agents of change.
- Our images and stories should not exaggerate vulnerability. For example, we avoid taking images of vulnerable people from above.

- We don't use photos of children in vulnerable contexts with no adults present in the picture.
- We do not use stories or images of children who are survivors of sexual violence in a way which may identify them.
- We do not take or use images of people who have died² or are dying or people who are in extreme physical or emotional distress.³
- We will avoid images of people with flies on their faces.

2. Our stories will accurately represent people and their environment

- Our stories will be accurate, as in reflecting the specific situation which they documented.⁴ There are times when it will be appropriate to 'stage' a photo, however this staging should still reflect the reality of the contributor/ context being portrayed. There may also be times when Oxfam produces communications which are clearly creative as opposed to documentary and it will be clear in the captions messages that the images do not represent reality.
- Our stories will aim to communicate the wider context of the situation, beyond the individual or situation being pictured.
- We will not reduce someone to a problem but instead strive to show a 360° view of people's lives, bringing in their personality, either through their voice, or through other detail about their lives which is distinct from the problem.⁵
- Our stories will balance need with solutions and suffering with resilience.
- We will not use an image of one person alongside other content in a way which could lead people to believe that both are related, or to interpret the image wrongly.

3. Our stories will challenge existing stereotypes and problematic power relationships

- Our stories will not portray people as dependent on the knowledge, assistance or pity of celebrities, supporters or experts; instead, our stories will show people inspiring those same celebrities, supporters or experts in the context of an equal exchange.

Filming for a DRTV advert in Kenya. Joyce is a real climate activist but the protest march was set up for filming. Staging can be appropriate if clearly creative rather than documentary. (Credit: Rogers Ouma.Ojwook/Oxfam)



- Where possible, we avoid using images featuring two or more people in an unequal power relationship, (e.g. a white staff member standing up in front of a group of local non-white staff who are sitting on the ground)
- The images and stories we collect should reflect diversity, capturing a range of ages, genders, ethnicities and being inclusive of people with disabilities, where possible.
- Our stories will show our local partner organizations supporting contributors and feature their voices and they will be named alongside their international colleagues.

A balancing act

At times these commitments can be at odds and need to be brought in a balance. A specific situation can be both a reality (which needs accurate documenting)

yet also confirms an existing stereotype. It should be clear that we would challenge stereotypes and power relationships only to the extent that the actual reality offers more nuance than the stereotype.

For example in the immediate aftermath of a humanitarian emergency, accurate representation means capturing stories which communicate the severity of the situation including the multiple challenges and needs facing survivors. It is also

important to acknowledge that some audiences will regard these contributors as victims, even if we consider them to be survivors. It is important that we capture the reality of the situation but are respectful in our portrayal and accompanying messaging. We can ensure that our communications portfolio of an emergency is accurate in relation to its causes and impacts, and that where appropriate our stories generate empathy, and show people as capable individuals helping or wanting to help themselves or others.

Also, these commitments need not necessarily be applied in every single image. As part of the image collection (raw content) or media mix (final comms pieces) some of the images can reflect need and others can reflect solutions.

The values of empowerment and accountability also inform the process of gathering images.

Oxfam believes that content gathering can be empowering for contributors. Through a meaningful process of informed consent, a contributor should have the power and knowledge to decide whether to participate in Oxfam's content gathering.

Oxfam must strive to provide potential contributors and contributors with genuine choice over whether to be photographed/filmed or interviewed or not, predicated on an understanding of how material will be used and what the risks to them might be.

Oxfam views contributors as important stakeholders in content gathering and is committed to finding out

about any preferences they may have in relation to the images and stories that are gathered and used about them. Some contributors will find the process of content gathering an empowering experience — they will feel proud of their story and their role in raising awareness of an issue or further support for Oxfam. Other contributors will not experience content gathering as empowering for reasons that may be distinct from the process of content gathering.

Oxfam will work towards being accountable to its contributors, by wherever possible, returning images and finished communications to contributors, and at times also documenting contributors' feedback on the finished content and the process of content gathering. Follow-up with contributors and listening to their feedback recognises their position as important stakeholders and will also support Oxfam's ongoing efforts to improve its practice in content gathering and use.

A diverse and changing context: being responsive

It is the responsibility of those overseeing content gathering that it is sensitive to different contexts and circumstance, including different cultural, social or legal requirements.⁶ The country team or relevant partner organization should consult on these sensitivities with relevant authorities (for example, a headteacher, village chief, head of police) preferably in advance and ultimately before starting the content gathering.⁷

Oxfam country offices should provide a full briefing for any incoming story gathering team on cultural sensitivities to be aware of during interviews and when taking photographs or filming certain places, objects or actions. The story gathering plans need to be adapted to ensure there is sufficient time for this briefing and the consequences should be factored in in the risk assessment. Country offices should provide a full briefing for any incoming story gathering team on cultural sensitivities to be aware of during interviews and when taking photographs or filming certain places, objects or actions. The story gathering plans need to be adapted to ensure there is sufficient time for this briefing and the consequences should be factored in in the risk assessment.

A constantly evolving media and communications landscape

Oxfam's content gathering takes place in a diverse and constantly evolving media and communications landscape, in terms of both the production and consumption of content. Increased use of internet, smart phones and social media has changed the profile of audiences as well as their habits and preferences.

The use of digital content also means that once images or stories have been shared online, they can potentially be shared by anyone anywhere and it is almost impossible to delete or recall them. Audiences are no longer determined by their geography and so contributors and their communities must always be considered potential audiences.

Acknowledging and responding to multiple unequal relationships

Oxfam acknowledges the unequal power relationships inherent in the production and consumption of its content, particularly those produced in Oxfam program countries by and for affiliates.

These relationships can lead to Oxfam country teams feeling obliged to support affiliates' demands, partners may feel obliged to facilitate Oxfam's access to contributors, and contributors (who have an existing relationship with Oxfam or its partner) may feel obliged to share their image or story either out of gratitude for services received or out of fear for the negative consequences of saying no.

Those involved in Oxfam's content gathering have a responsibility to recognise and attempt to disrupt these unequal relationships. Throughout the guidelines and related template documents you will find practical efforts to attempt to mitigate the power imbalances and provide those with less power with genuine choice, when it comes to content gathering.

Being critical and empathetic

The ethical issues surrounding the gathering, management and use of content are numerous, and not all have straightforward practical solutions that can be applied consistently. While it is important to identify some tangible aspects of practice that all those involved in content gathering should adhere to, it is equally important for those involved to be sensitive to the ethical and power issues at play.

Thinking critically about content gathering and empathetically about those who are contributing their image and story, supports an ethical approach to the work. Engendering such an approach will enable those involved to respond sensitively and responsibly to unexpected issues.

Budgeting and planning for time

Ethical practice in relation to content gathering, management and use takes time, and the costs related to that additional time need to be built into content gathering budgets at the planning stage:

- For affiliate-led trips, time in advance for communicating with country team and time in- country for discussion before content gathering begins;
- When working with freelance image makers and writers/interviewers, time for them to understand our ethical guidelines (and related processes);
- When working with interpreters, time to identify (and brief) appropriate interpreters;
- Time to understand the context, and to consider and respond to risks;
- Time to talk to potential contributors in advance⁸ of any content gathering, to ensure that consent is informed and freely given;
- Time to support country teams with capacity- building and strategic use of content;
- Time to screen each piece of content for its compliance with these guidelines and to ensure there is evidence of informed consent for each contributor;⁹
- Time to ensure content and related materials are stored securely and uploaded to DAM carefully and accurately with all required information;
- Time to return copies of images and/or final communications to contributors and to follow up with contributors on their experience;

It is the responsibility of the commissioning team to ensure that the budget and workplan for the content gathering allows those involved to work according to the standards/guidelines presented here. The lack of time or budget cannot be used to justify non-compliance with the guidelines.

Notes

¹ All of Oxfam's interactions with the people we work with – including content gathering as per this document – are governed by confederation-wide [Data Protection Policies](#) and the [Responsible Program Data Policy](#). Please consult this policy for legal and ethical guidance relating to data (content) collected for program purposes.

² This does not exclude use of images in which an image of a dead person is depicted, e.g. taking photographs of a woman holding an image of her deceased husband.

³ People in extreme distress will not be in a position to provide informed consent.

⁴ When using images from contributors of whom we know the situation has changed substantially since the point of collecting their story, the caption should make this plainly clear.

⁵ This level of detail both brings colour to a story and helps to individualize people in the pictures, so that they do not end up as campaign objects or symbols.

⁶ For example, in the Pacific it may be usual for a male community leader to be a necessary gateway for consent for anyone in that community to participate in content gathering; or in Rwanda humanitarian stories may often need sign off by UNHCR.

⁷ In determining who to consult with, we should also be cognizant of power and gender dynamics within communities about who is or is not able to speak. If for example women are systematically barred from raising their voice, this constitutes a problematic power relationship, which needs to be carefully considered against cultural sensitivities at play.

⁸ Advance means before, and distinct from, the content gathering. This may include calculating an additional day in order to have those conversations and build trust – and only take photos or film on the second day.

⁹ With the exception of those featured in non-sensitive public crowd scenes (see Informed Consent, p.22).

Working together

Upholding people's rights in
collaboration with others

Working with freelancers

Where possible, Oxfam works with service providers who are based geographically and culturally close to the story or program being documented. This will help to avoid an extractive approach as well as cultural bias, and make for more equitable storytelling.

Data protection

Data Protection is predicated on principles including transparency with those with whom we work, clear assignment of responsibility, proportionality in using data, and specific obligations around aspects of the data lifecycle like informed consent. These obligations should all closely match our own ethical principles, and values – and should ultimately be cumulative and productive, rather than obstructive.

Affiliates will need to have contractual terms in place with photographers which includes responsibilities for the photographer to protect any personal data (including any personal data contained in images) in accordance with data protection laws. Oxfam requires image makers to comply with appropriate data security standards, and to use our current Informed Consent guidance and form when collecting images or stories from contributors. Our [global template contracts](#) cover all of these elements.

All image makers must also be required to read and sign Oxfam [Consultants Code of Conduct](#) and for those who will be in touch with children as part of their assignment, to abide by Oxfam's minimum standards for child safeguarding.

Intellectual property

Even where Oxfam has commissioned and paid for content, the content provider is likely to own the intellectual property (IP) rights in the content, and be able to control its use. For this reason, Oxfam's contracts with content providers need to give Oxfam appropriate rights to use the content. This can be by way of a 'license to use' or by a transfer of the IP rights from the content provider to Oxfam.

Oxfam requires filmmakers to transfer the IP rights in the filmed content to Oxfam. As a result, Oxfam will own the rights and will have full rights to use the content as it chooses. If you do not use the template contract when commissioning film, you should ensure that your agreement contains an 'assignment of IP clause' similar to that in the template.

Photographers frequently seek to retain intellectual property rights over their images and to not transfer these rights outright to Oxfam.¹⁰ As a result, Oxfam's

GDPR: additional considerations

Affiliates in the EU will need to consider whether they consider photographers 'data controllers' or 'data processors' within the meaning of EU law, and include data protection clauses in their agreements appropriate to the designation. The template toolkit contains appropriate clauses in each case.

Where consent is sought for processing, there are specific requirements in GDPR (including that consent be specific for purpose, affirmative, and informed). Our guidance aligns with these requirements.

Data protection law in Europe gives individuals a "Right to be Informed", mirroring our obligations in the Responsible Data in Program Policy. Our Consent form is designed to uphold this right – and should be used and reviewed by users, ensuring the use cases and explanation provided are accurate.

Where appropriate, affiliates' Data Protection Officers should be consulted where there are questions regarding what is lawful, and in particular if in a particular context there might be additional complications or risks and further guidance is needed.

right to use the photographs will often arise under license terms in the commissioning agreement. For this reason, it is important to ensure that the license terms agreed give Oxfam as broad a right as possible to use the content for its purposes and to allow other affiliates and partners to use it. If you do not use the template agreement, you need to ensure that:

- The photographer grants Oxfam a perpetual, fully paid-up, worldwide license (with the right to grant sub-licenses to any third party) to use the images in any format for any purpose connected to Oxfam's work (including publications, websites, intranet, media and other materials, in each case whether produced by Oxfam or its sub-licensees).¹¹
- The photographer's rights in relation to the images are limited to self-promotion, educational purposes, or purposes in support of Oxfam's mission. Also, the photographer should not have any rights in relation to work commissioned other than in relation to the images.

Where Oxfam is using an image under license, any restrictions imposed by a photographer on use of the image as well as any attribution requirements (e.g. requirements to attribute the photographer) must be included along with the designated image or story on our global digital asset management platform Inuru, and users must always comply with these restrictions and requirements when using the content.

It is understood that there can be different intellectual property standards and practice in different parts of the world. It is therefore important that these are made clear when images/stories are uploaded to Inuru.

Working with the media

When Oxfam acts as a gatekeeper for external media (journalists and film crews) it is recommended that the media sign up to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) stipulating Oxfam's expectations in relation to

ethical content gathering.

We recognize that media trips do not always feature a contractually-binding relationship with media representatives and so we cannot always require that they follow Oxfam's informed consent procedures, for example (and Oxfam will not have editorial control over final outputs).

Nevertheless, it is still Oxfam's responsibility to clearly communicate its approach and expectations to the media in advance of providing them with access to potential contributors. It is also Oxfam's responsibility, wherever possible, to identify potential contributors and establish informed consent in advance of any media trip. It is Oxfam's responsibility, regardless of the media's informed consent procedures (or lack of) to ensure that contributors who are interacting with the media are made aware, by Oxfam, of their right to choose NOT to participate, or to participate but not be identifiable visibly (face hidden) and/or to choose a pseudonym.

Extra care must be taken in humanitarian contexts



Participatory photography participants engaged in hands-on camera training, Mutare, Zimbabwe, 2025. (also: p15)
[Credit: Tavonga Chikwaya/Oxfam]

and other contexts that Oxfam considers to be sensitive. Media representatives should be accompanied at all times by an Oxfam staff member.

Where possible, working with media representatives who have previously worked with Oxfam, will also help to mitigate any risks for either contributors, Oxfam's partners and Oxfam itself.

Working with interpreters

If the writer/interviewer and image maker do not speak one of the languages of the contributors, then it is essential that there is an experienced interpreter available for the duration of the assignment. Informed consent can only take place in a person's own language. It is also essential for realising Oxfam's values of respect and dignity and contributors' right to be heard; accurate interpretation of their words is required to ensure both accuracy and respect.

The choice of interpreter should factor in gender and social norms in the country where story gathering is taking place. We should carefully consider whether the contributor's comfort would be best served by having an interpreter from the same gender, religious, ethnic or social group as the contributors, or the opposite – and ask the contributor's opinion on this if possible.

The cost of an external and experienced interpreter (salary, per diems, transport and accommodation) is a part of the cost of story gathering and should be budgeted for as such. If an affiliate commissions the content, the onus should never be on the country team to fund this.

At times it may not be appropriate or possible to either identify or contract an external interpreter for content-gathering. Or it may be that the contributor would be more comfortable with a staff member from Oxfam or its partners to act as interpreter. In any event, those in charge of organising content gathering must be able to justify the decision to not use an external experienced interpreter.

Sharing skills and content

We should always aim for the country team to have the lead for any storygathering within their country. This means the country team ultimately decides whether storygathering takes place and where and who is being interviewed/photographed.

When Oxfam affiliates are organising content

gathering visits to a program country, good collaboration is critical for success. Affiliate expertise and resources should complement those that are available in the country team, rather than duplicating or overruling.

While staffing and capacity varies across country teams, many do not have content gathering specialists and their communications officers cover multiple roles. Where this is the case, it is essential that country teams benefit from those visits in terms of skills transfer; and/or content they can use for their own communications purposes.

All affiliate-led content gathering assignment must plan for support to the country team. This can take the form of one day at the end (or the beginning if appropriate) of their trip, dedicated to supporting the country team with its communications, including how the team can use content resulting from the trip. Or it can take the form of an agreed professional development objective for the country team's communications officer to enhance their content gathering skills (writing, photography, filming, video-editing, or any related area).

Country teams should determine the type and level of support desired, based on local needs and capacity to absorb support. Affiliates cannot proceed with story gathering without building time and budget for support into their schedule.

Country teams in turn should feel empowered to share their capacity and capabilities with local partner organizations and people we work with where and when appropriate.

Notes

10 Although some may do so, and if so, the assignment clause in the film-maker contract should be used in the contract commissioning the photographer.

11 An exclusive license means Oxfam alone can use the content (even to the exclusion of the photographer); a sole license means Oxfam is the only party other than the photographer who may use the content; a non-exclusive license means that the photographer can grant other parties rights to use the content. Whether this license is exclusive, sole or non-exclusive will depend upon each context, the individual photographer, as well as the nature of the content. For example, Oxfam should require an exclusive license in relation to any content that is deemed sensitive. If the work has been commissioned for a fee, Oxfam would normally expect to be granted a sole or exclusive license.

Do no harm

Assessing and mitigating risks to contributors

If you notice unwanted behaviour

- The first priority is the immediate safety and welfare of the people involved.
- Keep calm and act normally; do not say or show that you are shocked.
- Do not investigate or question the person reporting. If someone reports abuse directly to you, only ask questions to get enough information to understand the complaint (e.g. 'who, what, where, when' questions, but not 'why' questions).
- Never agree to keep a secret to someone under the age of 18. If a child is in danger you will have to inform others.
- Do not directly challenge parents, carers or teachers about your concerns.
- Record all the details that support your suspicion.
- Report this in line with [internal reporting procedures](#).

The principle of “do no harm” - to not support or carry out activities which may harm on others or on the environment - will always take priority over Oxfam’s content gathering and public engagement needs. When planning content gathering, those in charge should consult with relevant local partner organisations¹² to assess the potential risks for contributors in participating in Oxfam content gathering and the potential risks in relation to their image and story being published.

Risks could include emotional distress or trauma, social reprisal within their family or community, or retribution from companies, authorities or other groups that hold power over the contributor.

Risk assessment is an essential stage of any content gathering. The commissioning team should consider whether potential contributors face any risks, either because of who they are, the information they are sharing or the context they live in. The outcome of the risk assessment will require different choices in terms of who collects the content, when and how, or whether to proceed with story gathering altogether.

Main risks

The elements outlined below should always be considered together, and as part of a holistic risk assessment. For example, while an Oxfam staff member would usually not be at risk because of sharing their story, this would be very different if they are sharing information about their sexual orientation in a country where this is highly controversial.

Contributor

People we work with in our programs would be most at risk, given the inherent power imbalance in their relationship with Oxfam. Oxfam staff are usually not at risk, given that they are protected through our organization’s policy and support mechanisms. Other groups – including supporters, volunteers, event participants, partner or peer organization staff, and people with no relationship to Oxfam – will be in-between.

Minors would be more at risk than adults. When in doubt we should operate on the assumption that the contributor is a minor.

Women and non-binary people would be more at risk than men.

There are a number of vulnerable groups, which we know are more at risk than others. This includes people who:

- are living in or fleeing from conflict zones
- are affected by a natural disaster
- are human rights defenders
- are living with HIV
- survived sexual assault or gender-based violence
- are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Intersexed (LGBTQI+)
- are part of religious or ethnic minorities
- have a physical or mental disability

Content

People will run risk if they are sharing with us any details that relate to their race or ethnicity, religious, political or philosophical beliefs, trade-union membership, health-related data or data concerning their sex life or sexual orientation.

If a contributor is well-known publicly for speaking out on the topic, the contributor is unlikely to suffer any repercussions. If it’s the first time the story is being shared though, that risk is substantially higher

We also need to be cognizant of contributor’s agency in sharing the story. Whether they are sharing the story themselves (for example through a selfie-style video), agreeing to being interviewed, or alternatively unaware of their data being captured –makes a huge difference in terms of risk.

Context

We need to be mindful of the context people live in, as they share their story. In contexts with a stronger rule of law and/or a stronger social support system in place, contributors will be more resilient in case of any repercussions from sharing their story. This means actively considering whether the police or judiciary are accountable and independent, and which degree of liberty or repression is typical for the political space in which the discussion is taking place. Discussing the weather in Switzerland does not require the same level of caution as talking with an environmental activist in a mining community where the police are corrupt and several outspoken leaders have recently been murdered.

We should proactively reflect on whose interests the story may interfere with. For any of those people or organizations, we should assess the power they have over the contributor; the likeliness of them noticing the story; and how strongly it would run against their interests. Each of these elements would inflate risk to the contributor.

Framework For Choice

In order to help story gatherers to conduct risk assessments and develop a more shared understanding of risk, it is recommended to use the [Framework for Choice](#). This tool allows story gatherers to rate the level of risk on a range of parameters, and obtain an integrated outcome, including safeguarding measures that need to be put in place as part of planning.

The Framework for Choice is intended as a guide to identifying power imbalances and potential risk to contributor(s). It should be carried out for all storygathering which has public communications as its main purpose and will likely contain identifiable details on one or more individuals.

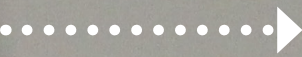
An assessment can be completed in relation to a single storygathering project or community, and be revised up or down for individuals, in case individual risk would be significantly different. It should be completed by the Content Lead well ahead of storygathering, as part of a collaborative approach with the country and/or partner team closest to the community where the contributor lives. We should, however, avoid extracting personal or sensitive information from potential contributors for the sole purpose of completing the risk assessment.

The outcome of the risk assessment should inform if and how one can proceed with story gathering. If and when risk to any one contributor is higher:

- we need to consider alternatives or decide to **not collect**
- we need a tighter control on who interacts with the contributor
- we need to explain the context, risks and rights in more detail
- we need to dedicate greater attention to obtaining and documenting consent
- we need to allow more time for people to consent before collecting their story
- we need to make more efforts to minimize personal details revealed (NOTE: allow contributors to weigh in here)
- we need to follow up with people afterwards to make sure they don't have second thoughts
- we need to allow more time for people to **reconsider** in between collection and publication

TRY IT OUT





	VERY LOW RISK	LOW RISK	MEDIUM RISK	HIGH RISK	VERY HIGH RISK
CAN WE COLLECT THE STORY?	yes	yes	yes	please consider alternatives ¹³	no
WHO CAN COLLECT THE STORY?	anyone	anyone	trained Oxfam staff, partner staff or trained freelancer	trained Oxfam staff to always be present	-
HOW DO WE OBTAIN CONSENT? ¹⁴	quick introduction	10 min conversation	10 min conversation	20min+ conversation	-
GROUP CONSENT (FORMAL GROUPS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
FORWARD CONSENT (CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIPS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
OPT-IN CONSENT (EVENTS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
NO CONSENT (PUBLIC SPACES)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
HOW DO WE DOCUMENT THE PROCESS?	- verbal confirmation by content collector - opt-in: subscription record - no consent: completed risk assessment	- signature/ audio record/thumbs up picture - opt-in: subscription record - no consent: completed risk assessment	signature/ audio record/thumbs up picture	signature/ audio record/thumbs up picture	-
WHEN CAN A STORY BE COLLECTED?	anytime	anytime after consent	anytime after consent	1 day after consent at the earliest	-
WHICH PERSONAL DETAILS CAN BE CAPTURED?	no attention required	no attention required	avoid capturing personal details which don't contribute to the power of the story	avoid capturing personal details or either hide those details in postproduction	-
WHICH FOLLOW-UP IS REQUIRED?	no follow-up required	passive follow-up (leave contact details)	passive follow-up (leave contact details)	active follow-up (leave contact details + check in 3-4 days after collection) ¹⁵	-
WHEN CAN YOU PUBLISH THE STORY?	anytime after collection	anytime after collection	2-3 days after collection at the earliest	1 week after collection at the earliest	-

Hiding personal details

For some content gathering, Oxfam will decide that the risks to individuals being identified are too great, and identities will be fully concealed, even if particular individuals are willing to be identified.

Concealing someone's identity means not showing their face and not using their real name, in some instances it may also be important to 'hide' someone's voice.

During the planning stage, the image maker should develop initial ideas about how to gather engaging and powerful content that does not reveal people's identity.

Remember other people's names, environmental features, or signage could unintentionally reveal the identity or the location of someone who should be anonymised.

Those involved in content gathering should be alert to things that may create a security risk to the person, or a brand/ethical risk to Oxfam

if they are included within a film or photograph. For example, location signs, school emblems, name tags, jewellery, nudity, or inappropriate slogans, graphics, graffiti or multinational logos on clothing, notable buildings.

Remember that, depending on the issue/story, staff of Oxfam's partners or country programmes might also need to be anonymised.

In some instances, a contributor, whom due to their circumstances would normally be anonymised, may already have a public profile relating to their activism. In that context it would not be appropriate to use a pseudonym alongside a recognizable image of that individual. In such cases, the contributor should be offered the choice to either be completely identifiable (recognizable image and real name) or completely anonymised (non-recognizable image or no image, and pseudonym).

Additional precautions

Depending on the particular situation, it may be necessary to take additional safeguarding measures.

Social reprisal

Being seen (or heard) being photographed, filmed or interviewed by Oxfam, may lead members of the family or community to react negatively. Also, being

interviewed by a male (or adversely, female) story gatherer could trigger action against the contributor at the household or community level, given the gender and power dynamics at play.

Storygatherers should consider who is best placed to carry out the interview, where and when. And they should offer a comfortable and safe place for interviews that is away from the contributor's home. This might be a partner organisation's office, where the activities are not overheard by neighbours or family. Consider transport as well.

Secondary trauma

We should not aim to collect stories from contributors who have experienced trauma, discrimination or exclusion, unless they have received support and are willing to speak out. They could be at risk of secondary trauma if they are asked to relive their experience by those gathering content.

Partners or country teams should be tasked with identifying individuals who they believe will be comfortable with this experience of being filmed, photographed or interviewed.

It is not acceptable to interview people about sensitive issues at short notice.

During the planning and TOR development, time should be spent developing questions that avoid causing anyone further distress. It is advisable to seek advice /feedback from country teams and thematic specialists (e.g. those working in humanitarian relief, gender-based violence, psychosocial support).

Contributors should always have the option of being accompanied during content gathering by someone they trust and feel comfortable

with, who can also offer them support after the content gathering if necessary.

Anger

Interviewers should be prepared to react appropriately and sensitively if a contributor becomes upset (pause, check if someone ok to continue, remind them they can stop at any time).

As part of the planning stage a reaction protocol should be developed to ensure that those gathering content have considered how to respond to distress, disclosure or requests for assistance from contributors¹⁶.

The content gathering team should identify ways to refer contributors to available and appropriate support services – and do so well in advance.

Remember in some contexts those who have experienced trauma will not have access to any services or professional support. In such contexts, Oxfam must consider very carefully whether to go ahead with content gathering.

Material losses

As part of the planning stage Oxfam should budget or arrange other types of support to compensate for any material losses which may be caused to the contributor as a consequence of them speaking out as part of Oxfam's content gathering, for example losing their job. This should be considered in close collaboration with the country team and local partners.

Agile risk mitigation

Be aware that risks to contributors may change over time. If a contributor has spoken out against an abusive employer, corrupt politician etc, even if it does not put the contributor in danger at time photo taken, socio-political contexts can change and contributor could be at risk in the future.

Programme staff in country may sometimes be more aware/knowledgeable about risks facing particular individuals/groups of people than the communications officer.

Humanitarian conflict responses and fragile states often expose individuals to additional risk. Extra care must be taken to consider these contexts, and it is imperative that if data will compromise individual(s)' safety, it not be collected.

It is not possible to predict or plan for all possible risks, and there will be times during content gathering where decisions will need to be taken in response to new information or unexpected circumstances. Such decisions may determine whether/how to go ahead with content gathering. The following principles should apply to such decision-making:

- In unexpected scenarios what is important is that decisions relating to content gathering are carefully considered in relation to the risks and benefits of gathering that content, and that there is evidence of that considered decision.
- Decisions relating to risks for individuals and their families/communities, or partner organisations, should never be made by an individual acting on their own.
- Such decisions should be informed by those

who are have most knowledge of the individuals and communities concerned and their circumstances.

Our Responsible Data in Program Policy sets out explicit obligations to account for risk – including a red line around data collection of data in fragile or conflict scenarios where individuals may be exposed to risk. These obligations mirror those in European Data Protection law – that information or imagery which exposes individuals to risk must be carefully handled and accounted for – or not handled at all where the risk is high.

Risks and agreed ways to mitigate should be logged in a risk analysis document, which sits with the ToR as an annex, and thus is signed off by the Country Director before the start of the story gathering. Where these risks are high, affiliates may have legal obligations and must consult their Data Protection Officer or Focal Point, or another specialist (e.g. Safeguarding or Protection) if unclear what these are.

During the content gathering, the content lead is responsible for initiating daily discussions/reflection on risks as they evolve, including addressing any unexpected risks. This reflection should always involve the contributor focal point. A brief summary of these daily discussions will be documented in a logbook.

Notes

12 When the story gathering is initiated by an affiliate, the affiliate should contact the country team first, who would then be in touch with relevant partners.

13 We should not be contemplating interviewing anyone facing this level of risk unless we have a compelling reason to do so. In high-risk contexts it may be appropriate to consider changing the angle of a story and framing it around the experiences/ideas of Oxfam's staff or partners – however it is important to remember that these individuals could also be placed at risk by being identifiable in any visual communications.

14 For more info and conditions applying, see Informed Consent (p19)

15 It is good practice to follow up with contributors shortly after the content gathering. This can be phone call or face-to-face visit. This follow-up serves as an additional opportunity for contributors to discuss any concerns they may have with the content or its publication. In high-risk situations, this is mandatory.

16 This will be unnecessary in some contexts depending on country team experience with particular groups

Informed consent

Empowering people to share
their own story (or not)

Photographer Hadi Uddin shows a fisherfolk lady in Chanpur, Bangladesh, the photo he took from her.

(Credit: Evelien Schotsman/Oxfam)



About informed consent

In all of our story gathering it is absolutely essential that contributors actively consent to their story being collected and used by Oxfam. A robust consent process is the cornerstone of any ethical approach to story gathering.¹⁷

Consent is only meaningful if it can be freely given, and if it is informed by a clear understanding of the context and usage of material. To be informed, individuals must understand:

- Why the content is being gathered;
- Who the individuals involved in filming/ photography/interviewing are;
- Basic aspects about the nature of Oxfam and/or partner organization (including which organisation it is);
- The type of communications and scope of audiences (show examples);
- That Oxfam cannot control the use of content once it is published online;
- The right to refuse to participate;
- The right to choose whether to be visibly identifiable and whether to use real name or a pseudonym;
- The right to withdraw consent in the future – and that they may have other legal rights;

Each of these points is covered in more detail on Oxfam's [informed consent form](#).

If an external photographer is involved, consent for his/her use of the images as separate from Oxfam, is deemed to be covered by Oxfam's own consent process.

Informed consent can only be achieved in an individual's own language. That means that if an image maker/team does not speak the language or dialect of the contributor(s), an interpreter must be part of the content gathering team. Documentation and tools supporting the consent process, are available in various languages.¹⁸

Our informed consent process

Informed consent must be recognised as an essential multi-staged process, that is responsible and meaningful for contributors and potential contributors. Proof of consent should only be collected after a meaningful dialogue between contributor(s) and content gatherers has taken place.

An Oxfam staff member from the commissioning team must have overall responsibility for ensuring informed consent takes place.

Oxfam adopts a 3-staged-consent process.



Oxfam storygatherers Evelien Schotsman and Colin Carey are joined by interpreter Jenya (left) as they prepare for interviewing a woman who crossed the Polish border, fleeing the war in Ukraine, April 2022.

(Photo: Tineke Dhaese/Oxfam)

1 BEFORE

Before storygathering

The contributor focal point is thoroughly briefed on the purpose and requirements of the story gathering and provided with a script for the conversation with potential contributors. Subsequently, he/she reaches out to potential contributors, explains the purpose of the story gathering and identifies those who are willing to participate.

This should happen well in advance of story gathering, to ensure that potential contributors are provided with the information and time to make a considered decision. This will also allow time for Oxfam to explore alternative options in case people decide not to participate. The story gathering budget should provide funds for any travelling costs associated with this.

In some situations (including the immediate aftermath of emergencies) this will not be possible at all. In some (less sensitive) situations this might not be needed.

2 DURING

During storygathering

Upon meeting the contributor(s), and prior to any interview or shoot taking place, the person responsible for obtaining consent introduces themselves and explains the context and purpose of the story gathering. While this conversation should cover all elements outlined on p.18., it should be a relaxed dialogue. Careful delivery of Stage 1 should greatly help to facilitate this conversation.¹⁹

It is recommended to use Oxfam's FairConsent App to guide the contributor through the process. In this case, proof of consent can be obtained through either a digital signature, a thumbs-up picture or a short audio statement – all integrated in the app.

Alternatively, you may also use the [paper informed consent form, and obtain a signature on the form as proof of consent.](#)

We always leave our contact details with the contributor, either over email or text message, or on paper.



3 AFTER

After storygathering

At the end of an interview/filming, take time to show contributors footage or images on the back of camera before leaving, and if appropriate engage them in discussion about which images should be used.²⁰ This is an opportunity to give contributors agency over the process, and clarify whether they are still happy to provide consent, and if that is on the same basis as agreed at the beginning.

It is recommended that the contributor focal point follow up with the contributor at least once during the weeks following the story gathering. He/she should check how the contributor feels now about sharing their story and if they have received any feedback, either as a consequence of the story gathering or the publication of the materials. In high-risk situations, following up is mandatory.

For contributors, this provides an opportunity to withdraw consent or put caveats to the use of their images. For Oxfam, this allows to check on a contributor's situation and put additional safeguards in place if needed, and to provide copies of finished content to the contributor.

Using the FairConsent App

- 1 Download and install the app ([Google](#) or [Apple](#)) on your phone
- 2 Ask [your Oxfam local DAM manager](#) to invite you. You will receive an email - use your phone's camera to scan the QR code. You should now see 'Collect consent for Oxfam'
- 3 At the time of storygathering, sit down together with the contributor and use the visuals in the app to explain the process
- 4 Obtain consent through a digital signature, recorded audio statement or thumbs-up photo
- 5 Once everything is recorded, and back online, upload your consents directly from the app to Inuru.



GDPR & lawful basis

This guidance requires those collecting content to follow Oxfam's ethical informed consent process. While processes in these guidelines, including the ethical consent process and form have been designed with data protection laws in mind, affiliates should always be mindful of requirements under their own laws. In particular, affiliates in the EU may need to consider their lawful basis – GDPR sets out six of these, which include consent. The law explicitly outlines that any use of information must have a valid lawful basis, and each has specific implications.

Option 1: Consent

Where the lawful basis is consent, GDPR sets out a number of explicit requirements, including that:

- Consent must be freely given and can be withheld;
- No power imbalance which would prevent it being given must exist;
- It must be possible to easily withdraw it ;
- Consent must be a positive, affirmative step;
- It must be specific to a purpose;
- It must be informed.

The FairConsent App and Oxfam's informed consent form have been designed with these requirements in mind.

For **ethical** reasons, Oxfam will always require informed consent for the use of personal data as part of its public engagement work²¹, and often this will be a strong **legal** basis too²².

However, the relationship between Oxfam and its beneficiaries is such that not all contributors will at all times be able to provide their informed consent as defined in Data Protection Law. Affiliates may therefore wish – based on their legal understanding and analysis, and while still obtaining informed consent – to use a different lawful basis.

Option 2: Legitimate Interest

The principal implications of using Legitimate Interest rather than consent are:

1. There is an increased obligation on the organisation to account for its 'interest' in using data, and account for the risk to which it exposes individuals;
2. There is no explicit right to withdraw consent or be forgotten – instead the law outlines a softer right to object.

If Legitimate Interest is used, these implications put more onus on the Data Controller (either the affiliate gathering the content or the Executing Affiliate if the content is gathered by a country team) to account for behaviour and carry out risk-based decision-making in order to protect individuals and respect their privacy rights – and may reduce the challenges inherent in requiring robust consent withdrawal mechanism.

The use of Legitimate Interest does not lessen the protection available to individuals, prevent a robust consent process from being carried out, or remove the need for risk analysis or follow-up mechanisms to allow consent withdrawal / objection. There are parallels in other walks of life (e.g. medical research) where an 'ethical' consent process is used alongside a non-consent lawful basis due to an imbalance of power.

Deciding on the lawful basis

This documentation has been written with consideration that the 'balance' of risk and ethical thinking it provides may provide weight to a decision to use Legitimate Interest, and that the safeguards it provides in preventing exploitation may satisfy the requirements of GDPR.

However, ultimately affiliates must conclude whether they are collecting content on the basis of legitimate interest (with the consent process an ethical rather than data protection element) or on the basis of consent within the meaning of their data protection laws (and having satisfied themselves that the consent process fulfils the requirements of those laws).

In cases where 'Special Category' data is processed – e.g. in a narrative relating to religion, trade union membership, health history, or another of the 'special category' types of data – an additional processing condition (set out in Article 9(2) of GDPR) may also be needed. This may be consent – or another condition.

Specific modalities

There are circumstances which will allow for more agility in obtaining and documenting consent. Please mind that the level of risk to contributors will always 'override' these circumstances. Hence, it is critical that a full risk assessment is completed before adopting either of these approaches.

Groups

ONLY WHEN RISK LEVEL: VERY LOW - HIGH



There are times when adhering to the process of informed consent for all those featured in an image (still or moving) can be difficult. This is particularly in relation to images of groups of people. Group consent may be applied on 3 conditions:

- groups are well-established, and relationships between group members have a formal status and long-term nature (families, cooperatives, saving groups, etc.)
- group size and context allow for consent to be explained to the group as a whole
- a designated group member can act as the group's representative.

When applying group consent, consent is explained to the group as a whole, instead of to each individual separately. Where possible, the content collector should bring along visuals (as those used in the FairConsent App) which can be shown to the group in order to explain.

Group consent can never be a shortcut to getting consent from individuals. Consent should always be explained to every individual in a group, to the extent that they are able to understand, and all individuals should have the opportunity to opt out.

Consent is then confirmed by the group's representative, either through a signature, a thumbs-up photo or audio statement. The content collector will record his or her contact details, and provide them with a written consent confirmation. The group's representative will act as a 'bridge' in between the group and Oxfam going forward (e.g. in case any of the group members want to withdraw consent).

If a group is 10 people or less, Oxfam will also want to take names and headshot photos of individual group members (on our form or in the app). If a group is larger than that, no individual names or headshot photos need to be taken.



Oxfam's Rachel Schaevitz visits rural Boleo province in Laos to learn about the experiences of people who participated in Oxfam's Essential Cash & Livelihoods Project.

(Credit: /Oxfam in Laos)

Frequent Collaborations

ONLY WHEN RISK LEVEL : VERY LOW - MEDIUM



Consent by default only pertains to the particular story being shared at the point of gathering consent. However, when we anticipate to work regularly with same contributor, we may allow contributors to consent for the use of any images or stories they would share with Oxfam over a longer time period.

Forward consent may be applied on the condition that the contributor is in a contractual relationship with Oxfam, expected to continue for at least 1 year. This may include:

- Oxfam staff members
- partner staff members
- volunteers
- corporate partners
- celebrities or ambassadors
- activists

Contributors in those cases may be given the opportunity to consent for the use of all future stories or images they will share with Oxfam over the next 12 months. This removes the requirement to get consent each time a new story is collected.

For example, we require consent from identifiable individuals in a queue outside an HIV testing centre, or in a refugee camp, or at a political rally. Image making in such contexts must be done with extreme care as publication of their images could lead to risks for individuals or their families. And therefore, consent cannot be assumed.

However, we might not require consent from identifiable individuals in the background of an urban or rural public scene which does not reveal any of the individuals' sensitive data.

When filming or taking photographs in public places there are times when we may need to seek advice and permission from local authorities before filming or photographing in those locations. Checking whether such permissions are required is an essential part of the planning/TOR development.

Events

ONLY WHEN RISK LEVEL : VERY LOW - LOW



When stories or images are being collected in the context of an event organized by Oxfam, we may allow participants to opt in to their photo or story being collected as part of the subscription.

In this case, the full written terms of consent must be included in the subscription form, so that participants are able to make an informed choice.

Public Spaces

ONLY WHEN RISK LEVEL : VERY LOW - LOW



Consent can be particularly hard to manage for groups or crowds of people in public places (for example street scenes, a protest march, a refugee camp). It is good practice to frame camera shots in such a way that they only reveal the individual identities of those we have consent from.²³

If and when this is not possible, we may still proceed and take photos or film which reveal identities, on the condition that risk to these individuals is deemed low or very low. Therefore again, it is essential that a risk assessment is completed before collecting content.

Notes

¹⁷ Guidance from this section, and other sections of the guidelines, on the informed consent process is summarized in a 1-page sheet that sits with the [informed consent form](#).

¹⁸ All country programs should translate the informed consent form into further languages as appropriate and needed.

¹⁹ Oxfam content gathering should minimize additional stress or concern for individuals who are already facing undue stress and difficulties. E.g. contributors who are caught up in conflict or emergency situations may feel worried about the potential use of any of their data. They should never be pressured into providing their image, or details of their story or identity.

²⁰ This provides them with an additional opportunity to express any concerns they may have about the image being published.

²¹ With the notable but strictly limited exception of photography or filmmaking in public spaces, see below.

²² For any use for fundraising or marketing purposes, consent is the only viable legal basis.

²³ This is preferable to having to manipulate the image afterwards i.e. blurring the faces of anyone whose consent you don't have.

Mohamed Mohamud of Pastoralist Girls Initiative (PGI), an Oxfam partner organization in Garissa, Kenya, speaks on Oxfam and PGI's response to the ongoing floods. Oxfam and partner staff are able to provide consent for the use of all future stories or images they will share with Oxfam over the next 12 months.

(Credit: Peter Irungu/Oxfam)



Showing respect

Further responsibilities to contributors

Children & vulnerable adults

Oxfam is committed to upholding the rights of children, and safeguarding them against actions (intended or unintended) that place them at risk of all forms of violence and harm, including child abuse and exploitation. Freelance content gatherers who come into contact with children or vulnerable adults will be required to:

- Undergo reference checks and (where relevant/ possible) criminal record checks;
- Sign [One Oxfam Child safeguarding policy](#);
- Always be accompanied by an Oxfam staff member or representative of a partner organisation.

General safeguards

Oxfam's gathering, management and use of content featuring children must adhere to legal and ethical standards and consider: assessment of risk to the child (with extra care taken for especially vulnerable children); child safety; respect of the child's rights, integrity and dignity; obtaining and documenting informed consent from the child (if they are old enough to understand) as well as from their parent or guardian.²⁴ Oxfam must prioritise the best interests and protection of children over the opportunity for advocacy and promotion of the agency.

This means those involved in content gathering with children must, in addition to providing the safeguards outlined above:

- Take care to ensure local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images are adhered to before photographing or filming a child.
- Obtain informed consent from the child (if they are old enough to understand as well as from their parent or guardian before photographing or filming a child or obtaining their story.
- Information shared with anyone, but especially with children, during the process of content gathering, must be in clear and plain language that can be understood.
- Ensure all images present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive – regardless of whether they are boys or girls. We do not use photos of minors that do not feature an adult.

- When gathering and publishing images and stories of children, Oxfam must mitigate the risks of retribution, stigmatisation, or increased targeting by child sex-offenders.

Protecting identities

By default Oxfam changes children's names.²⁵

Images of under-18s with changed names cannot feature identifying elements in the picture, nor be accompanied by identifying information in the caption/story when shared either internally (as part of metadata on the DAM visible to users) or externally (on online or offline channels). These elements may include:

- Reference to any location under 100,000 inhabitants (use a county or state name rather than a town name if needed);
- A parent's last name or location;
- A school name.

In addition to using changed names and not identifying locations, the story gathering team/child/parent can decide to not show the individual's face on film or photos, for additional protection, as per the above guidance on risk analysis and consent.

There are some exceptions to the name change rule. The story gathering team can choose to use children's real names, only if all three of the following key conditions are met:

1. The child and their parent feel strongly about doing so and they have been informed of any risks associated with children being featured in the media;
2. The [local safeguarding focal point](#) agrees;
3. The context does not involve any one of the following issues: conflict, child labour, unaccompanied minors, asylum application, trafficking, HIV and AIDS, armed groups (child soldiers/brides), sexual violence (including victims of child marriage) – or any other major risks identified as part of the risk analysis.

Even when using real names, the story gathering team should carefully consider if it is appropriate to reveal specific locations.

Vulnerable adults

Oxfam must apply similar care and responsibilities when content gathering involves vulnerable adults.

Oxfam defines a vulnerable adult as any person aged 18 years and over who is or may be in need

of community care services by reason of mental health issues, learning or physical disability, sensory impairment, or unable to protect themselves due to age or illness and who may be unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation. This includes people encountering domestic abuse, substance misusers and asylum seekers. An elderly person, while they may require extra support, does not necessarily meet the definition of adult at risk.

Contributors' homes & environment

When those involved in a content gathering trip find themselves in people's homes and surrounding environment, they must be respectful and careful. If people take their shoes off before entering a home then the content gathering team must also do this. Similarly lights should not be turned on or

furniture or belongings moved without first asking. And equipment should not be left around without first asking. The content gathering team should be equally careful in outside areas belonging to the contributor(s).

All those gathering content for Oxfam must be sensitive to the environment and any impact photography, videography or interviews may have on the surrounding environment, taking care not to:

- Damage vegetation;
- Stray from marked trails;
- Disturb or harm wildlife or the environment;
- Leave behind any rubbish; take it with you.

While Oxfam does not judge other cultures on their attitudes and behaviours regarding animals, we must do everything we can to ensure animals are not distressed or harmed in the course of our content-gathering. All those involved in content gathering are expected to treat all animals humanely and not support the mistreatment of animals.

Meimei is a fishmonger whose community experiences damaging flash floods.

[Credit: Aimee Han/Oxfam]



Joint decision-making

Image makers and interviewers should talk to contributors about how they would like to photograph/film/interview them. For example, depending on the context of the image-making and if appropriate, contributors should be invited to suggest a suitable time and place for any interviewing. Contributors should be encouraged to suggest a place that is convenient and comfortable, and, if appropriate, private. Story gatherers should be aware of gender differential safe hours and places, and should take care not to place undue burden on women's hours that are often considered 'only for housework'.

Those gathering content should also allow space for the contributor to suggest how they may like to be portrayed. It is usual practice for image makers to make time to share images taken with contributors on the back of their camera. This is another opportunity for a contributor to let the image maker know if there is something they are not happy with in terms of their portrayal.

Reimbursement

Depending on their relationship with Oxfam or its partners, some contributors will associate Oxfam content gathering with possible assistance for themselves or their communities. It is important that those involved in content gathering take care in managing contributors' expectations. Once it has been explained that Oxfam may use image and stories for fundraising purposes it is likely that contributors and others will want to know how, if at all, they, their families or their communities will benefit. Those on content gathering trips must be ready to answer that question.

We do not normally pay communities or individuals to take their images or collect their stories, particularly during short visits where the time commitment of the subjects is not more than a few hours. Where we may need more than half a day from a single person's time, it may be appropriate to compensate individuals on a 'loss of income' basis.

Care should be taken, at all times, to handle these issues as sensitively and transparently as possible. Both at community and household level, who the money is given to can be a source of conflict. There should be no discrimination related to who (men or

women) gets funds or how much. The story gathering team should always defer to the advice of local Oxfam staff and partners. If payment is to be made in cash, it should be handed over discreetly and privately at the end of the assignment.

Find out with the local Oxfam team and our partners whether paying compensation is appropriate and if there are any risks involved; how much to pay, based on what the subject would normally be paid per day in their jobs; and if compensation should be communicated up front or offered as a gift at the end.

In some cases, it might be culturally appropriate to make a small gift or donation. Some cultures for example there is a strong value on reciprocity, and a token contribution may be essential. Again, local staff should advise. It is important to consider this in the planning stage for budgeting purposes, and to include the Oxfam country program and/or partners in the decision.

Content gathering during humanitarian crisis

There are several references throughout these guidelines about content gathering during humanitarian response situations. In addition it is important to specify that Oxfam adheres to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief. This code stipulates: ²⁶

'In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects. Respect for the disaster victim as an equal partner in action should never be lost. In our public information we shall portray an objective image of the disaster situation where the capacities and aspirations of disaster victims are highlighted, and not just their vulnerabilities and fears.'

'While we will cooperate with the media in order to enhance public response, we will not allow external or internal demands for publicity to take precedence over the principle of maximising overall relief assistance. We will avoid competing with other disaster response agencies for media coverage in situations where such coverage may be to the detriment of the service provided to the beneficiaries or to the security of our staff or the beneficiaries.'

Contributors who have no relationship with Oxfam

A significant portion of Oxfam's work is influencing work at a national or international level. These programmes provide indirect benefit to lots of people but have no direct programme participants. Content gathering to support these influencing programmes is likely to involve individuals who will not have a direct relationship with Oxfam. The same ethical standards must apply.

In addition, attention must be paid to ensuring those contributing are aware of services and programmes that they would be able to access and may bring benefit to their lives. Identifying appropriate referral services is an important part of the planning for such content gathering.

In the case that we knowingly plan to feature individuals (who are not involved with Oxfam's activities) in communications to support Oxfam's program or influencing work, we need to make sure that wherever possible they are able to reap the benefits of that same work as well.

Those involved in content gathering will need to work closely with partners or Oxfam country programs to put in place the necessary resources and procedures to ensure those featured can participate in and benefit from relevant, nearby programming or support. Attention should be paid that the support is appropriate to both our local work and the contributor's needs, and not seen as favouring some and discriminating others in a community. Agreeing on convenient support should be an integral part of the planning process and inform the decision on whether a trip will go ahead or not.

Following up afterwards

Oxfam's commitment does not stop with the story gathering crew leaving.

Returning images to contributors

Oxfam is committed to make every possible effort to provide images and/or finished communications materials to those who contributed their image and story. Follow-up with contributors in this way is respectful, helps to manage expectations, provides an opportunity to check contributor's well-being (after the interest demonstrated in their lives at the time of content gathering), is an opportunity to

recheck consent, and is a way that Oxfam can give something appropriate back to those who have given Oxfam use of their image and story.

When it comes to returning images and follow-up this should always be managed by the relevant country team and the contributor focal point in particular.

IF the contributor leaves an email address and/or mobile phone number in the consent form (and provided communicating with contributors by phone or email is considered appropriate)²⁷, the contributor focal point should share links to relevant content and resulting communications digitally. In this case, Oxfam should always return materials to the contributor (and commit to doing so at the time of story gathering).

IF the contributor has left only a physical address in the consent form, we can return a selection of content and communications materials to the contributor focal point, who can then transfer those materials to the contributor. Recognizing that this often depends on action from our local partners, beyond our control, and may require disproportionate effort, we should share materials if we can (and commit to doing so at the time of story gathering).

The commissioning office should include in workplans and budgets, printing/postage costs and the staff time/travel costs associated with returning images to the contributors. The country program should be aware that this is a critical part of the TOR.

Some affiliates and country teams have also started to take a polaroid camera with them while content gathering so that image makers can take photographs of contributors and their families and leave these with them.

Contributors' feedback on the story gathering process

Oxfam will strive to gather feedback from contributors on how they experienced the content gathering process and how they feel about the resulting communications they feature in. Clearly this will not be possible with all content gathering assignments. As part of the TOR/planning stage commissioning teams will be considering if and how they can return content and communications to contributors.

When that is possible, Oxfam should ensure that contributors are provided with the opportunity to feedback on the process and their portrayal and Oxfam should document their feedback. On an annual basis the Content group will share feedback received and consider its implications for ongoing content gathering practice and procedures.

Eric Malyangu, Communications Officer with Oxfam in Zambia, on location in Mongu, Western Province, preparing to conduct interviews with community members to capture their experiences and perspectives.

(Credit: Colin Carey/Oxfam)

Notes

²⁴ In some cases a parent may not be well placed to provide or deny consent, especially if his/her interest is clearly conflicting with the child's rights. Example: a father who sold off his 14-year old daughter, would be badly placed to consent to his daughter sharing her view on child marriage. It is the duty of the content lead to assess carefully and draw upon advice from the local team. If it is determined that the parent cannot cover consent, consent should be sought from a person fulfilling the role of guardian. If such a person is not available, we should conclude that insufficient safeguards are in place and storygathering to not go ahead.

²⁵ Except for when he/she has an existing public profile, as per above guidance

²⁶ From the [ICRC & NGOs in Disaster Relief Code of Conduct](#)

²⁷ It is prohibited for those working with Oxfam to contact contributors who are under 18 in this way.

Processing content

Ensuring data protection
after the shoot

10 key metadata for every image

When published on Inuru and shared within Oxfam, every image should be accompanied with the following 10 key metadata for every contributor (who is clearly visible):

1. full name
2. pseudonym (if appropriate)
3. age
4. caption
5. date of the story gathering
6. geographical location
7. program work description
8. project name/number
9. partner organization
10. image-maker/agency



Diabe Ba (left), speaks with Oxfam storygatherer Chris Hufstader and Khar Ndeye, Oxfam program director, in Senegal. [Credit: Djibril Dia/Oxfam]

Image makers and those involved in commissioning or producing content, are responsible for ensuring that all gathered content is processed in line with relevant Oxfam guidelines on data protection.

Equipment

While on content gathering, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) on any cameras, phones or recorders must be turned off. This requirement forms part of all of Oxfam's contracts with image makers.

Image makers — where not using Oxfam's equipment — must employ appropriate Technical and Operational safeguard on their equipment to protect content while handling it, including encryption of their phones and devices, use of supported and patched hardware and software, regular transfer of raw data from cameras, appropriate anti-malware software, and any other appropriate safeguards defined in the agreement with the Image Maker, or an appropriate annexe to the contract.

Metadata & captions

Taking care to upload detailed and accurate captions alongside each image, is respectful to the contributor and audiences and also guarantees that any use and re-use of images is appropriate to context, thereby minimising risk to contributor as well as any

reputational risk resulting from inappropriate re-use of images. Oxfam cannot use images which do not have the correct information associated with them.

Image makers contracts should be provided with clear instructions on what is expected from them in relation to metadata to accompany each image (or group of images).

All images should be accompanied by clear captions and comprehensive additional information. Captions should be limited to 2-3 sentences and answer the five W's — what can you see in the picture, who, where, when and why. For example:

Solomon Islands: Rubina, with her son David* is now better prepared for future floods after receiving training and support from Oxfam this year on how to prepare for disasters and safeguard food and water supplies. *Name changed for safeguarding purposes.

Additional information may should expand on the issue at stake and on Oxfam's work, explain how both are related and include at least one direct quote.

Sign-off on the final selection of stories and images, including captions, should be sought from the relevant country team's Country Director prior to publishing the content on Inuru and sharing with Oxfam staff. This approval warrants use of the materials in all Oxfam communications, as long as these are reflective of the story and images as they were documented originally.

Storage & curation

Consent forms containing the real names of contributors should be stored next to the assets on Inuru, they must not be visible to any Oxfam staff with the notable exception of trained content managers, to guarantee anonymity for those who have requested it.

Extra care needed that when contributor has requested the use of pseudonym, that their real name should not be visible to users on Inuru.

Photos and stories on Inuru will be active as long as they are deemed relevant, and for a maximum of four years — after that they are archived and restricted on a secure server where they will be stored for historical records and only used where appropriate, for example 75th anniversary, reviewing a past project etc.

In the case of evergreen images — which does not contain any personal information, faces, recognizable traits, and reflect 'stock image'-type content, can remain available to be used in line with common sense and Oxfam values. When in doubt, please seek the advice of your content manager.

Through our consent form, contributors agree to Oxfam's use of their story for five years. Archival after four years allows for one year of 'content retirement', in which no new communications are produced and existing public communications using the designated content gradually disappear. It also provides time for re-consent to be sought if we wish to create anything new from the content.

By default, any photos, videos or artwork intended for public communications should be uploaded to Inuru as soon as possible after its collection or creation, and before using the content in communications or sharing them more widely within Oxfam. The Inuru upload process and corresponding checks help ensure all safeguards are in place. However, in cases where content needs to be shared publicly immediately after collecting, for example photos during or after an event, it may be published first and uploaded on Inuru afterwards. Please note that the same ethical requirements apply regardless whether the content is on Inuru or not.

Contributors have the right to withdraw consent to the use of their images at any point before the five-year term, by means of a simple request. In case a contributor has deceased or is in any other way

incapable of doing so him/herself, consent can be withdrawn by one of their immediate relatives.

It is the duty of the content manager who checked and uploaded images and stories originally, to periodically review their relevance. This review should involve relevant country teams and consider whether:

- A contributor's situation has changed significantly;
- The issue covered has changed significantly;
- The story is still in line with programs and policies.

If at any point in time it would become clear that the context on the ground has changed substantially from the time of storygathering, the story should either be archived or the changes should be clearly logged with each of the assets.



Curation process during a participatory photography workshop, Mutare, Zimbabwe, 2025.

(Credit: Tavonga Chikwaya/Oxfam)

Using content

Integrity & accuracy in
our communications

Being ethical is not only about how we collect and store content, it's also about how we use content in communications. Therefore these guidelines only make sense if they are adhered to by Oxfam staff involved in using the content for public engagement purposes (creative, media, social, digital, fundraising etc.). Oxfam has a commitment to both its contributors and its audiences to ensure that it uses images and accompanying messages accurately and with integrity in its official communications.

The same goes for communication from individual Oxfam staff, both internally and externally.

- On Oxfam's internal platforms, staff should not share sensitive or personal data, unless the images or stories have gone through the same vetting process as content for external communications.²⁸
- Use of content on staff' personal social media accounts should mirror official Oxfam communications, and thus comply with all of the requirements in these guidelines as well.²⁹

Changes to original content

The images (still and moving) that Oxfam use must be accurate representations of the reality covered. Manipulation of images risks changing the situation someone agreed to be photographed or filmed in (changing the conditions of informed consent) and fails to provide audiences with the credibility it expects from Oxfam. Only changes in line with the guidelines below are permissible.

Under no circumstances should images be altered by adding material or subtracting material that was not originally there. Blurring of people should only be done for security or protection reasons, and only if it has proven impossible to address any requirements relating to concealing an individual's identity, location or circumstances, at the time of the shoot.

Changing colour

Basic colour corrections such as removing red eye from a photograph, are acceptable. However, images or footage should not be changed to duller/sepia tones or more vivid/colourful tones to make the situation look worse, or better, than it is.

Cropping & flipping

Any cropping or flipping should be done with care. Do not crop or flip images if this could change context or imply a different truth.

Editing film

Oxfam will not alter film footage during editing in a way that changes the reality of what was filmed, for example by deliberately slowing footage or keying out a background to make the situation appear worse than it is. There are however times when slowing footage down, to focus on an individual, is an acceptable creative device. The key principle is not to alter the footage in a way which changes the reality or context of what was filmed.

Editing quotes

We always quote a person accurately, maintaining the meaning, emotion, context and authenticity of what they are saying. We do not alter their quote to suit our communication objective. In subtitles, always use first-person, direct speech. Do not summarise what people are saying because it may fit more neatly onto the screen. You can omit unnecessary or irrelevant words, but you cannot edit down the quote in any significant way. For further guidance on editing quotes see Annex 2.

Upon finalizing creative products, we should ask ourselves if the contributor would still feel happy about the proposed design and consider whether the piece will need re-consent. The onus is on the creative team developing the materials to make these assessments – they should consult with the story gathering team if needed.

Selecting images & text

Do not use images taken at a previous time to represent a current emergency or news, unless there are no alternatives available. The caption must reflect accurately the time that the photo was taken if it is not current.

Do not use an image from one location to illustrate a story in another location. If no alternatives are available, again the caption must detail the location of the image being used.

Oxfam must not knowingly use unrelated images to illustrate a story or campaign, nor use an image of an individual or group of individuals to illustrate an issue which has nothing to do with them. Photographs of one person should not be used to accompany a story of someone else, unless the person featured is a model and that would be stated within the caption.

Text with an image affects how it is interpreted. It can incriminate contributors, influence their lives or stereotype them in an unfavourable, negative or other way that they would not agree to if asked.³⁰

Captioning

Taking care with uploading correct information with all images should help to prevent incorrect use. All images used in Oxfam communications should be accompanied by a caption which provides the individual pictured with a name (or pseudonym), a location, and relevant context, as well as a credit that attributes the photographer and Oxfam (or other agency). The standard format for credits is 'Credit: name of photographer/ Oxfam' or in the case of 3rd party content 'Credit: name of photographer/name of agency'

Do not use images without a caption/credit or a link to where these can be found. For example for audiences viewing images on social media there should be a link to a website where the caption and credits will be available.

Using images without captions can risk contributing to the perpetuation of visual stereotypes and is not respectful to contributors (or audiences). However, it is important to note that the need for captions does not override the need to manage risks in relation to disclosing someone's name/location/circumstance. Where using images of children be careful not to include any identifying information in the caption, for example exact location or parent's surname.

For some of our audiences, referring to someone without their surnames is disrespectful and patronising, in other places the use of first names is preferred to create a more personal connection with the audience. Teams using content to create communications should give consideration to whether they will use surnames or first names only.

Use of third-party content

Oxfam prefers to use commissioned content, as we can gather content in accordance with these ethical content guidelines and Oxfam values. However, when this is not possible or would require disproportionate effort, Oxfam may need to obtain imagery from third parties. This content must only come from a trusted and reputable source and must adhere to the same principles contained in these guidelines. This means:

- general caution when using third-party content
- don't purchase any images older than four years
- don't purchase any images that portray people in a disrespectful way as per these guidelines
- ask for consent information with the image
- apply a framework for risk assessment—if the

outcome requires consent and consent is not available, then do not use the image if it reveals the person's face

- change names of minors prior to distribution
- credit the image appropriately.

In case of paid stock imagery, caption and consent information must be obtained at the time of purchase. In case of using free Creative Commons - licensed content or even when re-posting content from third parties on Oxfam channels, similar care should be taken.

Partners

We are often sent content from partners or other organisations, which may not share Oxfam's consent process, though many have created consent forms based on ours. If the consent process used covers off the same points as our own, then we can use the content. Content received from partners should consider the level of risk involved, with the final decision at the discretion of the local DAM manager

Individuals

In the digital space, more and more people are sharing their own stories. Oxfam at times can amplify this content. To distinguish between commissioned content, which is:

- briefed and scripted by Oxfam
- usually by professional storygatherers
- defined through a contract
- often with monetary compensation
- fully compliant with our guidelines,

User-generated content is:

- people telling their own story
- people sharing the content publicly on their own channels
- usually non-professional storytellers
- informal agreement
- often no compensation
- not fully-assessed risk-wise.

Exemptions from guidelines may apply, and we should consider the risk and seek guidance from the local DAM manager.

News agency images

In case of an urgent response to a humanitarian emergency, Oxfam will consider purchasing images from editorial and news agencies.

In many cases images from news agencies will not have consent attached, as the images will have been taken for journalistic purposes for which informed

consent is not required. Oxfam must take care to consider whether it feels there are any risks posed to the individuals featured in those images as a result of publishing, and whether the benefits of using that image to raise funds to respond to an emergency outweigh any potential risks. The use of such images is strictly limited to fundraising in the immediate aftermath of humanitarian emergencies, and should be limited in time to the point at which Oxfam is able to obtain commissioned photography.

Content managers must do their best to check whether the imagery has been used by another aid organisation; doing so presents a reputational risk as it can lead to the belief that Oxfam is not on the ground and therefore not the right organisation to support.

Images from the Internet

Most photos on the internet are copyright materials. This means they cannot be used freely, or only under certain conditions. For example, Pinterest photos cannot be used unless the permissions associated with the individual photo explicitly allow to do so. Another popular example is meme template images.

At Oxfam we respect these conditions. The Oxfam staff member who wants to use a web image in communications or presentations, is required to find out about the license arrangements. This applies to all kinds of use – regardless if internal/external comms or the reach of the communications.

When searching for non-Oxfam imagery, staff should look for images on a stock website which only offers photos under very permissive licensing arrangements (such as [Freelimages](#) or [Pexels](#)). Alternatively, some of the bigger image sites offer ways to filter search results by licensing arrangement, so you can easily identify those you can freely use.

- In Google Images search results section, click Tools and then choose the Usage Rights options;
- In Flickr's search results, choose from the dropdown menu under Any License in the top left.

Even in these cases, use may be subject to some conditions (such as attributing the author), so do make sure to always check the specific licensing arrangements.

AI

Authenticity is key to building credibility between Oxfam and our audience. When people see our work, they need to trust that we are depicting realities rather than

inventing them.

AI imagery should not be used as a way to avoid consent or increase representation. AI as a tool is built on existing art, photography, and other image formats. They can contain copyrighted content, as well as exacerbate documented colonial, patriarchal, and heteronormative biases. Users of AI-generated content must be mindful of these biases when writing prompts and choosing AI imagery.

The use of AI-generated content should be restricted, and when used, it should be clear and obvious to the audience. The captions should include how this content was generated, and state reasons why it has been used in this instance.

Reasons to use AI imagery might be:

- We are trying to portray something that has not happened yet
- We want to represent a concept or idea rather than a story
- We want to avoid exposing sensitive data about a person in our images

In each example, it is imperative the audience knows the images shown are fake and AI-generated, and clear reasons for usage must be given.

Supply Chain Responsibility

Where Oxfam-commissioned content, such as a video or animation, include images from third-party sources, the content lead has a responsibility to ensure that our use of those images comply with our ethical and legal complications. Advice should be sought by the legal team when we're unsure.

Notes

²⁸ See [Digital Workplace Terms of Use](#)

²⁹ See Codes of Conduct for staff and consultants ('I will seek authorisation before communicating externally in Oxfam's name...') and the draft digital safeguarding policy ('Sharing online content of volunteers, programme participants and beneficiaries on social media must follow the guidelines outlined below in Section 7 on Data Protection, Research and Informed Consent')

³⁰ For example, people whose photos are used on blogs about Ebola, child soldiers, rape survivors, etc. will be assumed to have experienced those issues themselves. See also: [Taking photos in humanitarian emergencies](#).

Annex

Editing quotes

Oxfam believes in giving people a voice – we amplify their voice, we don't put words in their mouths or misrepresent what they say to suit Oxfam's message.

Quoting accurately

Although it may be tempting to edit, omit or alter part of what a person says, to make it seem more compelling, urgent or desperate, or more aesthetically pleasing, we don't do this. We always quote a person accurately, maintaining the meaning, emotion, context and authenticity of what they are saying. We do not alter their quote to suit our communication objective.

When transcribing direct speech into a trip report/transcription

Present the material as a direct quotation as close as possible to the actual words the person uttered. Do not significantly change, rewrite or misrepresent what people say or alter their meaning in any way.

If needed, you may omit unnecessary and irrelevant words (eg, ums or ahems or side conversations) and/or lightly fix up words or terms that have been translated incorrectly, poorly or in a clumsy, clunky or jargon-filled way, providing the meaning or context isn't changed.

When quoting from a trip report/transcription

The words appearing in quotation marks must be identical to the actual words the persons says in the trip report. Do not change words or grammar, or reorganise the quote, even if the speaker is grammatically incorrect. Present the words as they appear in the trip report. Do not omit words or parts of a quote, to convey a different meaning or emotion or to what was said or to alter the truth of a person's situation or story. You can only change the meaning of what is actually said with the approval of the person being quoted.

If you feel the quote is unclear and needs to be changed, you must speak with the designated Content Lead first. If they concur, they will update the quote and change it in the official transcript/trip report and on the DAM.

Exceptions

You may only omit words or parts of a direct quote if:

- The quote is particularly long or rambling;
- The quote contains words that are not essential to the speaker's meaning;

- You have limited text space;
- You wish to make the speaker's meaning clearer;
- You wish to link two continuous quotes within a single thought on or the same topic.

You correctly omit one or more words by inserting an ellipsis (...) with a single space either side.

Before (all words included):

'My main source of income is charcoal burning. First I have to cut trees, fill a sand pit, burn the wood, chop it up. It's a long process and very tough work. I do everything myself', Delfinia says.

After (using an ellipsis to indicate missing words):

'My main source of income is charcoal burning (...) It's a long process and very tough work. I do everything myself', Delfinia says.

Points to take into account when editing quotes:

- When omitting parts of a quote, you must not change the meaning, accuracy intent or integrity of what the speaker is saying or render the quote out of context to the person's overall story.
- Do not take quotes in completely separate parts of a transcription or trip report and link them together as though they were part of one thought.
- Sometimes it may be better to start a new quote, to indicate a fresh thought, rather than use an ellipsis.
- If you are unsure of the precise quote, or need to alter it to suit your communication, use indirect speech. However, always be sure to maintain the integrity and meaning of what was said.
- If you wish to add or replace a word to make the direct quote clearer, you must enclose the new word(s) in square brackets to indicate that they were not in the original quote.
'We go [to the health centre] about once a month', he said.
- If you feel a spoken word needs to be clarified, defined or explained, put this in round brackets immediately after the word.
'The community fines illegal fishers 200,000 kip per person (about AUD \$27) for the first offence', Mr Xu said.

Oxfam is an international confederation of 21 organizations working together with partners and local communities in more than 70 countries. Stichting Oxfam International is an organisation under the laws of the Netherlands, located at PO Box 30919, 2500GX, The Hague, The Netherlands



OXFAM