



COMMUNICATIONS POLICY FOR STT

APPLICABILITY	AOG World Relief Vietnam Team (Staff) Members, Volunteers, Visitors & Project Partners
VERSION	3
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INTRODUCTION

PREAMBLE

Good communication with our supporters, partners, and beneficiaries is an essential component of the work of AOG World Relief Vietnam (hereon after referred to as AOGWR Vietnam). Without good communication, it is difficult to maintain the support of donors and other partners, which in turn impacts our effectiveness and ability to achieve our goals. However, as crucial as our supporters and partners are, protecting the interests and dignity of the communities, families and individuals we work with should always be our primary concern.

Promotions and communications should also not simply be a fundraising tool, but should also be viewed as a platform for informing and influencing the views and understanding of our networks in relation to the development and cross-cultural ministry.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance to ensure that our communications:

- Accurately represent the vision, purpose and values of AOGWR Vietnam;
- Act as tools that develop a healthy and balanced understanding of the issues we engage with; and
- Above all protect the interests of our key stakeholders.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

AOGWR Vietnam communications will:

- Respect human dignity and ensure the rights, safety and well-being of the people being portrayed;
- Reflect AOGWR Vietnam's values and beliefs, as outlined in the AOGWR Vietnam Vision and Mission Statement.
- Build public awareness, understanding and support for the purposes of international missions, development and relief.

SCOPE

This policy applies to AOGWR Vietnam stakeholders as defined below:

- All AOGWR Team (Staff) Members.
- All AOGWR Vietnam Advisory Board Members.

This policy is recommended for other AOGWR Vietnam Stakeholders as defined below:

- AOGWR Vietnam Volunteers including but not limited to office and event-based volunteers.
- AOGWR Vietnam Partnering Agencies including but not limited to government departments, consultants, and contractors.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AOGWR Vietnam complies with the following codes of conduct specific to promotions and fundraising:

- ACFID Code of Conduct;
- ACFID Fundraising Charter (See Appendix 1); and
- Fundraising Institute of Australia's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

SECTION 1:

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

1.1. PORTRAYAL OF LOCAL PEOPLE

AOGWR Vietnam aims to be highly conscious of how we portray people both in the language and images we use. Language and images should not only recognise the challenges and issues that people and communities face, but also show a positive way forward where individuals and communities are the key agents in their own transformation.

In all communications, AOGWR Vietnam commits to:

- ✓ Presenting people, both adults and children, in a dignified and respectful manner.
- ✓ Giving due respect to the values, history, religion and culture of the people portrayed.
- ✓ Representing people in a holistic, accurate light with a sense of hope, highlighting their capacity and agency to impact their own future and act as key determinants in the development process.
- ✓ Use language free from labels and stigmas.
- ✓ Take care to avoid stereotyping certain groups (e.g. beware of the repeated use of images of particular ethnic groups, nationalities or genders when illustrating particular issues).
- ✓ Comply with local traditions and national laws in taking or reproducing images of people, children, objects or places.

In all communications, AOGWR Vietnam will avoid:

- ✗ Presenting people, including children, as helpless, dependent or to be pitied; where the donor or project is portrayed as 'saving' the subject. This requires assessment on an individual basis, but will generally eliminate images with crying, or unclad children which are deemed to be emotionally exploitive.
- ✗ Using any images or language which may be derogatory, discriminatory or violent.
- ✗ Using only images which contain just children to represent issues that affect the broader community. This is to avoid giving the false impression that the response to the issue needs to be directly targeted towards children in isolation from the rest of the community. Children should be shown with their families, their communities and/or siblings or other groups of children.

1.2. TRUTHFULNESS OF MATERIAL

AOGWR Vietnam aims to ensure that in all its communication the issues, communities and people we work with are represented and portrayed truthfully, accurately and in context. Project impacts should be reported truthfully, not exaggerated, and where there are multiple factors that contributed to the impacts, of which the project is one, this should also be communicated.

In all communications, AOGWR Vietnam commits to:

- ✓ Ensuring information, images and captions are truthful and represent the issue, person and community accurately.
- ✓ Ensuring images are used in context and are correctly attributed to programs and photographers. Disclosures should be used where there is risk of misunderstandings.
- ✓ Using images and interview content ideally within the first 2 years they are obtained, and ideally for a maximum of 5 years after which content should be archived and used only for historical pieces.

In all communications, AOGWR Vietnam will avoid:

- ✘ Oversimplifying the diversity of communities, individuals, and the context in which they live.
- ✘ Presenting any misleading or deceiving information or images that may create a false impression or misunderstandings.
- ✘ Exaggerating facts, sensationalising issues or making claims which cannot be fulfilled.
- ✘ Editing photos or film to alter context. If photos are edited to protect identities, this must be noted and explained.
- ✘ Using images in a 'generic' fashion to illustrate subject matter when there is in fact no connection between the image and the content of the material illustrated.
- ✘ Using images of nationals from one country to represent nationals from another country.
- ✘ Evoking a donor response in a manner that is manipulative and does not align with AOGWR Vietnam's values of integrity and transparency.
- ✘ Oversimplifying issues, their causes and solutions as this does not give the donor the opportunity to respond to and make an informed decision about their involvement based on the real circumstance and facts.

1.3. CONSENT FOR STORIES AND IMAGES

As a part of showing respect for the people and communities we engage with, we should seek permission from individuals before capturing or publishing people's images and stories. AOGWR Vietnam recognises that there are a broad range of factors that need to be considered when gaining consent and that not all circumstances will fit in a neat category. In such 'grey' circumstances, AOGWR Vietnam seeks to put the best interests of the person first and use common sense and wisdom. If in doubt about whether proper consent has been gained, it is safer to avoid using the image or story altogether.

Types of Consent

- The different levels of consent are verbal and written, given either by the subject themselves or guardian.
- Both verbal and written consent should also be informed consent, which means that the person understands where the image/story will be used, what information will be revealed, and is given an opportunity to place stipulations around their story (e.g. such as not revealing identity, time limitation, or not being published on the internet).
- AOGWR Vietnam respects a person's right to refuse to be photographed or have their story recorded and will refrain from taking a photo or recording a story if the subject shows any reluctance or confusion. Subjects also have the right to withdraw permission, even after a story or photo is published.

Determining which Type of Consent

- Determining which consent is required is based on the nature of the image/story and the final output of the image/story.
- Verbal consent should almost always be gained, except in very limited circumstances where individuals cannot be clearly recognised or identified and therefore no consent is required. Photographers or those submitting photos/videos for usage will complete the online AOGWR Vietnam Interview and Image Consent Form (available in both English and Vietnamese) and upload photos to applicable storage. Records of consent will be collated on the website.
- Written consent is required when:
 - Individuals are **identifiable**.
 - Note there is a difference between 'recognisable' and 'identifiable'.
 - Recognisable means that the subject could be recognised by someone that knows the individual but no other significant information is revealed.
 - Identifiable means that additional information is revealed that would allow the person

to be clearly identified, which could include information shown in the image itself (e.g. name badges, school uniforms, well known locations) or information accompanying the image when published (e.g. names, locations).

- Subjects are also considered identifiable where substantial information about their story, testimony or circumstance is revealed, such as in a case study or interview.
- Images/stories are of a **sensitive nature**, which includes:
 - Culturally sensitive, politically sensitive, taboo or high-stigma issues.
 - Clinical settings (e.g. hospitals, clinics, with midwives/nurses) or private settings (e.g. private home, classroom).
 - When a child is the sole subject of an image which accompanies a story of a sensitive nature and implies the issue pertains to the child.
 - Any situation where individuals may be put at risk or face stigma (refer to Section 1.5).
- When written consent is required, the AOGWR Vietnam Staff will review the applicable Project Activity Commitment Agreement to confirm that written consent has already been given by the appropriate party/ies for images taken as part of the project activities to be used as required for promotional purposes. Photographers will still complete the online AOGWR Vietnam Interview and Image Consent Form (available in both English and Vietnamese) to re-confirm consent using this previously granted permission for image usage.
- In the event that an applicable Project Activity Commitment Agreement does not exist for the activity being photographed or recorded, photographers will complete the online AOGWR Vietnam Interview and Image Consent Form.
 - The AOGWR Vietnam Interview and Image Consent Form will be used (Appendix 3). In order to comply with the written consent requirements, we will ensure:
 - Consent forms are available in both English and Vietnamese.
 - An interpreter is engaged and used for extensive photographic shoots or videography in order to explain and communicate the purpose of the photographs/footage and to gain informed consent.
- A record be kept by the photographer/videographer for any photograph/footage taken for which written consent was not gained due to illiteracy, but for which informed verbal consent was gained when completing the online AOGWR Vietnam Interview and Image Consent Form.

Summary of Consent

Circumstance	No consent	Verbal consent	Written consent	Examples
Individuals are neither recognisable nor identifiable	✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide angle shot of people playing, working or participating in an activity. • Wide angle b-roll footage at a public location. • Images from creative angles that do not show people’s faces or any defining features.
Individuals are recognisable		✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group shots of people. • Portrait of a person with no other substantial information revealed. • Mid-length or close-up b-roll footage at a public location. <p>*Where people/locations do not meet sensitive or high-risk criteria.</p>

<p>Individuals are identifiable</p>			<p>✓</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image that clearly identifies and provides substantial information about a person. • Image with captions including names. • Image that shows easily identifiable locations or landmarks. • Individual is the sole focus of a story/case study.
<p>Images/stories are of a sensitive nature</p>			<p>✓</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images of people with HIV/AIDS. • Images of families in their private homes. • Images of children in classrooms. • Images of children next to a story discussing orphaned and vulnerable children. • Image of a Christian in a country where they may face religious persecution.

Children and Consent

- When taking photographs or recording stories of a child under 14 years old, or a child aged 14- 18 years old that cannot give informed consent, consent must be gained from a parent or guardian.
- Parents/guardians are not able to consent to children being photographed or participating in activities that are in breach of the AOGWR Vietnam Child Safeguarding Policy.

1.4. PORTRAYAL OF SENSITIVE ISSUES

Specific care should be taken when portraying sensitive issues or high-risk populations such as the vulnerable children, survivors of abuse or exploitation and victims of disasters. These issues should be portrayed accurately, using language and images in accordance with relevant guidelines specific to these issues, and in a way that avoids depicting people into over simplified victim or villain roles.

Portraying children including orphaned, vulnerable or unaccompanied children

Children’s situations often evoke particularly strong responses; however we must be careful not to exploit this and instead put the child’s best interests and safety above the desire to share an impacting image or story.

In all communications, AOGWR Vietnam commits to:

- ✓ Respect the rights of every child including their:
 - ✓ Rights to protection from harm and retribution;
 - ✓ Rights to privacy;
 - ✓ Rights to have their opinions heard; and
 - ✓ Rights to participate in decisions affecting them.
- ✓ Ensure that the best interests of each child are protected over any other consideration, including over advocacy for children’s issues and rights.
- ✓ Ensure children are presented 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.
- ✓ Take a child’s views into account in accordance with their age and maturity.
- ✓ Assess and comply with local laws, traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images of children.
- ✓ Interview children in a sensitive manner and only when a parent or guardian is present.
- ✓ Present the context of the child accurately and the role or impact of the project in context of other supporting factors in the child’s life (e.g. family, community, local church or support group).
- ✓ Ensuring children’s private information is not made publicly available including details of their specific location. Therefore, the GPS tracking function must be disabled on equipment when filming or photographing children.

In all communications, AOGWR Vietnam will avoid:

- ✗ Publishing a story or an image which might put the child, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used.

Portraying people who are survivors of abuse or exploitation

Media and communication has the ability to be used as a positive tool for advocacy, but can also be used to inflict a “second victimisation” upon victims or survivors by re-enhancing their feelings of violation, shame, disorientation, and loss of control.

In communications portraying survivors of abuse or exploitation, AOGWR Vietnam commits to:

- ✓ Only using content for a maximum of 2 years unless otherwise specified by the interview subject.
- ✓ Ensuring interviewers are properly trained to interview adult or child survivors of violence, abuse or exploitation. This may include need for the interviewer to be trained in psycho-social counselling.

Portraying people affected by disasters

During a disaster, especially in the initial response stage, extra care and sensitivity should be taken when collecting information, images and stories. We must be conscious that people affected by disasters are especially vulnerable during this time and may be experiencing trauma and shock.

In disaster relief communications, AOGWR Vietnam commits to:

- ✓ Taking extra consideration when asking survivors for informed consent, as due to their vulnerable state they may feel compelled to give consent and incorrectly presume that declining may impact their ability to access benefits.
- ✓ Never using stories or images if there are doubts around potential risks as it is also often very difficult in disaster situations to adequately assess risk of harm or stigma.

In disaster relief communications, AOGWR Vietnam will avoid:

- ✗ Asking survivors to share their stories for communication purposes in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. Generally, stories should only be recorded during this initial stage if a person tells their story without being asked and when you can ensure that they have freely given consent for the information they have shared to be used. The recovery stage of a disaster is a much better time to collect stories from survivors.

1.5. MANAGING LEVELS OF RISKS

Individuals or groups may be put at risk of stigma, reprisal, violence or rejection in their communities as a result of exposing their identity or story. A person’s safety, privacy and reputation should always be put above the value and importance of using their story or image.

In all communications, AOGWR Vietnam commits to:

- ✓ Assessing the risks of harm or stigma to the subject. When publishing stories or images, AOGWR Vietnam will follow the below guidelines regarding what can be revealed based on the level of risk of harm and stigma:

RISK LEVEL	WHAT CAN BE REVEALED
Low Risk	Faces, full names and geographical location may be revealed.
Medium Risk	Faces, pseudonyms (limited cases first names will be permitted) and vague geographical location may be revealed.
High Risk	Faces and visuals to be concealed, pseudonyms to be used and locations will be changed.
Significant Risk	AOGWR Vietnam will not publish any information or images when there is significant risk of harm and stigma. The only exception is when an individual strongly expresses a desire for their story to be told and AOGWR Vietnam decides to respect the subject’s right to tell their story as an act of advocacy. In these cases, the subject must give written consent and fully understand the risks and how the story will be used. Great caution should be exercised in these situations.

NOTE: Children are much more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. For this reason, AOGWR Vietnam will consider all children to be ranked as medium or high risk and act accordingly in all promotions and communications activities.

SECTION 2: OTHER GUIDELINES

2.1. GENERAL GUIDELINES

- AOGWR Vietnam will ensure we make clear the purpose of all donations.
- Identifying information about AOGWR Vietnam should also be included in key publications and our websites, including phone number, address, website and ABN.
- Generally, key AOGWR Vietnam publications will be read and/or discussed with the Management Team and Advisory Board before being published.

2.2. DEVELOPMENT AND NON-DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

- AOGWR Vietnam will clearly and consistently distinguish development activities from non-development and evangelism activities in both communications and practice.
- In all fundraising material, there will be clear communication regarding the tax deductibility of donations.

2.3. PARTNER ORGANISATIONS & AGENCIES

- AOGWR Vietnam will appropriately reference and credit any overseas partners and implementing agencies involved in activities, projects and disaster relief appeals.
- AOGWR Vietnam will ensure that when working in partnership with other organisations, these partnerships are mentioned and ensure our role in the project or initiative is not overstated.
- When using images of activities carried out by other organisations, we will ensure that they are credited even if implementing programs our behalf.
- AOGWR Vietnam will not denigrate other agencies or organisations by making false or misleading statements, but ensure communication is respectful of the role of other organisations and agencies.

2.4. COPYRIGHT

- When publishing an image AOGWR Vietnam will ensure we have permission from the photographer or copyright holder. The name of the photographer and/or the source of the image must also be included.
- Whenever stock photography is used, AOGWR Vietnam will ensure that copyright laws have been followed. This may include:
 - Buying licences;
 - Gaining written permission;
 - Sourcing from websites which freely allow images to be used (e.g. Creative Commons).

2.5. MEDIA

- In all matters pertaining to discussions with the media it is the Management Team or the Advisory Board who will respond or appoint a given staff member to respond on their behalf.
- With regard to interviews granted to the media on any particular aspect of AOGWR Vietnam operations or policy it is preferable that a list of questions be submitted first which can then be answered in writing. If this is not possible an audio recording should be maintained of the interview for future reference.
- At all times the mission and core values of the organisation should be enunciated.

APPENDIX 1:
AOGWR VIETNAM INTERVIEW & IMAGE CONSENT FORM

Please click the below link to access our **AOGWR Vietnam Interview and Image Consent Form** to be completed by team members as needed:

<https://aogwr.org/photo/>