



Reaching out with love

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

Good communication with Vision Rescue's community of supporters is core to who we are as an organisation. One of our cultural Core Principles is being Reliable, which simply means that our donors, partners, beneficiaries, staff and volunteers can trust us to deliver on our promises. The primary means by which we ensure Reliability to our community of supporters, donors and partners, especially, is through good, effective communication. However, protecting the interests, dignity and privacy of our beneficiaries - the children, families and communities we serve - is the first priority in our communication strategy. One cannot be sacrificed at the cost of the other.

Vision Rescue views its media and communications as not merely fundraising tools for our operations, but as vehicles by which to influence the thought and behaviour patterns of the larger community of supporters towards the good of disadvantaged peoples. Our goal is to gently nudge our audience into action within their own communities, by questioning the status quo, asking thought-provoking questions and empowering people to be changemakers in their own communities by serving those in need around them. Through all our content, we are intentional about sharing accurate facts, sourced from reliable authorities, presented in an engaging, entertaining and informative manner, aimed at educating and raising the awareness of our community about the reality and needs of the poor and vulnerable.

Through our communications, we also seek to encourage and bless those who support our work, as many in our community of supporters don't ever get to see face-to-face the impact of their contributions. We seek to effectively communicate the impact that their often-sacrificial giving has made possible here on the ground.

PURPOSE

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

- accurately represent the vision, purpose and values of Vision Rescue
- 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: our beneficiaries.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Vision Rescue communications will:

- respect human dignity and ensure the rights, safety and well-being of the people being portrayed.
- ensure the collection of information, images and stories does not harm people, their property or the environment.
- reflect Vision Rescue's values, beliefs and core cultural principles, as outlined in the Vision Rescue Vision and Mission Statements.
- build public awareness, understanding and support for the purposes of intergenerational transformation of vulnerable children, families and communities.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Vision Rescue's **Stakeholders** defined below.

- All Vision Rescue's **Staff, Contractors** and **Consultants**.
- All Vision Rescue's **Volunteers** including but not limited to office and event-based volunteers.
- All Vision Rescue's **Interns**.
- All Vision Rescue's **Board Members**.

Note: For the purpose of this policy, "Vision Rescue Communications" includes all Vision Rescue marketing, fundraising and promotion materials and donor correspondences. It includes all images, film, stories, reports, online media, publications, website content and so forth.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

Portrayal of people

Vision Rescue aims to be conscious of how we portray people through the language, images, videos, music and editing styles used to communicate their story and situation. Our goal is to recognize the challenges they face but also show a positive way forward whereby the individuals and communities are key agents in their own transformation.

In all communications, Vision Rescue commits to:

- Presenting people, both adults and children, in a dignified and respectful manner, neither exaggerating, nor underplaying their current situation.
- 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.
- Highlighting and focusing on the context and complexity of a situation, rather than solely focusing on an individual's suffering.
- Using language free from labels and stigmas.
- Taking 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).
- Complying with local traditions and national laws in taking or reproducing images of people, children, objects or places.

In all communications, Vision Rescue 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, starving, dirty or unclad children which are deemed to be emotionally exploitative.
- 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.

Truthfulness of Material

Vision Rescue 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 impact numbers 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, Vision Rescue commits to:

- Ensuring information, images and captions are truthful and represent the issue, person and community accurately.
- Ensuring images are used in context.
- Using images and interview content ideally within the year they are obtained, and ideally for a maximum of 5 years after which content should be archived and used only for historical pieces.
- Providing relevant, publicly-available information to build the awareness and consciousness of our audience, using only facts that are sourced from reliable and unbiased authorities.

In all communications, Vision Rescue 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, sensationalizing 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.
- Evoking a donor response in a manner that is manipulative and does not align with Vision Rescue's values of being people-centric, evoking joy, being reliable or demonstrating love in action.
- 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.
- Sourcing data or facts to explain the need for aid, from biased or unreliable publicly available sources.

Consent for stories & Images

As a part of showing respect for the children, families and communities we engage with, we should seek permission from individuals before capturing or publishing people's images and stories. Vision Rescue recognizes 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, Vision Rescue 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 two different levels of consent are verbal and written.
- 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).

- It is also important to make special considerations to those with higher vulnerabilities such as children, people with disabilities and survivors of exploitation, abuse and/or disasters and ensure they have the power and agency to make an informed decision.
- Vision Rescue 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.
- Receiving either verbal or written consent must be done in accordance with Vision Rescue's Child Protection Policy.

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 recognized or identified and therefore no consent is required.
- Written consent is required when:
 - Individuals are identifiable. Note there is a difference between 'recognizable' and 'identifiable'. Recognizable means that the subject could be recognized 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
 - When written consent is required, the below attached Vision Rescue Consent Form will be used

In order to comply with the written consent requirement, it is recommended that:

- Consent forms are translated into local language.
- 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.
- 3. 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. This record needs to be provided along with the images/footage to the Vision Rescue media department.

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 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, Vision Rescue 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;
 - 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)
- Ensuring children's private information is not made publically 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, Vision Rescue 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 have the ability to be used as a positive tool for advocacy, but can also be used to inflict a "second victimization" 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, Vision Rescue 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 the 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, Vision Rescue 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, Vision Rescue 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.

OTHER GUIDELINES

General Guidelines

- Vision Rescue will ensure we make clear the purpose of all donations.
- Identifying information about Vision Rescue should also be included in key publications and our websites, including phone number, address and website.
- Generally, key Vision Rescue publications will be read and/or discussed with the Media & Communication Head before being published.
- In all fundraising material, there will be clear communication regarding the tax deductibility of donations.

Partner Organizations & Agencies

- Vision Rescue will appropriately reference and credit any partners and implementing agencies involved in activities, projects and disaster relief appeals.
- Vision Rescue will ensure that when working in partnership with other organizations, 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 organizations, we will ensure that they are credited even if implementing programs on our behalf.
- Vision Rescue will not denigrate other agencies or organizations by making false or misleading statements, but ensure communication is respectful of the role of other organizations and agencies.

Annual Reporting

An Annual Report will be made available to staff, stakeholders, partners, donors and the wider public.

The Vision Rescue Annual Report will contain the following:

- A statement of Vision Rescue's vision, mission and core values.
- A financial summary report
- Summary of activities

The information contained in these annual reports shall be an accurate reflection of Vision Rescue's pursuits and achievements.

Financial Information

Vision Rescue's financial summary reports will be made publicly available each year in our Annual Report.

- Audit Reports and Annual Reports for at least the past 3 financial years will be available for download from our website, and this will be made known in any published material that references financial summaries or other financial details.
- Fundraising/promotions and administrative costs will also be made available. Vision Rescue will avoid giving donors the impression that there are no administrative costs incurred and will honestly disclose costs incurred in each donation program. For any programs where 100% of funds are directed to the program, Vision Rescue will disclose how the administrative and overhead expenses are being covered.

Legal Fundraising Requirements

- Vision Rescue complies with all Indian laws on fundraising for NGOs, and all laws pertaining to tax deductions for donations within India and from abroad. Vision Rescue typically does not make contracts or agreements with professional fundraisers to act on behalf of Vision Rescue. In the event that third party fundraising is sourced, the following conditions will be met:
- All contracts and agreements with the third party will be put in writing. Expectations, responsibilities and obligations of each party will be clearly described in the contract and understood by each party.
- All contracts will meet applicable legislative, regulatory requirements and state/territory conditions.
- Vision Rescue is to be acknowledged as the recipient of donations in all fundraising activities.

Copyright

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

Media

- In all matters pertaining to discussions with the media it is the Head - Media & Communications 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 Vision Rescue's 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 organization should be enunciated

Branding & Co-branding

- Vision Rescue's logo was trademarked in 2021, and it is this trademarked logo that must be used on all printed collaterals such as shop signs, brochures etc.
- For other iterations of the logo, brand values, brand personality, brand colors, brand tone, typography and for co-branding instructions see Vision Rescue Brand Guideline

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW, IMAGE AND VIDEO FORM

This form is to be used to gain consent to interview and capture images of project beneficiaries/participants for the purpose of Vision Rescue and/or partner publications, promotions and educational materials. All interviews, images captured, and final edited stories must abide by the guidelines in the Vision Rescue Communication Policy and Ethical Promotions Guidelines.

PART 1: CONSENT OF INTERVIEWEE

I _____, consent to be interviewed by an *Vision Rescue* staff member/field worker and consent to my image and voice being recorded for the purpose of *Vision Rescue* publications and promotional materials as per the conditions listed below:

1	I consent to my story and image being published in <i>Vision Rescue</i> and/or partner publications and promotional materials ☐ Yes ☐ No
2	I consent to my story and image being released on the <i>Vision Rescue</i> and/or partner website and I understand that my story can be downloaded from the internet ☐ Yes ☐ No
3	I consent to my story and image being used by <i>Vision Rescue</i> for the above purposes for as many years as required by Vision Rescue (or until I revoke my consent) ☐ Yes ☐ No
4	I consent to <i>Vision Rescue</i> using my name & the personal details I disclose in my interview in <i>Vision Rescue</i> and/or partner publications & promotional materials. ☐ Yes ☐ Yes, but I would like to OMIT the following details: ☐ No ☐ Name ☐ Age ☐ Specifics of any condition I may have ☐ Location ☐ Other (Please specify) _____
5	I consent to Vision Rescue being the sole proprietor of all revenue generated from the publication and release of my story. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I wish to make the following extra requests:

PART 2: DETAILS OF INTERVIEWEE

Name of person being interviewed: _____ Age (if a minor): _____

Location: _____ Project: _____

Signature of interviewee: _____ Date: _____

PART 3: PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT

- In the event that the person is under 14 years old a parent or guardian must give consent.
- In the event that the person is between the ages of 14-18 years old, but unable to give informed consent, a parent or guardian must also sign the consent form.

Parent/Guardian's name: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

PART 4: FIELD WORKER**MANAGING LEVELS OF RISKS:**

When *Vision Rescue* staff/field worker wish to use images or information about an individual, they should assess the risks of harm or stigma to the individual and act according to table below in all promotions and communications activities.

As children are always more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, *Vision Rescue* will rank all children as medium to high risk.

Is the individual a survivor of abuse or exploitation:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please tick if the individual is a child or adult

☐ Child (Please go section 4a) ☐ Adult (Please go to section 4b)

4a. If individual is a Child

Is there a high risk of harm or stigma?

☐ No- If no, please note the child will be ranked as medium risk

☐ Yes- If yes, please state below the reason why and any recommendations

4b. If individual is an Adult

Please tick level of risk of harm or stigma:

☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High

If medium or high please state the reason why and include any recommendations:

Signature of Field Worker: _____

Date: _____

Please Note: This form should be translated for non-English speakers.