

TELLING THEIR STORY

*A MANIFESTO TO
HELP STORYTELLERS
KEEP CHILDREN LIVING
IN-CRISIS SAFE*



**IN A WORLD WITH
SO MUCH INJUSTICE,**

**WE WILL PROTECT THE
CHILDREN WHO TELL US
THEIR STORIES**

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CHILD PROTECTION MANIFESTO
Edition 001



Discover The Journey has developed the following policies and best practices that inform how and why we tell stories about children at-risk. Our manifesto of story is rooted in thousands of hours spent listening to children in dozens of nations around the world emerging from a vast range of cultural, political, geographical, and social contexts. In addition to adhering to UNICEF's "Principles for Ethical Reporting on Children," DTJ seeks to serve children at-risk through our media, story telling and advocacy. No media we create should ever endanger, stigmatize, or ostracize a child, but rather empower, dignify and give voice to a child. DTJ is committed to protecting and honoring each child we represent through the various forms of media. Below, DTJ's philosophy of story is expanded, and specific guidelines for media usage and gathering are described.

A PHILOSOPHY OF STORY

We Believe:

1/ In the Humanity of Each Child

We use media to represent children, and are charged with the responsibility of celebrating the humanity of each child.

2/ In Emphasizing One Child

We tell the story of one to represent the stories of many. Every child's story is important.

3/ In the Dignity of Each Child

We regard the dignity of each child by not exploiting, manipulating or spinning a child's story. Furthermore, our stylistic approach places the camera at the eye level of the child, thus transforming the camera from a tool of observation (looking downwards) into a true platform for their voices to be heard looking up to these children as the future of humanity.

4/ In Child Participation

We create stories that highlight hope, and we include a child in the decision making process of how they want their story to be told or image to be represented and what information about them is shared.

5/ In The Relational Nature of Media

Media is relational in nature, so we are compelled by authenticity, trust and sincerity, noting that these are hallmarks of healthy relationship.

/ What this means:

Because of the above, we have developed the following practical guidelines that maintain fluency with the philosophies behind them.

/ THE IMPORTANCE OF STORY

- Stories bridge cultural, economic, geographic and generational divides.
- Stories humanize people and crisis humans are facing.
- People find themselves within each story if told well.
- Story is the principle form of human learning.
- Stories create community around issues, and provide commonality to the language and discourse about those issues.
- Stories destroy fear, comfort, apathy, and ignorance.
- Stories stir action, and provide hope. Stories create action.

/ MEDIA USAGE

- We do not use any images/video that are exploitative of the child.
- More specifically we will not use photos of inflated suffering. So often these are misrepresentations of a fuller reality.
- We use accurate names and locations for all stories unless an individual's name or location should be changed or remain undisclosed in order to protect them.
- We do not use photography/video of unrelated community members or nations when visually representing an organization's work, but only of direct beneficiaries.
- We do not edit images to the extent that they are representing something other than the original intent (as to be determined by both photographer and editor).
- We do not exaggerate or embellish.
- We are accurate and true - we are truth-tellers who adhere to journalistic principles of balance, fairness, objectivity and truth.
- We always cite our sources and double and triple check all statistics for accuracy (we do not oversensationalize or necessarily choose the highest statistic for shock value. We choose the most accurate, well-researched statistics.)

/ MEDIA GATHERING

- The process of photo/video/writing gathering is a gift. A bridge of trust is built and we are able to walk away bearing a bit of that child's life and story. We never take what is not offered. We maintain trust.
- We respect cultural, religious, community and national customs.
- We always ask permission before taking a child's photograph, explaining to them who we are and how their image will be used. If they are too young to comprehend permission, we ask a caretaker or parent. Regardless, we get a written minor consent form signed from their legal guardian when possible.
- We always write down a child's name and location and cite them appropriately in the article/magazine/website.
- We artistically capture beauty as well as pain in continually dynamic, creative fashions.
- We do not stage "scenes" for effect. We capture real life as it really happens.
- We listen intently to what is being told to us. Make eye contact when culturally appropriate and ask questions more as in a conversation than an interview.

/ DISTRIBUTION

- Media will not be distributed in a manner in which it would be made accessible to those who could harm the child. In order to prevent secondary revictimization, it is assumed that in today's globalized and connected world, perpetrators, oppressors, governments and armed groups can access the media from wherever they are. The child's protection remains paramount.

**UNICEF's Principles for Ethical Reporting on Children*

Reporting on children and young people has its special challenges. In some instances the act of reporting on children places them or other children at risk of retribution or stigmatization. UNICEF has developed these principles to assist journalists as they report on issues affecting children. They are offered as guidelines that UNICEF believes will help media to cover children in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner. The guidelines are meant to support the best intentions of ethical reporters: serving the public interest without compromising the rights of children.

I. Principles

1. The dignity and rights of every child are to be respected in every circumstance.
2. In interviewing and reporting on children, special attention is to be paid to each child's right to privacy and confidentiality, to have their opinions heard, to participate in decisions affecting them and to be protected from harm and retribution, including the potential of harm and retribution.
3. The best interests of each child are to be protected over any other consideration, including over advocacy for children's issues and the promotion of child rights.
4. When trying to determine the best interests of a child, the child's right to have their views taken into account are to be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.
5. Those closest to the child's situation and best able to assess it are to be consulted about the political, social and cultural ramifications of any reportage.
6. Do not publish a story or an image which might put the child, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used.

II. Guidelines for interviewing children

1. Do no harm to any child; avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are judgmental, insensitive to cultural values, that place a child in danger or expose a child to humiliation, or that reactivate a child's pain and grief from traumatic events.
2. Do not discriminate in choosing children to interview because of sex, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities.
3. No staging: Do not ask children to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own history.
4. Ensure that the child or guardian knows they are talking with a reporter. Explain the purpose of the interview and its intended use.
5. Obtain permission from the child and his or her guardian for all interviews, videotaping and, when possible, for documentary photographs. When possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing. Permission must be obtained in circumstances that ensure that the child and guardian are not coerced in any way and that they understand that they are part of a story that might be disseminated locally and globally. This is usually only ensured if the permission is obtained in the child's language and if the decision is made in consultation with an adult the child trusts.
6. Pay attention to where and how the child is interviewed. Limit the number of interviewers and photographers. Try to make certain that children are comfortable and able to tell their story without outside pressure, including from the interviewer. In film, video and radio interviews, consider what the choice of visual or audio background might imply about the child and her or his life and story. Ensure that the child would not be endangered or adversely affected by showing their home, community or general whereabouts.

III. Guidelines for reporting on children

1. 1. Do not further stigmatize any child; avoid categorisations or descriptions that expose a child to negative reprisals - including additional physical or psychological harm, or to lifelong abuse, discrimination or rejection by their local communities.
2. 2. Always provide an accurate context for the child's story or image.
3. 3. Always change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as:
 - a. A victim of sexual abuse or exploitation,
 - b. A perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse,
 - c. HIV positive, or living with AIDS, unless the child, a parent or a guardian gives fully informed consent,
 - d. Charged or convicted of a crime.
4. In certain circumstances of risk or potential risk of harm or retribution, change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as:
 - a. A current or former child combatant,
 - b. An asylum seeker, a refugee or an internal displaced person.
5. In certain cases, using a child's identity - their name and/or recognizable image - is in the child's best interests. However, when the child's identity is used, they must still be protected against harm and supported through any stigmatization or reprisals.
6. Some examples of these special cases are:
 - a. When a child initiates contact with the reporter, wanting to exercise their right to freedom of expression and their right to have their opinion heard.
 - b. When a child is part of a sustained programme of activism or social mobilization and wants to be so identified
 - c. When a child is engaged in a psychosocial programme and claiming their name and identity is part of their healthy development.
7. Confirm the accuracy of what the child has to say, either with other children or an adult, preferably with both.
8. When in doubt about whether a child is at risk, report on the general situation for children rather than on an individual child, no matter how newsworthy the story.

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