

1. Purpose

This policy sets out AFAO's approach to public and stakeholder communications, including our advocacy and media engagement.

AFAO is committed to openness, honesty, transparency and ethical decision-making in its approach to communications.

This policy includes, as an annexure, an ethical decision-making framework to support AFAO's assessment of communications and advocacy risks, including in the sharing of people's stories and images.

2. Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers are required to comply with this policy.

3. Application of policy

This policy applies fully to all of AFAO's operations, including its international activities and the AFAO Foundation. References in this policy to AFAO include the AFAO Foundation.

Where this policy is contradicted by contractual obligations to funders, the contractual obligations must be adhered to. Exceptions to such obligations should be sought from funders prior to entering contracts and any substantive areas of difference must be drawn to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer.

This policy should be read in conjunction with AFAO's Social Media Policy.

4. Approach

AFAO acts with openness, honesty, transparency and integrity in its public and stakeholder communications. Our communications will be ethical, truthful and accurate at all times. Our transparency forms part of our accountability to donors, stakeholders and our communities.

AFAO values cultural and social diversity and will be inclusive and respectful of all people in its communications.

AFAO is recognised as a credible and trustworthy organisation and works hard to protect this reputation by maintaining the highest communications standards.

All AFAO communications will comply with local laws, donor requirements and the Australian Council for International Development Code of Conduct.

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Approved by: AFAO Chief Executive Officer

4.1. Advocacy

AFAO provides a voice for its members and communities domestically and in its regional and international work.

Our advocacy and campaigns will be grounded by evidence. AFAO's values include building and promoting evidence-based approaches to policy, advocacy and health promotion, guided by the Ottawa Charter.

AFAO's political engagement approach is determined each year with the endorsement of AFAO's Board.

Advocacy and campaign materials will reflect the perspectives of affected communities and will not harm or increase risks facing the communities we work with. AFAO consults closely with members, affiliates and communities to ensure its advocacy positions and messages reflect the needs and aspirations of those we serve.

Public material, such as policy submissions, publications and media statements, will undergo fact-checking and review process by AFAO's Deputy Chief Executive Officer. This will include input from external content specialists for technical information.

4.2. Use of imagery and stories

AFAO aims to empower the communities we work with through our storytelling and communications content. We strive to empower and protect the people who share their stories with us. We are committed to depicting people and contexts authentically and truthfully. We value the importance of self-determination and are committed to working with all stakeholders in a way that upholds their dignity.

AFAO will ensure the use of images and stories portraying primary stakeholders is appropriate and accurate and consent has been given.

AFAO will seek the permission and consent of people whose images and stories we use, or their adult guardians, when collecting images, taking photos and documenting stories. AFAO's Informed Consent form is used to explain and seek consent for the use of personal stories, photographs and audiovisual content. This form must be used for all information, stories and images collected for research, evaluation, donor and supporter purposes.

Records of the origins of images and case studies, permissions and copyright releases, as well as key details including name, age, location, date, program association and evidence of consent gained is to be kept on file by AFAO.

AFAO is especially mindful of the interests and safety of children. All staff and volunteers will comply with AFAO's Code of Conduct in relation to photography and filming of children.

4.3. Authorities, including media spokespeople

Public and stakeholder communications, including policy submissions, publications and media statements, must be approved consistent with AFAO's Delegations of Authority Policy.

Where the Delegations of Authority Policy is silent, communications may be approved by a staff member or volunteer consistent with the scope of their portfolio and authority and subject to the exercise of judgement.

AFAO's Chief Executive Officer and President are the only spokespeople authorised to speak on AFAO's behalf to media. No other AFAO staff member or volunteer is authorised to speak to media on AFAO's behalf, unless expressly delegated otherwise in accordance with AFAO's Delegations of Authority Policy.

4.4. References to members, partners and stakeholders

AFAO respects the autonomy of its members, partners and stakeholders. When referring to others in its public communications, AFAO will consider whether these members, partners and stakeholders would reasonably expect that their permission is sought or that they are otherwise advised of the communication in advance.

Consistent with the Australian Council for International Development's Code of Conduct, AFAO will not make statements about other ACFID Members with the intention of creating a reputational or other advantage to itself.

4.5. Privacy

AFAO's Privacy Policy sets out AFAO's approach to protect the privacy of personal information that AFAO collects, holds and administers.

AFAO complies with the Privacy Act 1988 in handling personal information.

4.6. Website and social media

AFAO'S website includes Terms and Copyright conditions, including in relation to the use of information provided on the website. This can be accessed at www.afao.org.au/terms-and-copyright/

AFAO's social media guidelines (house rules) aim to foster a constructive and respectful online environment. They can be accessed at www.facebook.com/pg/getprepdaus/about/.

4.7. Annual Report

AFAO's Annual Report will be prepared in accordance with statutory and regulatory requirements and the ACFID Code of Conduct.

AFAO is accountable to its members and committed to transparency and integrity in our program delivery and financial management. This is demonstrated by external auditing of AFAO's finances by a registered company auditor.

AFAO's annual financial report is reviewed by the AFAO Board and made available on AFAO's website as part of our Annual Report. The Annual Report is presented to all members at the AFAO Annual General Meeting.

5. Transparency

AFAO is committed to disclosing timely, relevant and accurate information in an accessible format. AFAO will ensure partners adhere to this policy or have a transparency policy in place that meets Australian Council For International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct standards.

AFAO's website provides information about AFAO's legal status, purpose and governance, programs, policy papers, media statements, strategic documents, research and corporate policies.

AFAO is committed to transparency and integrity in our financial management (see AFAO Finance Policy). This is demonstrated by external auditing of AFAO's finances by a registered company auditor (see section 4.7).

A request for information from AFAO can be made by:

- Email: enquiries@afao.org.au
- Phone: +61 (2) 9557 9399
- In writing to: Level 1, 222 King Street, Newtown NSW 2042, Australia.

AFAO will respond to requests for information by:

- acknowledging the sender's request for information when received
- confirming the information requested is on the approved list for distribution
- collating information and sending it to the requester.

6. Framework

AFAO's communications decision-making will be guided by an ethical framework, provided as an annexure to this policy. The framework will be used by AFAO staff and volunteers in creating and publishing communications content.

The framework is intended to minimise communications risks to AFAO and to people whose stories we share.

7. Breach of policy

Any staff member or volunteer who is found to have breached this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer engagement.

Ethical decision-making framework

AFAO seeks to empower the communities we work with through our communications. We are committed to depicting people and contexts authentically and truthfully. We value the importance of self-determination and are committed to working with all stakeholders in a way that upholds their dignity.

This means we will carefully protect those who share their stories and images with us so we can utilise these in our communications.

Using the personal stories and images of people in our communications can pose a risk to the reputation and confidence of those who have shared their materials with us. People can be damaged if their stories and images are misused and may face retribution from their community. AFAO may suffer damage to its reputation if we publish insensitive materials.

This ethical decision-making framework is one element by which AFAO assesses and reduces these risks.

Purpose

This framework is a tool by which AFAO's staff and volunteers can ensure our communications content is of the highest ethical standard. This helps ensure all AFAO's stakeholders are respected and protected and trust in our organisation is maintained.

Scope

This framework should be followed by AFAO staff and volunteers who collect and publish stories or images. The framework is guided by AFAO's values and is aligned with the Australian Council for International Development's Code of Conduct. It should be read in conjunction with AFAO's:

- Code of Conduct
- Communications Policy (to which it is an annexure)
- Child Protection Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Risk Management Policy

Risk assessment

In developing this framework, AFAO has considered its communications risks and how they might impact:

- the communities with which we work
- people who share their images and stories with us
- AFAO and its staff and volunteers

- our members, partners, supporters and donors
- other ACFID members
- the general public.

Given who we are, we are especially sensitive to:

- stigma, discrimination and criminalisation experienced by communities of people with HIV and other communities with which we work, including LGBTI communities, sex workers, people who use drugs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- sensitivities for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities regarding the use of images of people who have died.

Application of policy

All AFAO staff and volunteers have responsibility for ensuring our communications are ethical, lawful and protect contributors. These include:

- content gatherers Including communications specialists, multimedia producers, writers and social media contributors
- program staff and volunteers
- any person who has contact with children through their work at AFAO who therefore has a child safeguarding responsibility
- staff and volunteers involved in digital marketing and fundraising and events.

Ethical issues should be considered throughout the communications process, including in telling the stories of people we work with. Below are seven ‘ethically important’ moments during the storytelling and publishing process, accompanied by issues to consider at those times and the people responsible for those discussions.

When scoping a story

When

- Developing a storytelling concept
- Scoping story leads
- Writing a Terms of Reference

Issues to discuss

- Connection to values
- Protection

Who

- Content gatherers
- Programs
- Child safeguarding
- Marketing

When planning to gather content

When

- Planning a content-gathering trip
- Planning a phone/email/video interview
- Sourcing content directly from program staff and contributors

Issues to discuss

- Informed consent
- Fuzzy boundaries
- Protection
- Privacy

Who

- Content gatherers
- Programs
- Child safeguarding

While gathering content

When

- While on a content-gathering trip
- While conducting an interview

Issues to discuss

- Informed consent
- Fuzzy boundaries
- Protection
- Connection to values
- Privacy
- Authorship and ownership

Who

- Content gatherers
- Programs
- Child safeguarding

Directly after gathering content

When

- Directly after gathering content from the field or via an interview

Issues to discuss

- Informed consent
- Fuzzy boundaries
- Protection

Who

- Content gatherers
- Programs
- Child safeguarding

While creating the content

When

- While creating materials to publish, such as writing a story, editing videos/photos, and writing social media content

Issues to discuss

- Connection to values
- Authorship and ownership
- Fuzzy boundaries
- Privacy

Who

- Content gatherers
- Programs
- Marketing

When publishing a story

When

- When publishing content on social media and via the website, print (such as DMs) and the news media

Issues to discuss

- Connection to values
- Fuzzy boundaries
- Informed consent
- Protection
- Privacy
- Authorship and ownership

Who

- Marketing
- Content gatherers
- Child safeguarding

After publishing a story

When

- Once a story is in the public domain

Issues to discuss

- Informed consent
- Fuzzy boundaries
- Authorship and ownership

Who

- Programs
- Content gatherers
- Marketing

Ethical issues

There are six key ethical issues relevant for our storytelling and publishing process. Below are some questions to help staff and volunteers reflect on and discuss these issues as part of the decision-making process. Some of these questions might not have a clear answer and are best considered in conversations with others.

Connection to values

Everything AFAO does is built on our values. We must continue to look to our values in our everyday work so our foundations remain strong and our actions are ethical. Our discussions should ensure that AFAO's core values are taken into account when developing stories and content.

AFAO's values

- Respect for the dignity of all people
- Respecting and valuing diversity
- Acknowledging the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first Australians and respecting their communities' traditions, views and ways of life
- Empowering our communities and supporting their ownership and self-determined control of their health and lives
- Protecting and promoting the human rights of all communities
- Promoting and supporting harm reduction principles
- Recognising the social determinants of health
- Building and promoting evidence-based approaches to policy, advocacy and health promotion, guided by the Ottawa Charter
- Being accountable and responsive to the communities we are part of, work with, represent and serve.

Furthermore the following rights will guide the ethical decision-making process. These rights are additional to AFAO's foundation commitment to diversity across all AFAO's communities, including LGBTIQ+ communities, people with HIV, sex workers, people who use drugs and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Human rights

- Have we put the best interests of the contributor first?
- Have we ensured we 'do no harm' to the contributor during the storytelling process?
- Have we treated the contributor with dignity and fairness?
- Have we respected the personal freedom and privacy of the contributor?
- Have we encouraged the contributor to freely express their thoughts and feelings?
- Have we given the contributor control over how their identity and thoughts are portrayed in their story?
- Have we ensured the content is accurate?

Children's rights

- Have we ensured the best interests of children have been put before the interests of adults and AFAO?
- Have we adequately protected children?
- Have we respected children's rights to dignity and fairness?
- Have we attempted to reduce stereotyping of children?
- Have we treated all children equally?

Women's rights

- Have we carefully considered how women are portrayed?
- Have we considered how gender-role stereotyping is portrayed?
- Have we given voice to women?
- Are we empowering girls and women through this story?
- Have we considered the unique protection needs of women in this story?

Trans and gender diverse people's rights

- Have we given trans and gender diverse people the opportunity to contribute to this story?
- Have we considered the experiences of TGD people in this story?
- Have we carefully considered how TGD people are portrayed?
- When published, will this story be accessible to TGD people?

Disability rights

- Have we given people with disabilities the opportunity to contribute to this story?
- Have we considered how ableism has affected this story?
- Have we carefully considered how people with a disability are portrayed?
- When published, will this story be accessible to people with disabilities?

Indigenous rights

- Have we respected indigenous people's rights to dignity and fairness?
- Have we given indigenous people the ability to freely express themselves, through their own culture and language?
- Have we considered how racism has affected this story?
- Have we carefully considered how indigenous people are portrayed?
- Have we given indigenous people control over how their identity and thoughts are portrayed in their story?

Protection

AFAO puts the wellbeing of its stakeholders first. We explain how we protect our stakeholders in this Communications Policy and our Code of Conduct, Child Protection Policy, Privacy Policy and Risk Management Policy.

All staff and volunteers must uphold these policies. There are no exceptions. However, there are also context-related issues that arise in relation to protection. In assessing communications risks, we should consider:

Protection of life

- Could the contributor's life be put at risk by sharing their story?
- Do we know enough about the contributor's history to make a confident assessment of their safety?

Protection of health

- Could the contributor's health be put at risk by sharing their story?
- Could the contributor risk being cut off from important services by sharing their story?

Protection of dignity

- Could we be putting the contributor or their community at risk of vilification or retribution by sharing their story?
- Have we considered how the contributor's family, friends and community might feel about the storytelling project?

Informed consent

AFAO's informed consent process is clearly defined in this Communications Policy.

There are also context-specific issues that arise in relation to informed consent. In assessing communications risks, we should consider:

Correct information

- Have we provided all the necessary information to the contributor so they can decide whether to consent to participate?
- Have we shown the contributor appropriate examples of how their story might be used (including where it may be published and who will see it)?
- Have we explained different ways the contributor's identity can be revealed and concealed?
- Have we consulted with the right people (including children's guardians and community elders)?

Clear comprehension

- Does the contributor fully understand the risks and opportunities associated with sharing and publishing their image and story with our organisation?
- Have we given the contributor enough advance notice about the project so they have time to consider the risks and opportunities?
- Have we explained the storytelling process in a way the contributor fully understands (including children), using the best-possible language?
- Is there a single point of contact for the contributor to discuss the project and any consent issues? Is it easy for the contributor to discuss the project with us?

Voluntary consent

- Is there a power imbalance between the contributor and AFAO?
- If there is a power imbalance, can you describe it?
- If there is a power imbalance, how can we reduce it?
- Is there an element of duress in the contributor's consent?
- If there is an element of duress, how can we address it?
- How can we ensure the contributor can say 'no' to being involved in the storytelling project?
- How can we ensure the contributor can withdraw their consent at any time?

Privacy

AFAO values and upholds the privacy of its contributors. All staff and volunteers must abide by our Privacy Policy.

There are also context-specific issues that arise in relation to informed consent. In assessing communications risks, we should consider:

Protection

- Have we adequately protected the privacy of the contributor?
- Have we discussed how the contributor's story may expose them to the public?
- If appropriate, have we adequately concealed the name, location and visual identity of the contributor?

Information storage

- Have we safely and securely stored the contributor's personal information?
- Does the contributor understand how their personal information is stored and used?

Access to information

- Who has access to the contributor's information and are they aware of who can access it?
- Have we explained how the contributor can access their personal information, make amendments to their story and withdraw consent?

Authorship and ownership

We respect the right of contributors to control their stories and the right of contracted writers and photographers to moral ownership of their works. We acknowledge that ownership and 'control' of stories can raise difficult ethical questions. While we always abide by our Privacy Policy, there are some discussions that can help us understand our responsibilities regarding authorship.

In assessing communications risks, we should consider:

Authorship

- How will contributors and content creators be acknowledged when publishing their stories?
- Does acknowledgement of authorship have implications for the privacy, anonymity or confidentiality assurances given to contributors?
- What ethical obligations do contributors and content creators have to the truthful representation of stories and data?

Copyright

- Who owns the copyright of our storytelling content?
- Are there any conflicting copyright claims for storytelling materials we've published (or seek to publish)?
- How do we ensure contributors and content creators understand their legal rights?

Fuzzy boundaries

AFAO understands the storytelling process is built on relationships, and sometimes the network of relationships is complex. Relational boundaries between contributors, content collectors, program staff and others can be blurred. In addition, the stories they create may be used to serve multiple purposes, such as fundraising, advocacy and community engagement. This blurring of roles and purposes is referred to as 'fuzzy boundaries.'

We acknowledge the potential for the content-collector role to become blurred in storytelling processes that involve building rapport with contributors. We also acknowledge that this potential is intensified in storytelling projects where content collectors spend significant periods of time engaged in fieldwork.

In assessing communications risks, we should consider:

Content-creator responsibilities

- How should we develop a relationship with the contributor?
- Should we explore how our unconscious biases affects this project? How might we change the storytelling process as a result of exploring our unconscious biases?
- What are the moral responsibilities that fall directly on the content collector?

Other people's responsibilities

- What are the different roles of those involved in the storytelling project?
- Does everyone in the project understand their role and others' expectations of them?
- How do different people involved in the project see the purpose of the storytelling project? If there are different perspectives, how do we manage any conflicts?

Blurred boundaries

- How do we respect the personal relationships (and possible friendships) developed during the project?
- How do we respond to any blurred roles and relationships during the course of the project?
- What impacts do blurred roles have on the ethical conduct of the project?
- Can content collectors, contributors or others become personally over-invested?

Informed Consent Release Form



AFAO seeks your permission to include your personal stories, photographs and audiovisual content in our communications including publications, websites, social and other media.

These may be used by AFAO and, with our permission, by other organisations including media.

Acknowledgment and Consent

I or my legal representative (which could include a legal guardian or person with power of attorney):

- acknowledge I have read and been given a copy of this form
- acknowledge I am over 18 years of age (for children under 18 years a parent or guardian must sign)
- consent to the use of the photographs/images/story described on this form by AFAO now, and at any time in the future, for the purposes outlined above
- understand that once any of the materials referred to above have been published, AFAO has no control over the subsequent use and disclosure of the images
- understand AFAO does not guarantee the materials will necessarily be used
- understand I will receive no payment from AFAO for the use of the materials
- understand I can request the removal of my materials from the AFAO library at any time by written request to AFAO at the address below.

Name	Signature
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For persons under 18 years, a legal representative, parent or guardian can give consent:

Name of legal representative, parent or guardian	Signature of legal representative, parent or guardian
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Address	Email address
	Phone
Description of material	Date material was provided

If verbal consent was given but the person did not sign:

Name of witness	Signature of witness
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