



AusAID ethical photography guidelines

August 2012

The following guidelines are intended to ensure that the human rights and dignity of persons whose images are used in AusAID publications are protected.

I. Copyright and ownership of photographs

AusAID owns the copyright of photos produced by staff, partner agencies and staff, sub-contractors, volunteers and hired photographers, provided they were taken in the course of carrying out or documenting AusAID activities.

AusAID copyright should be specified and agreed to in writing in photography agreements and contracts with partners, subcontractors, hired photographers and volunteers.

AusAID does not own the copyright of all photos taken by external sources, such as photos from commercial photo libraries, photos taken by partner organisations and staff not engaged in AusAID activities, and the personal photographs of staff and volunteers. AusAID requires a formal release prior to the use or reproduction of such images.

II. Standards of practice for taking photographs

Photos taken by AusAID staff and affiliates should respect human dignity and ensure the rights, safety and well-being of the person or people being portrayed.

- Comply with local traditions or restrictions when taking photos of people, objects or places.
- Inquire into national laws related to photography and privacy rights.
- Gain verbal or written consent before taking photographs.
- Respect a person's right to refuse to be photographed. If you sense any reluctance or confusion, refrain from taking the photo.
- Do no harm. Individuals or groups may be put at risk of reprisal, violence or rejection in their communities as a result of exposing their identity or personal story through the publication of their image.
- Do not misrepresent the individual, situation, context or location of the photo.
- Absolutely no payments or any other form of compensation are to be provided to subjects in exchange for their photo or consent.



Photos of issues that are culturally sensitive, politically sensitive or socially stigmatised must protect the identity and privacy of individuals.

- Do not identify individuals. Position the camera so that faces and other unique characteristics cannot be seen.
- Gain written consent to use real names and locations in situations where disclosure could result in harm. Otherwise, remove detailed personal information such as names and locations in captions or any other associated documentation.
- Identifiable images of individuals should not be used to illustrate sensitive subject matter in such a way as to indicate that the individual is connected with the issue.

Photos of people with special needs are to be taken with particular care, compassion and protection of privacy.

- Photograph all people with respect and dignity. Special care and compassion must be exercised with vulnerable subjects.
- Survivors of sexual exploitation, gender-based violence or abuse are not to be identified as such.
- An individual's status as a person living with HIV, TB or any other serious health conditions must not be revealed without written consent.
- An individual's engagement in sex work or other socially marginalised or criminal activities must not be identified.
- Care must be taken in photographing people in times of crisis. Do not exploit an individual's vulnerability at times of trauma or grief.

Photos of children taken for work-related purposes must adhere to standards arising from AusAID's *Child Protection Policy* and *Code of Conduct for Overseas Service*.

- Before photographing a child, assess and comply with local laws, traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images and gain consent from the child or a parent or guardian.
- Ensure photos 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.
- Photos must be honest representations of the context and the facts.
- File labels must not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically.



III. Consent

Informed consent

All photos used, published or disseminated by AusAID require the informed consent of individuals portrayed. Informed consent ensures respect for the individual's autonomy and privacy, ensures they understand the implications, purpose and potential use of the photo, and avoids harming the individual through the inappropriate publication of their image or their story.

Any agreement is purely voluntary and can be revoked at any time. It is expected that at a minimum any individuals photographed are aware that their image and story may be republished and disseminated in their home country and overseas.

Written consent

With a view to publication, staff and contractors are required to obtain informed written consent from every individual human photography subject if:

- photographing individuals in the context of culturally sensitive, politically sensitive, taboo or high-stigma issues
- individuals may be put at risk of reprisal, violence or rejection in their communities as a result of exposing their identity or personal story through photographs, captions or any other associated documentation
- photographing individuals:
 - in all clinical settings *e.g in a hospital, clinic, with midwives/nurses etc*
 - in all private settings *e.g in a private home, within a classroom*
 - in circumstances where the photo clearly identifies a child or adult.

It is acknowledged that the requirement for written consent places constraints on certain forms and subjects of photography, particularly where language, literacy and cultural barriers exist.

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

- consent forms in the local language are prepared
- an interpreter is engaged and used for extensive photographic shoots to explain and communicate the purpose of the photos and gain informed consent
- a record is kept by the photographer if written consent was not gained due to illiteracy but there was verbal agreement.

Verbal consent

Staff and contractors are required to gain *verbal* consent from all individual human photo subjects. Staff and contractors are not required to obtain verbal consent from human

