

## IMAGERY AND PORTRAYAL IN COMMUNICATIONS

### Statement of principles

#### INTRODUCTION

This statement sets out Save the Children's principles regarding the use of imagery, specifically the portrayal of children, which are in line with our organisation's mission, values and ambition.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF IMAGERY AND PORTRAYAL

Our goal is to end preventable child death by 2030 and dramatically improve the lives of millions of children across the world. Our struggle for children addresses head-on the indignity of poverty and social injustice, and communicating the reality of the children and communities we work with is of critical importance to Save the Children.

The use of imagery across our communications is key to our engagement of supporters and audiences. Without this we are unable to fulfil this goal and our ambitions for children across the world. Images bring the stories of those with whom we work to life allowing us to share the need for our life-saving work, the positive impact that we have in the short term and the dramatic scale of the progress we are making more widely.

We are aware of our responsibilities, as image producers, to both those that we portray and our audiences. The responsibilities around image-making and portrayal are regularly reviewed and discussed by Save the Children and as a result we have robust processes in place to maintain high standards, and are confident that our portrayal is a true representation of the situations in which we work.

Our primary duty of care is to those that we depict and we take this responsibility very seriously.

#### PRIORITIES, PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE IN THE FIELD

##### I. PRIORITIES

###### Putting children first

Our mission is to save children's lives, fight for their rights and help them fulfil their potential. Everything we communicate has this mission as its foundation.



Photo: Abir Abdulllah/Save the Children

Monowar and her daughter, Tamanna, from Habiganj, Bangladesh.

##### Response with responsibility

We want audiences to **respond** and support this mission. We have a **responsibility** to challenge certain attitudes and aim to both elicit response and change perceptions, but our clear priority is to generate the response that will help fund our work or drive our campaigning. Where we believe those aims require us to show the problems we are trying solve, we will do so, but we always portray need with a considered and responsible approach.

##### Brand continuity

While communications are always focused on achieving their objectives, whether direct (such as eliciting donations, a campaign action or influencing others), or less direct (awareness-raising or relationship-building), they are also designed to give a brand experience that builds recognition, understanding and positive associations with Save the Children.

## 2. PRINCIPLES OF PORTRAYAL

### Showing the shocking reality of need

Portraying the need for our work – particularly when children's lives are at risk – inevitably requires that we create and publish challenging, hard-hitting imagery. It is never our intention to offend but it is our job to galvanise a response to a reality that can be tough to accept. We take care to ensure that the stories that we tell represent the reality of the situation, but we are direct and unflinching in communicating the unacceptable

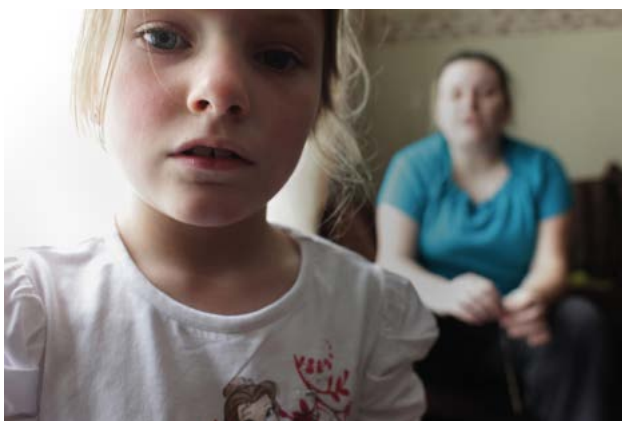
## IMAGE STATEMENT

reality for many children. We exist to change that reality for the better, so when children need help, we don't shy away from portraying that need.

### Balance

Across our communications, we aim to achieve a **balance** between portraying need and highlighting the dramatic progress that can and has been made, particularly when we work in partnership with the people we help. Our direct response communications have a single message to elicit maximum return so tell our stories in an emotional, but also simple and easily understandable way. Our supporter communications, designed to provide greater understanding of, and a deeper relationship with Save the Children, are more focused on impact and progress and often tell stories of greater depth and complexity. Across the large range of channels and tools that we use to talk to our supporters we design our communications so that a balanced view of our work is achieved.

Photo: Oli Cohen/Save the Children



Tia, six, from Ebbw Vale, Wales. Her family often can't afford to put the heating on in winter.

### Honest, emotive imagery without manipulation

Our aim when using images is to highlight the reality faced by children. At times portraying a child's need in the face of poverty, danger or life-threatening sickness can deliver a profoundly emotional experience. We work with children whose lives are challenging and even at risk, and we make every effort to allow the urgency or gravity of their circumstances to come across. But we take care to be honest in our portrayal and make every effort to avoid misrepresenting their lives. We would never construct a scenario or change a child's story, and take care to avoid circumstances where their situations can be exaggerated or misconstrued.



Photo: Oli Cohen/Save the Children

Abdul, one, is being treated for severe malnutrition at one of our feeding centres in Niger.

There are times when we ask actors to portray a real child's story when it would not be appropriate to show a child's face for reasons of protecting their identity. In these rare cases we always ensure our audiences are aware of our use of actors.

Like all communicators, we **frame** our stories: we make editorial choices about what to include in an image or a communication, and what to leave out. We accept that every image is taken from a point of view and at a moment in time: we don't claim that we can ever depict the entire context of a child's life or the socioeconomic situation which may affect them.

### Need does not imply neediness

We know from experience that need does not imply neediness. Our work is designed to empower communities to address their own needs while we work in partnership with them. Our portrayal is intended to avoid implications of endemic neediness by taking a balanced representation across the breadth of our communications channels.

### The fragility of life but never the moment of death

Many of the children whose stories we tell are fighting for their lives. We do not hold back from showing that shocking reality as we want to hold people to account for the preventable death of a child by sharing this outrage. However we would not publish the moment in which a child dies. There are moments when we would consider raising awareness of the loss of young life in a conflict by using imagery of child fatalities. These are generally rare, and we would not do so without extremely careful deliberation across our global organisation.

## Avoiding objectification

We ensure that we never objectify children by making as much room as we can in our communications for a child's story and sharing their experiences. The methods that we use to gather these stories are also designed to ensure that no content gathering reduces, belittles or dehumanises children or their families.

## Communicating in a digital landscape

In communications designed to elicit direct response, for example direct response TV (DRTV), our portrayal is directed at specific viewers in a given context. Our marketing is accurate in reflecting the need and indignity of those depicted, finely tuned to secure a response strong enough to inspire giving, and carefully judged to ensure that all content stays aligned with our priorities and principles. In today's media landscape, where content is shared, modified and re-published, it is not always possible to control the context in which our content will be consumed. DRTV and direct marketing can easily become Twitpics and Facebook posts, which can be taken out of context and risk misrepresentation. A given form of communication won't work for all audiences in all channels, so we consider this risk, we mitigate it where we can and we stand by our principles. Our priority is to support our work for children.

## Dialogue with contributors and beneficiaries

We engage in regular dialogue with communities we work with, and the children in those communities, about portraying their lives and experiences. This informs our judgements and reinforces our accountability to children. Our general findings to date from this dialogue are:

- Many contributors are keen to share their stories with the wider world in order to help both their own cause, but critically also people like them who they recognise are also suffering.
- A significant group has an informed understanding of the power of sharing its stories and of how NGOs tell their stories to audiences elsewhere.



Mohammed Nassirou, a health worker at one of our life-saving feeding centres in Niger, weighs two-year-old Sani before treatment for acute malnutrition.

## Dignity

We are mindful that our portrayal does not cause children already suffering the indignity of poverty and social injustice any further indignity, but does succeed in depicting that which they already suffer. We strive to be respectful of differing personal and cultural notions of dignity and reflect that in our representation. We talk to contributors about how we may use their story and images, how they think we should tell their story, and ensure that informed consent has been obtained (see below).

## 3. PRACTICE

### Safeguarding, security and informed consent

#### Child safeguarding

Child safeguarding is our first priority when gathering stories, and we undertake rigorous procedures to remove or minimise any risk to the children we portray. We would not have the impact that we need if we never showed a child's face, but that inevitably carries a degree of risk since a child's face is traceable, particularly in an online world with ubiquitous access to information. To mitigate this risk, we use the principle of the triangle of risk and never give any more than two of these pieces of information together: a child's full name, image and location. In certain circumstances, and in the full knowledge of the contributor and their family, we will also change a child's name or use unidentifiable/partial imagery to further protect them.



## IMAGE STATEMENT

Photo: Daniel McCabe/Save the Children



Barak, seven, (second left) and his brothers became separated from their parents when thousands of people had to flee fighting in North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Here Barak is shown reunited with his parents, thanks to the work of one of our partner organisations.

Our staff on the ground are fully involved in the process of assessing any potential for recrimination or stigmatisation of any child we portray. We have strict internal procedures whereby any use of a child's image must be signed off by those staff who have more finely tuned understanding of the risks in that child's particular circumstances.

### Staff security and operational continuity

Communications that are deemed to bring a nation or region into disrepute can subject our in-country staff to recriminations or risk our exclusion from a region or nation. We constantly evaluate and guard against this risk.

### Informed consent

Informed consent is not just about deciding whether or not to take part, but also preferences regarding a contribution. Imagery gathered by Save the Children is always used in our communications with the full and informed consent of children (when old enough) and their families or guardians. We have a detailed and necessarily lengthy consent gathering process that includes talking through the possible uses of their contribution with each contributor in detail and in their own language. We make sure that their consent is informed and that they understand not only the uses to which their contribution may be put but the possible consequences of that use. We also give opportunity for contributors to inform their own portrayal; for example deciding on the locations and situation in which they are photographed or filmed, or letting us know when and where we can or can't use their stories once they are gathered. Our consent process ensures that potential contributors are as fully able as they possibly can be

to make considered decisions about whether or not to become partners in telling their stories. Imagery is gathered in a way that we know is respectful, and used in a considered manner which ensures the rights of those portrayed are not compromised.

When we use imagery gathered by third parties we will verify consent to the best of our ability, and make an informed decision as to whether to use this imagery based on this knowledge.

## STAYING TRUE TO SAVE THE CHILDREN'S VALUES

### AMBITION, ACCOUNTABILITY, CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION AND INTEGRITY

Our values inform the way we work in every area, and therefore underpin our approach to portrayal. We are **ambitious** for children so we tell their stories in a way that ultimately helps us to help them. We are **accountable** for our communications: primarily to children but also to our staff in the field and to those who support our cause, and while we are **creative**, we are also scrupulously truthful. We ensure accountability by **collaborating** wherever we can with those who share our cause, and we behave with **integrity** in every aspect of our work, and protect and maintain that integrity by being transparent and open to feedback



Photo: Ahmad Baroudi/Save the Children

Nada and Ruba\* outside their family's tent in a refugee settlement in Lebanon near the Syrian border.

\*Names changed to protect identities.