



# ETHICAL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

ADIDAS FOUNDATION



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# <sup>1</sup>Introduction

To fulfill our mission to change the world through sport, we as the adidas Foundation, collaborate with a diverse range of global partners, including numerous non-profit organizations. We are convinced that sharing the stories and imagery from the people and communities we seek to support is crucial to showcasing the positive impact of our projects and programs. At the same time, we see this as part of our awareness-building, advocacy, and fundraising initiatives.

During this collaboration, we will ask our partners for stories, pictures, and videos that allow us to communicate the impact of their work via our media channels, such as the adidas Foundation's website, press, and social media platforms. We might also share this content with our current funder adidas AG and future funders, aiming strictly to communicate about the use of funding and demonstrating the impact of our work.

We recognize that the individuals and communities we work with generously donate their time, images, experiences, and perspectives to make this powerful communication happen. In this process, it is important to ensure all messages and imagery collected, created, and used are respecting the work, voice, dignity, privacy, and security of the individuals, organizations, and communities involved in this process.

As content creators, we acknowledge our responsibility to consider the broader impact of our communications. Our content plays a vital role in shaping public understanding of social and environmental challenges and solutions worldwide. To fulfill this responsibility, we strive to avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes that focus solely on vulnerabilities and fears. Instead, we wish to portray the complete story of individuals and

<sup>1</sup>These guidelines respond to the adidas Foundation's Values, Guiding principles, Code of Conduct, and Safeguarding Policy. Furthermore, they were also highly informed by the invaluable work of the following organizations that have dedicated their efforts to studying, developing, and making publicly available guidelines and best practices for international non-profit organizations: Dóchas Guide to Ethical Communications – from the Irish Association of NonGovernmental Development Organisations; BOND's Putting the people in the pictures first Ethical guidelines for the collection and use of content (images and stories); Photographing and filming children | Images guidance | NSPCC Learning - from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC); Feedback Labs Blog about the use of the word beneficiary: Do you still use the word "beneficiary"? – Feedback Labs.

communities, highlighting their aspirations, capabilities, dreams, resilience, and strength. By showcasing their comprehensive narrative, we aim to promote a nuanced understanding of challenges and solutions.

These guidelines shall inform our partner organizations, our current funder adidas AG and potential future funders, all external providers and consultants involved in the adidas Foundation's communications, as well as external stakeholders who create content about or in reference to the work of the adidas Foundation. This can involve but is not limited to communication about projects and organizations supported by adidas Foundation with financial resources, capacity building, or any other type of support.

These guidelines cover all types of communications, including, but not limited to annual reports, newsletters, press releases, case studies, impact reports, website content, social media posts, brochures and flyers, infographics, video content, blog posts, podcasts, webinars and online events, presentations and slide decks, event materials, strategic plans, and research reports and white papers. They outline best practices for ethical communication, safeguarding, informed consent, and data protection. Practical examples are provided to illustrate these directives in the form of DO'S and DON'TS in the final section of this document.



# PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL COMMUNICATION



# Terminology

When referring to the organizations receiving funds or any other support from the adidas Foundation, we call them partners. We don't call them grantees, beneficiaries, or recipients. We believe and base our work on the power of collective action and collaboration. With our terminology we want to emphasize the collaborative nature of our relationship with our partner organizations.

When referring to people, individuals and/or communities we work with through our programs and projects, we call them:

- **people, individuals, & communities we work with**
- **people, individuals, & communities we seek to support**
- **people, individuals, & communities at the heart of our work**
- **participants of a program or a project / staff / teacher / educator / coach of a program or a project.**

We don't call them beneficiaries or recipients. We value individuals and communities as active participants in their development journey, not as mere recipients of philanthropic support.





## Community Centered, Authentic & Responsible Representation

We strive for an authentic and responsible representation of the organizations, individuals, and communities throughout the narrative we create and in the imagery we collect and share. We commit to putting the individuals and communities at the heart of our communication.

We recognize potential intrinsic layers of power imbalances between us as a funder organization, our partner organizations, the staff of partner organizations, external content creators, and the individuals and communities we seek to support. We accept our duty to deliberately mitigate these dynamics by focusing our communication on communities and individuals we seek to support, elevating local voices and honoring their agency and active role in the development journey.

We recognize our duty as content creators to consider the broader impact of our communications and understand that the content we produce plays a crucial role in helping the public better understand the complexities of social and environmental challenges and solutions worldwide. We seek to ensure honest and accurate representation, we are committed to providing context that reflects the complex realities of social and environmental issues, focusing on root causes

and sustainable solutions. When it is safe to do so, we include captions to accurately convey cultural specifics and prioritize documentary-style content over staged or scripted scenes. We avoid vague or misleading portrayals, never compromise the safety of communities, and refrain from oversimplifying issues, reinforcing stereotypes, or manipulating imagery. If actors are involved, we transparently inform the audience to maintain authenticity and respect for the individuals and communities represented.

We are aware of problematic narratives that portray donors, volunteers, and external experts as “the saviors”. Although these portrayals can derive from a well-intentioned desire to help, they can cause harm by perpetuating power imbalances, misrepresenting communities, and undermining local expertise, voices, and agency of people while seeking for audience engagement and support. We will actively work to prevent such a narrative from perpetuating and to find alternative approaches.



# Ensuring No Harm in Communication

Our communication must not do harm. When gathering and disseminating content, we are guided by the adidas Foundation Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct, which also applies to stakeholders with a formal relationship with the adidas Foundation. This means that during content collection and dissemination, safeguarding the dignity, needs, well-being, voice, and safety of the individuals and communities telling their stories is always prioritized over the need for an image and story.

We protect children and vulnerable individuals by assessing the risks associated with their participation in content creation and taking appropriate action. When content creation that contains information about children and vulnerable individuals is deemed safe, we follow appropriate measures to ensure their safety, rights in the process and ensure the use of responsible and appropriate imagery.

We request that partner organizations ensure their staff, as well as any freelancers, photographers, journalists, or others involved in the communication process, adhere to their own Code of Conduct and Child Protection and/or Safeguarding Policy (those policies should be, according to

our formal agreement, equivalent and in alignment with adidas Foundation Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct). We request that partner organizations involve key staff members familiar with the individuals and communities being portrayed throughout the image-making process. This includes informing staff in advance, allowing them to review and provide input, and guiding them in briefing individuals and communities about their right to decline participation if they feel uncomfortable with any requests.

We only use imagery and information on which written informed consent is collected (see Section 3 for full guidance) and we follow the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) applicable in the European Union. We do not collect or use personal data<sup>2</sup> without obtaining written informed consent and complying with the GDPR in the European Union.

2 Personal data refers to any information relating to an identified or identifiable individual, including but not limited to names, images, identification numbers, location data, or online identifiers. Under GDPR, personal data is protected, and its use is regulated to ensure privacy and security, requiring informed consent for collection and processing.



# INFORMED CONSENT & GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)

A stylized graphic in the bottom left corner of the page. It features a globe with latitude and longitude lines, surrounded by several thick, curved, brush-stroke-like lines that radiate outwards, suggesting a sun or a signal. The entire graphic is rendered in a light orange color that matches the background.

We will obtain written informed consent from individuals (in case of minors, i.e., under 18 or under 16 years old, depending on local legislation, from their parents or guardians) involved in our content creation processes to have the permission and right to use their images, stories, and any other personal information. We will also ensure that all individuals and/or their parents/guardians are fully informed of their rights and the implications of their participation.

Informed consent means that, beyond consent documentation, individuals must understand what they agree to and are free from pressure or false expectations. It involves clearly communicating the purpose of their participation and potential risks, especially in digital channels where content may reach large and diverse audiences. Individual consent is not required when no personal information about individuals is visible, e.g., when people appear in large groups in a public space and in a non-sensitive context.

In this process, since we collect, store, and process individual data, we follow the European General Data Protection Regulation and obtain consent to collect, store and process individual information.

As a funder, we acknowledge that our work relies on collaboration with partner organizations that directly engage with individuals and communities we seek to support. These partners are responsible for collecting, storing, adhering to data protection regulations, and sending this information to us. To ensure effective collaboration, we have established a process of collaboration with all partner organizations that follows these guidelines and will be outlined during the onboarding with each organization.

# Informed Consent Practice Guide

Before documenting consent, the partner organization must ensure the following:

- All participants receive detailed information about the content creation process, including the communication's purpose, how their contributions will be used, and any potential risks involved, communicated in clear and understandable language (easy language).
- It is emphasized that participation is entirely voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time without facing any penalties e.g., some individuals might think that not accepting such requests might risk their or their child's participation in the project. Please clearly communicate that this is never the case.
- The withdrawal process is clearly explained, including providing participants with a card or document that contains contact information and instructions on how to withdraw consent.
- For individuals under 18 years old, consent must be obtained from a parent or guardian.

# Consent Guidance

The responsibility for obtaining consent from individuals appearing in pictures, videos, and stories submitted to the adidas Foundation lies with our partners. Written consent is the standard practice for the adidas Foundation (only exception made to recorded verbal consent is on situations where there is a large group of people on which individual consent is not possible, please check guidance below).

For large events where children will be photographed, consent must be obtained in advance from parents or guardians. The organization must have a process to ensure that children without consent are respected and not photographed.

Obtaining consent is also essential when photographing private adult groups, such as community meetings, partner meetings, or training sessions. However, collecting individual consent can be time-consuming. If securing consent before the gathering is not feasible, we recommend informing the group about the photography plans either verbally or through posters displayed at the event and keeping a record of this communication with a video that can be shared with adidas Foundation. Additionally, it is essential to have a protocol for addressing situations where

an individual may withdraw their consent later. To help manage this process, consider using colored stickers or tags to indicate whether a person is comfortable being photographed, with different colors representing their preferences.

# Foundation Consent Forms

When sending images, videos, stories, and individual information to the adidas Foundation, we provide a consent form to be used by our partner organizations. We will work with each organization we support to provide the necessary translation of the document.





# Check-List for the Use of the Organization's Consent Form

We recognize that each partner organization may already have its own image and data protection consent forms, and requiring additional forms can be burdensome. We have created the check-list below to determine whether the adidas Foundation can solely store the partner organization's consent form and avoid redundant data collection when possible. To confirm this assessment, the person responsible for communication at the adidas Foundation will conduct the evaluation and discuss this matter during onboarding. This discussion will enable us to decide and formalize which consent form can be used.

# Checklist

**Information from the individual that appears in the images, videos or is having their story collected:**

- ☑ The individual's full name
- ☑ For individuals under 18 years old, also include their parent's or guardian's full name and contact details.

**Purpose of content collection:**

- ☑ Clearly explain why the organization wants to film/photograph/interview the individual (e.g., for fundraising, communications, or campaigning purposes), and one of the reasons must be to share this material with the project's and/or organization's funders to communicate the results and impact of the project and/or organizations.

**Shared usage by the project and/or organization funders:**

- ☑ State that the content will be shared with all funders of the project (including naming the funders, if possible) and or organization and that each funder also has the right to use the content across their communication channels to promote the project's and or organization's impact.

**Intended communication materials:**

- ☑ Specify the types of communications in which the content may appear, including, but not limited to: Annual reports, Newsletters, Press releases, Case studies, Impact reports, Website content, Social media posts, Brochures and flyers, Infographics, Videos, Blog posts, Podcasts, Webinars/Online events, Presentations, Event materials, Strategic plans, Research reports and white papers. Offering a few examples of these finalized materials to individuals is considered a good practice and can help illustrate how information is utilized across various communication channels.

### **Communication channels:**

### **Data process, retention and sharing consent:**

### **Right to withdraw consent:**

### **Consent signature:**

- ☑ Clarify how and where the content will be shared, including that it might be shared in the funder's website and social media platforms, such as LinkedIn and Instagram.
- ☑ Clearly state how long the individuals' image and personal information will be retained and processed by the organization and funders – ideally: "retained only as long as necessary to fulfill the purposes outlined in the consent form" or in perpetuity due to online annual reports and other archived materials.
- ☑ Clearly state that the stored data will be protected by the organization and retained as long as necessary, or until consent is withdrawn. After this point, data will be deleted or anonymized unless further retention is required by law.
- ☑ Clearly state that the information can be shared with the project's and/or organization's funders and once shared, they also act as data processors and are obliged to handle data compliance laws according with the national data regulations applicable to their countries.
- ☑ The individual must clearly agree to the processing and retention of their data by the organization and all funders (e.g., through a signature or checkbox).
- ☑ Inform individuals that they have the right to withdraw consent at any time, providing clear instructions on how they can withdraw their consent.
- ☑ Obtain the signature of the individual or, in the case of minors, the signature of the parent or guardian, together with the date and city where the consent was collected.



# Procedure for Withdrawing Consent

At any point, individuals who have given consent for the use of their image or story (directly using an adidas Foundation consent form or a partner organization consent form shared with adidas) can choose to withdraw that consent to the adidas Foundation to use their data. To do so, they should send an email to [communications@adidasfoundation.org](mailto:communications@adidasfoundation.org), including their name, the name of the organization for which they participated in the project, and any relevant details. In case the individual used a consent form from a partner organization and wants to withdraw consent to the partner organization as well, this should be done directly with the organization.

By law, the adidas Foundation has 30 days to delete all personal data or information upon receiving a withdrawal request. While we cannot guarantee the removal of all already existing communications (as we might lose control once content is published), we will remove the data from all databases or media under our control and ensure that the individual's image is not used in future communications. In that case, adidas Foundation will also communicate with the partner organization and request the deletion of all data under their control.

# FEEDBACK & GRIEVANCE HANDLING





We are committed to upholding and adhering to these guidelines. If anyone believes that the adidas Foundation or any of our partner organizations are not following these guidelines on projects and programs supported by the adidas Foundation, we encourage you to voice your concerns.

**To do that, you have two options:**

You can voice this concern directly via email to the Program Manager, or the Community Engagement Advisor responsible for the relationship with the organization at adidas Foundation, or

- You can use our Grievance Mechanism, by contacting: [fairplay@adidasfoundation.org](mailto:fairplay@adidasfoundation.org); or
- via phone on these numbers: **Telephone Numbers - Safecall Ltd.**





# DOS AND DON'TS

We have listed a series of practical Dos and Don'ts to illustrate exactly how our guidelines look in practice.



# Terminology

How to refer to **partner organizations**

## Do's

- **"adidas Foundation is partnering with..."**
- **"(Name of the organization) is an adidas Foundation partner in the United by Sport program..."**
- **"We are partnering with (name of the organization)..."**
- **"(name of organization), a partner organization of the adidas Foundation in Mexico, has just launched their new program..."**
- **"Together with our partner organizations, we are working to support access to sport in the community."**

## Don'ts

- "adidas Foundation announces their grantees..."
- " (Name of the organization), an adidas Foundation grantee, has implemented successful projects."
- "The adidas Foundation oversees the projects of its grantees..."
- "The (name of the organization) is a recipient of adidas Foundation support..."
- "Together with our grantee, we are working to support access to sport in the community."

## How to refer to **individuals and communities**

### Do's

- **"In our United by Sport program, the communities and individuals we work with..."**
- **"The adidas Foundation is committed to supporting the individuals and communities at the heart of our work..."**
- **"Meet the people and communities the adidas Foundation seeks to support through our programs..."**
- **"This is John, a coach from (Name of the organization), partner of the adidas Foundation's United by Sport program; his testimonial highlights the learnings of the project XYZ..."**
- **"Get to know Lisa's story; she is a participant of the program (name of the program) from our partner organization (name of the organization) ..."**

### Don'ts

- "The beneficiaries of the United by Sport program..."
- "Our beneficiaries are the primary focus of our work..."
- "These communities, as beneficiaries of the adidas Foundation, have implemented the project..."
- "This is John, recipient of a coach training from (Name of the organization), grantee of adidas Foundation's United by Sport program; his testimonial highlights the learnings of the project XYZ..."
- "Get to know Lisa's story; she benefited from the program (name of the program), from our partner organization (name of the organization) ..."





# Community Centered, Authentic & Responsible Representation

Elevate local voices and the agency of individuals in their development journey, and actively work to prevent “white savior complex” in the narrative

## Do's

- **Credit local staff, individuals, and communities for their contributions in developing solutions.**
- **Highlight the experiences, expertise, and voices of the individuals and communities.**
- **Use quotes, testimonials, and stories that reflect the perspectives and agency of those being represented by portraying individuals' and communities' aspirations, capabilities, and dreams beyond only their needs, vulnerabilities, and fears.**
- **Prioritize images captured at eye level or from a low-angle perspective (where the subject is seen from below) – as this can create a more dynamic and respectful portrayal of the subject, rather than from a high-angle perspective (where the subject is seen from above).**

## Don'ts

- Don't neglect to credit local staff, individuals, or communities for their contributions.
- Don't value expertise of external and foreign experts over local experts and lived experience when communicating about a social problem.
- Don't center stories only on the experience of external actors, such as foreign volunteers or donors, or omit the perspectives and agency of the communities involved.
- Don't frame narratives in which a foreign 'hero' solves all the problems while the local community is portrayed as passive or helpless.
- Don't use images that portray communities and individuals in a victim role.

**Provide context and communicate the complex realities, ensuring honesty and accuracy**

**Do's**

- **Include captions with images when this doesn't compromise the safety of the individuals.**
- **Accurately represent culture and specific issues.**
- **Present the full context of the social or environmental issues, showing the root causes and long-term solutions.**
- **Prioritize documentary video and imagery creation over scripted video and imagery**
- **Prioritize hiring local talent, such as content creators, agencies, and interpreters, to ensure authentic storytelling and cultural sensitivity. Skilled local professionals can provide valuable insights and gather high-quality, contextually appropriate content.**

**Don'ts**

- Don't use images without captions or fail to provide context that explains the culture and specific issues being represented. Never include information that could compromise the safety or dignity of communities or individuals;
- Don't misrepresent the culture or issues by using vague, inaccurate, or misleading captions.
- Don't oversimplify complex realities, omit the root causes, or reinforce stereotypes.
- Don't stage, manipulate, or misrepresent imagery; if actors are part of the communication, make sure to make that clear to the audience.
- Don't script or direct individuals to act or say something in a script; if that is the case, make it clear to the audience that this was part of the video-making process.
- Don't fly people in solely for the purpose of content collection, unless they are already scheduled to visit for other reasons. In such cases, ensure that visitors can gather content with support from the local partner team while in the country.



# Ensuring No Harm is Done

Follow Code of Conduct, and/or a Child Protection or Safeguarding Policy

## Do's

- **Ensure all organization staff and others working with or for them (freelancers, photographers, journalists, etc.) adhere to their Code of Conduct and/or a Child Protection or Safeguarding Policy.**

## Don'ts

- Don't allow organization staff or others working with or for them (freelancers, photographers, journalists, etc.) to operate without adhering to the Code of Conduct, and/or Child Protection, or Safeguarding Policies.



## Involve key organizational staff throughout the entire process

### Do's

- **Inform all staff members familiar with the individuals and communities being portrayed about the image briefing in advance, and allow them to review the briefing and provide input during the image-making process.**
- **Guide staff in briefing individuals and communities about their right to decline participation without any retaliation if they feel uncomfortable with any requests, and ensure they have a familiar person to turn to in such cases.**
- **Ensure that staff are present during image-making to offer guidance and oversight.**
- **Empower staff to veto requests from external parties if they believe they pose risks to individuals or communities or make them uncomfortable.**
- **Brief any external content producers about this process and the veto power that individuals and organizations hold over the content.**
- **Ensure that the local organization and staff are aware and approve the final material.**

### Don'ts

- Don't exclude staff familiar with the individuals and communities from the image briefing process.
- Don't fail to inform individuals and communities about their right to decline participation if they feel uncomfortable.
- Don't allow image-making to proceed without staff presence for guidance and oversight.
- Don't disregard staff input when they identify potential risks from external requests.



## Collect informed consent and follow general data protection regulation

### Do's

- **Ensure that written informed consent is obtained (check section 4 for complete guidance) and follow the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that applies in the European Union (check section 4 for complete guidance), as well as relevant national applicable data protection laws.**

### Don'ts

- Don't collect or use any personal data without obtaining informed consent or complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe and relevant national data protection laws.

**Protect children and vulnerable individuals by assessing their risks to participating in content creation and acting on it**

### **Do's**

- **Assess the risks individuals or communities may face when participating in image and story-making, including potential negative consequences such as reprisals, violence, or stigmatization. This assessment is especially important for contexts involving children, women, older people, individuals living in or fleeing from conflict zones, asylum seekers, people affected by natural or man-made disasters, those living with HIV, individuals with disabilities, LGBTQI+ individuals, survivors of sexual assault and gender-based violence, and those speaking out against governments, authorities, or large corporations, as well as individuals facing religious or caste-based discrimination.**
- **Based on this assessment, prioritize anonymity when necessary (in both images and voice) and take measures to manage technology that could reveal individuals' precise locations, such as turning off the GPS function on cameras or removing other identifying features.**

### **Don'ts**

- **Don't ignore the risks that individuals or communities may face when participating in image and story-making.**





## **Protect children's and vulnerable individuals safety, images, and rights in the content creation**

### **Do's**

- **During image gathering, there should always be more than one adult present, and they should be aware and have signed the organization's code of conduct and safeguarding policy.**
- **Get written informed consent to film or photograph children (check section 4 for complete guidance).**
- **Only choose images of children in appropriate clothing and situations/movements.**
- **When possible, focus on the activity rather than a particular child.**
- **When possible, avoid pictures where a child is recognizable.**
- **Use images that positively reflect children's and young people's involvement in the activity.**

### **Don'ts**

- Never let any individual in the content-gathering team be left alone with a child or a vulnerable individual.
- Don't publish images or information about a child or vulnerable individual without the proper consent.
- Don't use images of children or vulnerable individual without appropriate clothing or in inappropriate situations/movements.
- Don't publish full-body images of children or other vulnerable people in swimwear or gymnastic clothes. If images are necessary for the project, prioritize photos where the majority of the body is underwater or opt for group photos that do not display full bodies.
- Don't ignore the risks that individuals or communities may face when participating in image and story-making – consider the risk of images being modified or misused out of context, e.g., to create child abuse images, a child being identified for future grooming and abuse, a vulnerable child being identified by an existing perpetrator of abuse.
- Don't use images and camera angles that may be more prone to misinterpretation or misuse than others.
- Don't supply the full names of children and vulnerable individuals along with the images, or do not use a child's or vulnerable individual's real name when communicating
- Don't publish personal information about individual children or vulnerable individuals, like their exact location, and disguise any identifying information, e.g., School uniforms, and school names.
- Don't portray children, young people and vulnerable individuals in victim roles.



## Contact

Please get in touch with  
**[communications@adidasfoundation.org](mailto:communications@adidasfoundation.org)**  
if you have any questions. Our Stakeholder  
Engagement team will support you.



