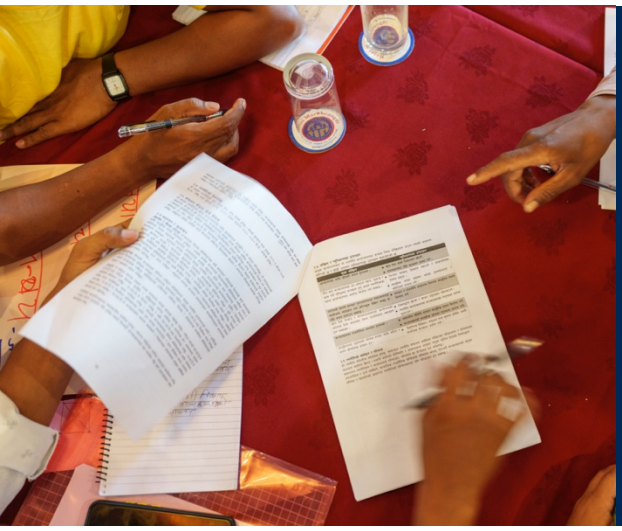
ETHICAL STORYTELLING GUIDELINES

Revised June 2026



The Freedom has developed a set of guidelines to follow when gathering stories, images and footage about the Freedom Fund's work, partners, program participants and the communities we support. These guidelines are shared with all staff and any consultant, contractor or partner involved with gathering video, photo or written content. They are especially critical to the work of our communications team.

INTRODUCTION

We recognise that our stories – the images and words we use - have power to create opinions about people and locations. We do not wish our communications to contribute to stereotypes or create the idea that victims and survivors of modern slavery or communities vulnerable to exploitation are 'other' or different to those who view their stories.

When gathering and sharing content we therefore always strive for dignified representations and follow best practice guidance such as Bond's Putting People in the Pictures First.

CODE OF CONDUCT

We prioritise the mental and physical well-being and safety of people above all other considerations. Our communications must adhere to the core principle of 'do no harm'.

We aim to be respectful in how we gather and share stories and images of the individuals we are depicting by avoiding unnecessary or unrepresentative portrayal of exploitation or distress; by showing nothing that is likely to compound or perpetuate stereotypes; and by protecting identities where asked or needed.

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We aim to be honest in how we tell stories and share content by accurately reflecting our support and avoiding inaccuracy, ambiguity, exaggeration and omission; by being transparent about what images depict through the use of captions or clarifying where photographs are representative; by ensuring that there is evidence to prove claims we make in written communications material; and by not creating false impressions through photoshopping or cropping images, merging different stories together or implying through inaccurate quote attribution.

INFORMED CONSENT

We recognise informed consent to be the keystone in ethical communications. Consent is not solely a form to be completed but is a process for participants to exercise their choices, and an ongoing dialogue before, during and after content is created and shared. This includes ensuring contributors understand the purpose of the communications project, how their story might be used, who the audiences of the finished communications are likely to be, that they can say no to anything, at any point in time, and that they can withdraw consent at any point. Recognising that contexts change, we also automatically retire images and stories after five years and this is explicit in our consent forms. Where needed, we will take audio consent if the subject is unable to read or sign their name.

SPECIFIC GUIDANCE RELATED TO SURVIVORS OF MODERN SLAVERY

While we follow general best practice adopted across the non-profit sector, we are also signatories to Freedom United's My Story, My Dignity guidelines that relate specifically to victims and survivors of modern slavery.

These guidelines specify that we should:

- Choose empowering images wherever possible
- Avoid depressing or sensationalist imagery such as ropes, chains, people stamped with barcodes or otherwise objectified, sexualised and/or victimising imagery
- Ensure that victims or survivors are represented in a way that conceals their identity wherever requested or necessary (see section below).

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GUIDANCE FOR USING IMAGES OF SURVIVORS OF MODERN SLAVERY

- Faces of adult actual victims or survivors can be shown, provided informed consent has been obtained.
- Faces of adult representative victims or survivors can be shown provided there is a written disclaimer/caption saying it is a representative image (eg "image for illustrative purposes only").
- Faces of child actual or representative victims or survivors (anyone aged under 18) can never be shown; faces must be obscured or be otherwise unidentifiable.
- Avoid using images without captions. Produce comprehensive captions that answer who, when, what, where and why to accompany images. This information will support responsible use of images.
- Pseudonyms should always be used for children's first names; and last names should never be used for children.
- Pseudonyms should be used for adults when they request one (this is documented in the consent form) and ideally, the subject selects their own pseudonym (first and last name).
- Adults should specify via the consent form whether they want their full names used or only their first name.

GUIDANCE FOR IMAGES OF PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT SURVIVORS OF MODERN SLAVERY

We also gather and share the stories of people who are not victims or survivors of modern slavery. These people include members of communities vulnerable to exploitation; activists, volunteers and staff working with and for partner organisations; people attending events and fora in a professional capacity; government officials in hotspot locations; colleagues from ally organisations, etc.

- Faces of adults and small groups of adults can be shown provided informed consent has been obtained from all adults in the group.
- Faces of representative adults can be shown provided there is a written disclaimer/caption saying it is a representative image (eg "image for illustrative purposes only")
- Avoid using images without captions. Produce comprehensive captions that answer who, when, what, where and why to accompany images.
- Faces of children, small groups of children and representative children (anyone aged under 18) can be shown provided informed consent has been obtained from parents or guardians and provided a caption is included with every image (including on websites and social media) saying how these children are being supported or receiving services to avoid exploitation (mainly applies to children in an education

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setting). Children can never be shown without a caption as an image alone otherwise potentially implies that they are victims or survivors of modern slavery.

- With images of children, do not include any identifying information in the caption, for example exact location or parent's last name.
- Written consent for image subjects is not required when the subjects are non-recognisable individuals in a public space (faces and all other identifying features are obscured), the subject is a public figure in a public setting (eg an official or organisation representative at a meeting or event), or if the subject is a crowd in a public space.
- If an individual is recognisable in a crowd shot, the decision as to whether informed consent is required or not depends on whether the context of that crowd reveals information about that individual which is considered personal (eg potential status as victim or survivor of modern slavery, health or mental health status, refugee status, sexuality, political beliefs, religion). You do not require consent from identifiable individuals in the background of an urban or rural public scene which does not reveal any personal information about the individual. If in doubt, images need to be taken in ways which do not reveal the individual identities of those at the scene, or the faces of anyone whose consent we don't have should be blurred.

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