



## Safe media and communications For CSOs in Ethiopia

This tip sheet aims to help Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Ethiopia identify and manage the risks of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH) and other harms and abuses caused by their media and communications work.

### Media and communications can help CSOs in Ethiopia

- Improve public awareness of activities and an organisation's public image
- Be accountable and transparent to donors and constituents
- Raise funds
- Raise the voices of community member
- Advocate for changes in policy, behaviour or systems
- Reinforce learning between CSOs.

### Various methods are used to communicate with audiences:

- **Mass media:** TV, Radio, print for example newspapers
- **Digital platforms:** social media, websites, email, YouTube, newsletters
- **On the ground events:** forums, networking events, community campaigns and group conversations

### Media and communications safeguarding risks

Different safeguarding risks are associated with different media and communications methods, messages and audiences.

#### Safeguarding risks may arise when:

- Communication materials do not maintain the dignity or privacy of programme participants and community members (e.g. graphic images or images that only show one side of a story)
- A child or person who may be at risk of abuse is exposed in the media
- Informed consent is not received before use of a person's information and / or images
- Communication materials do not protect the safety of the people reflected in them (e.g. sharing names and locations so people can be identified or become targets of revenge or exclusion)
- Communications do not consider local tensions or conflicts
- Communications use languages that are not inclusive or locally appropriate
- Communications may "re-traumatise" / bring back memories of harm or abuse to the people who are sharing their stories
- Systems are not in place to keep information of communities/ staff private and confidential
- Communications promote individuals, and their work, who challenge social norms (e.g. early marriage) without considering the risks for the individuals involved.

# Eight ways to make your media and communications safe



## 1. Take a risk-based approach

- Assess the safeguarding risks for your media and communications work so that they **do no harm**.
- Ensure that decisions favour the safety and protection of those at risk of SEAH and other harms and abuses.
- **Ask:** Will exposing the person's face, name, story pose any risk to the individual or people around them? Are there any risks of revenge or repercussions in the community?
- Where you need more detail, bring in advice from local colleagues or community representatives.
- Remember that exposure to wider audiences, as access to digital technology expands, may increase risk. Assume that communities will have access to the internet!



## 2. Include safe media and communications into policies

- Make sure that your safeguarding policy recognises the harms and abuses that may be caused by media and communications work.
- Include safeguarding in your media and communications policy and procedures. Ensure that communications staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities, understand the SEAH risks of their work and can ask a safeguarding focal point or others for advice if they are unsure.
- Before staff, or those contracted to deliver communications work (e.g. photographers, filmmakers, journalists) start to work with your organisation make sure that they receive a **safeguarding briefing and sign a declaration** stating they have read, understand and will follow the code of conduct.
- **Have some clear red lines, for instance:**
  - Images that sexualise people (such as nudity) should never be used
  - Images and footage collected for CSO purposes should never be used for individual purposes and should not be shared on personal social media accounts
- Agree with those contracted to deliver communications work, or those invited to events, who will have copyright on the images and information. If the copyright is only with photographers or journalists, ensure you emphasise that publication use is to be kept to the intended use only.

## 3. Be prepared

- Your engagement must be safe and pose no danger to the person you are collecting the story from or to others. In some cases, those who are involved in your communications work might be exposed to risks when talking to a media person or an “outsider”. In other cases, they might be suspected of receiving money in exchange for their story.
- Be aware of the social norms where you are working; don’t raise attention or risk unnecessarily.
- **Check:** Is it OK to speak to women alone? What kind of clothing is appropriate? Do I need to check with a local community head? Is the space is safe and comfortable? Am I allowed to film or photograph? What body language is acceptable? What language or translator is suitable?
- Have a reporting system and appropriate response procedures in place in case you come across a story of abuse, harassment or violence, or in case your staff or communications work cause SEAH or other harms and abuses. The system can include:
  - Information for community members on what to expect from CSO staff and how to report
  - Information for staff on the nearest relevant service points / help centres, such as health offices, police stations, and other organisations that can provide support.

## 4. Keep your messages respectful and balanced

- Respect the value and worth – the dignity – of all people you are communicating about.
- Avoid using terms and images that perpetuate stereotypes, or degrade, victimise or shame people. **Highlight agency, strength and resilience.**
- Use appropriate language(s) for the location.
- Avoid personal biases. Encourage the subject person / people to express their own experiences. Read your notes back to the people you are interviewing to confirm that you have captured their story accurately.
- Allow people to give input about the way they want their image to be taken.
- Do not exaggerate a story or use photos out of context. Inaccurate portrayal can increase a person's exposure to risk (and may raise questions about your organisation's reputation).

### Agency, strength and resilience

Imagine you are developing a short video on the consequences of early marriage in the Amhara region. Instead of narrating stories of girls who have experienced early marriage as victims to the culture and tradition of that community, it would be more powerful to highlight the experiences of girls, families and communities in overcoming harmful traditional practices together.

Also include stories of girls who have managed to escape early marriage and mobilise families and community members to agree and come together to stand against early marriage.

## 5. Protect people's privacy and confidentiality

- Respecting privacy and confidentiality are critical when developing communications materials. It is also important that the people you are collecting information from understand that their privacy and confidentiality is respected.
- Information gathered from people should never be shared if it could put the person at risk.
- Do not use full names or any information that can identify the location of the person. Where necessary, consider blurring faces and/or re-constructing voice audio.
- If you decide it is safe to include people who are victims / survivors of any form of violence or abuse, **do not display their faces or any information that could make them identifiable.**

## 6. Gather informed consent (RSH Ethiopia consent form is [here](#))

- Your organisation's right to use information and images collected can only be granted through informed consent from the person in question. In cases where the person sharing information is a child (under 18) or is unable to understand, rationalise and give consent themselves (e.g. have a chronic mental health condition or intellectual impairment), it is best gather to consent from the individual themselves plus a parent or caregiver (where the person agrees and where it is safe to do so).
- Consent can be obtained through a written signature, a marking or verbal agreement in video/audio recording.
- Informed consent should include an explanation of:
  - **What and why:** Your CSO, what data and images are being collected for and why

- **Where, when and how:** How the data will be used, where and when
- **Who:** Who will use their data and who the audience is
- **Explain that:** Other people might use the data, including quotes, shared in the media or communications

**TIP!** It is common in Ethiopia to work with people who are not able to read or write. In such cases, the consent must be read out for the individual in their local language and they should confirm verbally or mark on a form that they have understood the terms and conditions within the consent.

- In events where images may be taken of groups or crowds where individuals have not given consent, brief those participating that this may be the case.
- Make sure that individuals understand the potential use of their image or story where the organisation does not have copyright, or shared copyright, over the images or information.

### **Informed consent is reversible and must always be voluntary!**

People should understand that they do not have to participate and that they have the right to decline or withdraw their consent at any time before their information or image is published.

CSO staff should recognise their power compared to some of the people they may be writing stories about and be aware of any pressure that their presence may present.

Never pressurise anyone to participate in communications and media work.

## **7. Protect the data gathered for media and communications**

### **Using public computers**

In Ethiopia, it is common to share computers and flash drives and use public computers. In such cases, make sure that no data is saved on the computer, that you have cleared the history and that you have logged out of all your accounts.

- Make sure that images and information are stored and managed in a way that is secure and safe, for example:
  - Use password protected devices
  - Have data management policies and procedures
  - Train staff on IT security and data privacy
  - Restrict access to personal data to specific staff and regularly review who has access to the data
  - Delete stored data every few years (e.g. every 4/5years). This helps avoid using outdated photos and stories for purposes that they were not originally intended for.



## 8. Be aware when including the voices of victims/survivors of SEAH

- Be aware of both the importance and the risks of engaging victims/survivors of SEAH in media and communications work. Read this [tip sheet](#) for more information.
- If you use quotes from victims/survivors of SEAH from other resources or organisations, make sure that the original organisation has gathered informed consent correctly.
- Do ensure that victims/survivors understand what they are consenting to, where their stories will be published and the potential for their stories to be reproduced once in the public domain.

### Further reading

We referred to the following resources when developing this tip sheet:

- End Violence against children – [Child Safeguarding and Communications](#)
- Girl Effect – [Safeguarding Policy - Global](#)
- Save the Children – [Safeguarding Children in our comms and media work](#)

### Practice! Think about this fictional story.

Your organisation wants to produce an impact story about the programme they are implementing in Afar. You decide to talk to a 16-year-old girl who avoided female genital mutilation (FGM) against her parents and community will. Even if the girl agrees to tell her story, there is a potential risk that it could expose her to harm or any other form of abuse in the name of honour.

***What are the risks? Would you go ahead / publish or not to protect the individual? If yes, how will you mitigate and manage the risks? Consider all of the 8 points above.***