

TWO-PAGE GUIDANCE NOTE FOR MEDIA HOUSES

INTRODUCTION:

The portrayal of human trafficking, modern slavery and survivor stories in the media can undermine efforts to rehabilitate victims and secure abolition, when not conducted in an informed and considered manner. When images sensationalize the reality of modern slavery or dehumanize victims, portraying them in an undignified way without their consent, it can cause “secondary victimization.” While people who have experienced human trafficking and modern slavery are undoubtedly in the best position to share their stories and explain the context of the problem, we encourage the media to do this without further exploitation to the victim or perpetuating misrepresentations of modern slavery.

This document is based on key guidelines set out in Liberty Asia’s Guidance Note on use of Victims’ Images, which should be referred to for more comprehensive guidance and commentary. The summarized guidelines specified below is a suggested list of best practice and principles to guide media houses through as they make decisions on reporting on modern slavery and human trafficking.

GOAL: We urge all media organizations to adopt and endorse these guidelines so that modern slavery and survivor stories are presented with dignity across the media.

KEY GUIDELINES FOR MEDIA:

- (1) Do not use an image or name without the consent from the victim or their parent/guardian. Clearly explain to the victim what the image will be used for so they can give their informed consent, preferably on a signed consent form [see SAMPLE below]. Consent should not be coerced and victims should not feel obliged to give consent. If a person did not give their consent for the use of the image, the picture should be deleted in order to avoid any future assumption that the image can be freely used.
- (2) Be cautious about using names and sharing other identifiable details. Consider whether it is necessary to include names of subjects in pictures or other material, as there can be risk of harm, retribution or distress to the victim. It is common to use a pseudonym in order to protect victims and survivors.
- (3) Avoid images that stereotype the victim or sensationalize the issue. Sensationalized images can unintentionally create or reinforce stereotypes or negative prejudices and further perpetuate misunderstanding of what constitutes modern slavery and trafficking. Rather, images of people in vulnerable situations should focus primarily on the reasons for and the context of a situation, rather than on an individual’s suffering.
- (4) Avoid using the same image for an extended period of time. Instead, ensure that the image reflects the current situation. Images and their accompanying text should reflect the issue, both in its immediate context and as part of a broader problem. The image and text should represent precise, accurate and timely information.

- (5) Take particular care when photographing children. The best interest of the child should be the first priority and protected over any other consideration. Only use images of children who are suitably dressed to avoid potential misuse by others. Do not use real names of children in images.
- (6) Consider whether people included in the image or affected by the issue being represented would feel that it is an accurate representation of the issue. When choosing what images to use, consider whether you would be comfortable or happy sharing the image if it contained a member of your family or yourself.
- (7) The right to privacy should be extended to victims of trafficking. In some cultures, victims and survivors face significant social stigma and shaming from communities and thus do not want their information to be shared.

SAMPLE COPY FOR INCLUSION IN CONSENT FORM

Both parties, [NAME OF SUBJECT] and [MEDIA HOUSE], agree that the stories of the modern slavery survivors, who are often traumatized, are very sensitive and the protection of the victims is of the foremost importance. Therefore, both parties agree that the published story will not reveal the identity of the victim, including but not limited to; the victim’s face, location and any other identifying information that may cause harm to the victim, without prior consent.

Please check one:

- I give my permission to use my story in a media story with my name and identity included.
- I give my permission to use my story in a media story under the condition that my name and identity is protected.
- I give my permission to use my story in television and/or radio under the condition that my name and identity is protected and my face and voice is concealed.
- I give my permission to use my story in television and/or radio not withholding my personal details.
- I do not want to participate.

Please feel free to ask any questions you may have before you decide whether or not to give us permission to use your story. You do not need to give us permission if, for any reason, you do not wish to. Not granting us permission will not negatively affect you, or our relationship with you, in any way.

[MEDIA HOUSE] has fully explained this consent form to [NAME OF INDIVIDUAL], who now understands the conditions of consent.

Signed:

Date:.....