

2020

GUIDANCE NOTE FOR MEDIA HOUSES

FREEDOMUNITED
LET'S END MODERN SLAVERY TOGETHER



INTRODUCTION:

The portrayal of human trafficking, modern slavery and survivor stories in the media can undermine efforts to support survivors and identify systemic exploitation when not conducted in an informed and considered manner. When images sensationalize the reality of modern slavery or dehumanize survivors, 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 causing further harm to survivors 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 are 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 as a reference point to guide high-quality modern slavery coverage so that modern slavery and people's experiences of it are presented with dignity in the media. These guidelines aim to build on internal and external understandings of modern slavery and represent a necessary starting point for open conversations on survivor representation.

KEY GUIDELINES:

1. **Do not use an image or name without the consent from the survivor** or, if they are a child, from their parent/guardian. Clearly explain to the survivor 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 survivor. It is common to use a pseudonym in order to protect victims and survivors.
3. **Avoid images that stereotype survivors 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. **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.
5. **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.
6. **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:

INCLUSION IN CONSENT FORM

Both parties, [NAME OF SUBJECT] and [MEDIA HOUSE], agree that stories on modern slavery and people's experiences are very sensitive and the protection of survivors participating in media opportunities is of the foremost importance. Therefore, both parties agree that the published story will not reveal the identity of the survivor, including but not limited to; the survivor's face, location and any other identifying information that may cause harm to the survivor, 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. By signing this form, [NAME OF INDIVIDUAL] understands that a request to take down a story may not be granted once it has been published under the agreed conditions.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____