

**SAFEGUARDING GUIDELINES FOR
JOURNALISTS AND EDITORS-IN-CHIEF**

DOS & DON'TS





Terms & Definition:

Vulnerable Children: refers to children who are in need of assistance due to their difficult circumstances or challenges, including those at risk of harm. This includes children who face heightened risks of violence, exploitation, and abuse due to their individual circumstances or social and political identities—such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, disability, age, or illness. Their capacity to avoid, resist, cope with, or recover from harm is often constrained by social, economic, and political factors beyond their control.

Key Principles:

- The best interests of the children- are a primary consideration in all matters concerning children
- Respect: The inherent dignity, individual autonomy and rights of those concerned will be respected in every circumstance
- Non-discrimination: Applies safeguarding standards without discrimination
- Do no harm- Make sure that in every effort no one is harmed

Dos



1. Protect Identities:

ALWAYS ANONYMIZE CHILDREN'S IDENTITIES, ESPECIALLY WHEN DISCUSSING SENSITIVE TOPICS LIKE ABUSE OR EXPLOITATION.

- Example: Instead of stating "14-year-old Chan Dara from village 3, Sangkat Boeung Salang, Khan Toul Kork, Phnom Penh," say "Dara, a 14-year-old student from Khan Toul Kork, Phnom Penh." Ensure location details are limited to the district or province and turn off geo-tagging on cameras or phones.



2. Seek Consent:

OBTAIN INFORMED CONSENT FROM BOTH THE CHILD AND THEIR CAREGIVER OR GUARDIAN BEFORE TAKING PHOTOS, RECORDING VIDEOS, OR CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS. CONFIRM THAT THEY UNDERSTAND THEY CAN WITHDRAW CONSENT AT ANY TIME BEFORE THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING.

- Example: Present a consent form in their native language, explaining the purpose of the content and how it will be used.



3. Use Dignified Imagery:

CAPTURE CHILDREN PARTICIPATING ACTIVELY IN THEIR ENVIRONMENT, REFLECTING RESILIENCE AND EMPOWERMENT RATHER THAN VICTIMHOOD.

- Example: Instead of a child sitting alone looking sad, show them planting trees, studying, or helping in their community.



4. Create Safe Interview Spaces:

CONDUCT INTERVIEWS IN SECURE, PRIVATE LOCATIONS WHERE CHILDREN FEEL COMFORTABLE. ALLOW THEM TO HAVE A TRUSTED ADULT OR NGO STAFF MEMBERS (SOCIAL WORKERS) PRESENT OFF-CAMERA IF THEY WISH.

- Example: Choose a quiet room in a school or community centre instead of a public area where bystanders might overhear.



5. Respect Children's Voices:

ALLOW CHILDREN TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES NATURALLY, AVOIDING ANY SCRIPTING OR LEADING QUESTIONS.

- Example: Rather than asking, "Can you say how the project changed your life?" ask, "Can you tell me about your experience with the project?"



6. Be Sensitive with Questions:

ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES IN A WAY THAT FEELS COMFORTABLE FOR THEM, FOCUSING ON THEIR STORY RATHER THAN THEIR EMOTIONAL REACTION.

- Example: Instead of "How did you feel when the flood destroyed your home?" ask, "Can you tell me what happened during the flood?"



7. Corroborate Information:

VERIFY THE ACCURACY OF STORIES BY CONSULTING MULTIPLE SOURCES WHILE ENSURING THE CHILD'S SAFETY AND ANONYMITY.

- Example: After an interview, cross-check the details with community leaders or caregivers to ensure accuracy without pressuring the child.



8. Offer Non-Physical Comfort:

PROVIDE REASSURANCE THROUGH WORDS OR GESTURES LIKE OFFERING A TISSUE OR A GLASS OF WATER AND AVOIDING PHYSICAL CONTACT.

- Example: If a child becomes emotional, say, "Take your time. It's okay to pause," instead of placing a hand on their shoulder, which could be misinterpreted.



9. Empower Through Language:

USE LANGUAGE THAT HIGHLIGHTS THE CHILD'S RESILIENCE AND THE COMMUNITY'S EFFORTS. AVOID FOCUSING SOLELY ON HARDSHIP.

- Example: Instead of "A village devastated by drought," says, "A village finding innovative ways to adapt to drought."



10. Report Safeguarding Concerns:

IMMEDIATELY REPORT ANY SIGNS OF ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR EXPLOITATION TO THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES OR SAFEGUARDING TEAMS.

- Example: If a child discloses ongoing abuse, discreetly inform a safeguarding officer without alarming the child. Follow local reporting protocols, like contacting the 1288 police hotline.

Don'ts



1. Expose Identities:

NEVER REVEAL PERSONAL INFORMATION THAT COULD IDENTIFY CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE CHILDREN.

- Example: Avoid using their full names, exact addresses, or school names in published content.



2. Sensationalize Stories:

DON'T FRAME STORIES TO EVOKE PITY OR EXAGGERATE SUFFERING.

- Example: Instead of "Abandoned and hopeless, this child needs your help," write "With community support, this child is overcoming challenges and building a brighter future."



3. Conduct Interviews in Unsafe Spaces:

AVOID CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS IN LOCATIONS THAT MAY RETRAUMATIZE CHILDREN OR MAKE THEM FEEL UNSAFE.

- Example: Don't interview a child at the site of a traumatic event, like the ruins of their flood-damaged home.



4. Ask Leading or Blaming Questions:

NO PRE-JUDGEMENT AND AVOID QUESTIONS THAT IMPLY BLAME OR MAKE CHILDREN UNCOMFORTABLE.

- Example: Don't ask, "Why didn't you run away when the flood came?" Instead, ask, "What did you do when the flood happened?"



5. Ignore Power Dynamics:

DON'T IGNORE POWER DYNAMICS SUCH AS AGE, AND CULTURAL DYNAMICS WHEN ASSIGNING INTERVIEWERS OR TRANSLATORS.

- Example: In some cultures, girls may feel more comfortable speaking to a female interviewer, especially when discussing sensitive topics.



6. Use Inappropriate Imagery:

AVOID PHOTOS SHOWING CHILDREN UNDRESSED, IN DISTRESS, OR SUGGESTIVE POSES.

- Example: Never capture images of children bathing or changing clothes, even if it seems innocent in context.



7. Force Participation:

DON'T FORCE OR PRESSURE A CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERVIEW.

- Example: If a child hesitates or says they don't want to continue the interview, stop immediately without trying to convince them.



8. Touch Without Consent:

AVOID PHYSICAL CONTACT UNLESS INITIATED BY THE CHILD.

- Example: If a child is upset, offer comfort through words like "I'm here to listen" rather than touching their arm or back.



9. Publish Without Safeguards:

DON'T PUBLISH CONTENT THAT COULD POTENTIALLY ENDANGER A CHILD, EVEN IF THEIR NAME IS CHANGED.

- Example: Avoid sharing distinct background details that could identify the child's location or family, even if their face is obscured.



10. Neglect Follow-Up Care:

ENSURE CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT OR APPROPRIATE SERVICES IF REQUIRED.

- Example: After an interview, connect the child with a counsellor or support group if needed.

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