

Communications policy

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Document control

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Revision history

Version number	Status	Date	Author	Authorised by	Remarks
1.0	Final	25 September 2019	Larissa Tuohy	Board	This policy incorporates the previous Policy & Guidelines for Communications and Reporting on Children; Social Media Policy
2.0	Final	17 January 2023	Evelyn Santoro, Head of Public Affairs	Corinne Habel, Chief Development Officer	Updated document and related policies

Related policies and guidelines

- Organisational Code of Conduct
- Communications Procedures
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Consent Policy
- Where Does My Story Go?
- Privacy Policy

Objectives

ChildFund Australia is committed to communicating the stories of the children, families and communities with whom we work with our supporters, stakeholders, Alliance partners and the public at large, in an authentic manner. ChildFund Australia utilises the New Voice tone (which incorporates the personality traits of clarity, stronger together, ambitious and is child-rights focused).

Through engaging and regular communications – both online and offline, in visual and written formats – ChildFund Australia has the opportunity to:

- connect people and communities within and across national borders;
- update key stakeholders, supporters and donors on our programs, and how funds are being applied;
- raise awareness about the issues facing children and families in developing communities;
- build trust in the work of the organisation, and the international development sector; and
- highlight our key advocacy aims and engage stakeholders in support of those aims.

Policy statement

ChildFund Australia's communications will accurately and authentically describe the activities of the organisation and the stories of the children and communities with whom we work.

Communications will reflect the organisation's core values of respect, integrity, collaboration, change, empowerment and excellence, and express them through the New Voice tone.

ChildFund Australia will involve children and families wherever possible in the content gathering process, to ensure that the voices of marginalised communities are represented in our communications.

As a child-focused organisation, we also seek to give children and young people more opportunities to be heard, to express their opinions, and to gain valuable communications skills.

Scope

The organisation's values and our key communication principles apply to any content published via the organisation's official channels, but also to the personal communications of our staff, representatives and visitors to ChildFund's program activities when facilitated by ChildFund, who are expected to uphold the highest standards of conduct (see *Code of Conduct*).

This policy applies to:

- Board members; ChildFund Australia ambassadors and other individuals not employed by the organisation but selected to represent ChildFund;
- All employees including full-time, part-time or casual, temporary or permanent; job candidates; student placements, interns, apprentices, contractors, sub-contractors and volunteers;
- All forms of organisational content published by ChildFund Australia through on and offline publication channels or shared with third parties for publication.

- All forms of content published by ChildFund Australia staff and representatives using their personal communication channels, both on and offline;
- ChildFund Australia's program delivery partners, which are tasked with providing regular content on projects outcomes and the impact on beneficiaries.

Exclusions

Nil.

Definitions

ChildFund Australia representatives

This includes staff members, volunteers, ambassadors, board members, and fundraising contractors: any individual who represents the organisation in either an official or informal capacity.

ChildFund Australia supporters

ChildFund supporters are defined as members of the public who support ChildFund Australia's programs through financial contributions, as well as those individuals who support the organisation through non-financial methods, such as sharing ChildFund Australia's communications and advocacy activities. ChildFund Australia's Ambassadors are defined as both representatives and supporters.

Communications

The act of sharing information, stories and content with other parties.

Communication channels

Methods of content distribution to varying audiences and using different mediums: for example, social media, direct mail or publications.

Confidential information

Confidential Information includes, but is not limited to, trade secrets of ChildFund Australia; non-public information about the organisation and affairs of ChildFund Australia such as: contractual arrangements with third parties; financial information and data; policies and procedures documents; information which is personal information for the purposes of privacy law; and all other information obtained from ChildFund or obtained in the course of working or providing services to ChildFund Australia that is by its nature confidential.

Content gatherer

Individuals tasked with documenting a contributor's story and collecting content assets as part of this process (eg, images, footage, audio recordings, written testimony).

Content assets

Tools used in the communication process, eg, videos, written stories, social media memes, or infographics.

Contributor

An individual who willingly shares their story through oral or written interviews, images, footage and audio recordings.

Digital communications

Any communication which takes place using digital technologies, including social media, websites, online chat groups, emails, SMS, and online blogs. This includes digital technologies used for internal communication purposes.

Communication principles

ChildFund Australia strives to publish content that is of the highest integrity, authentically reflects the organisation, and has the greatest impact among audiences.

However, in all communications ChildFund puts the human rights of the individuals with whom we work above all other considerations.

Particular care and attention must be exercised when communicating and reporting on the children with whom ChildFund works, due to their age and current vulnerable environment.

Content gatherers may face a range of ethical dilemmas in the course of their work. ChildFund Australia will use best endeavours to ensure all staff have the necessary knowledge, tools, and systems in place so they can conduct this work professionally and in keeping with our organisational values.

All organisational communications distributed by ChildFund Australia must comply with the following core principles.

Authenticity

All content should accurately portray the contributor and their environment. 'Staging' of stories – where children/community members are asked to adopt a contrived, artificial position/stance or tell a story that is not their own – is not permitted. Content gatherers should seek to understand and present the contributor's reality and context. Accurate captions should accompany all photos.

Authorship and ownership

We respect the right of all contributors to control their stories. This includes their ability to withdraw consent at any time, as the primary rights holders of their content. Where consent is withdrawn, the appropriate action should be taken to archive any content assets in relation to that individual.

When using contracted videographers, ChildFund Australia will always retain exclusive or shared rights to any photographic stills or video footage created by the contractor.

Consent

Content gatherers must seek the informed consent of all contributors, as specified in the *Consent Policy*. When seeking informed consent, explanation is to be given in the contributor's language about how the information will be used. Content gatherers should use the guidance document *Where Does My Story Go* for this purpose. Children and parents/guardians must never be coerced into providing consent.

Dignity and respect

Communications should never be demeaning, patronising or reduce contributors to passive victims. Stereotypic imagery should be avoided. Communications should try to convey the strength, resilience, diversity, uniqueness and resourcefulness of children, families and the communities with whom we work. Images or footage which feature significant nudity, or which could be seen as sexually suggestive, are not to be used. Images of children and/or adults in severe distress may only be used if special clearance is given.

Do no harm

Questions, attitudes and comments that are judgemental, insensitive to cultural values, cause embarrassment or humiliation, or that reactivate trauma for a child must be avoided. Involving a contributor in a story that puts them at risk of familial, community or political backlash must be avoided. The best interests of the individual contributor are to be protected over any other consideration (including advocacy on issues). For content of a highly sensitive nature, but where contributors are keen to share their story, options which mask their identity should be used to avoid putting them at risk.

Empowerment

Where possible, content gatherers should aim to empower the children, families and communities with whom we work by adopting practices that encourage participation by contributors. For example, asking contributors to record images in the way they choose, and giving youth the opportunity to act as reporters/journalists in their local communities. A contributor's personal views about their situation and direct quotes should be used as much as possible. Reporting back to contributors after the content has been published is strongly encouraged as a mark of respect.

Privacy and confidentiality

For child protection reasons, use of a child's full name or information that identifies the child's place of residence are not permitted, as identified in the *Child Safeguarding Policy*. For all contributors, where content of a sensitive nature is shared, pseudonyms are recommended as an alternative. Contributors' wishes not to have certain information reported must be respected and complied with.

All content assets must be secured in ChildFund Australia's headquarter and country offices, with access available only to selected staff, with access arrangements regularly reviewed. When sending images electronically to outside parties, file labels must not reveal identifying information about a contributor. All communications should comply with the *Privacy Policy*.

Transparency and accountability

ChildFund Australia aspires to high standards of integrity, which is one of the organisational values that commits the organisation to being 'open, honest and transparent' in all activities.

Our program approach requires that we engage closely, and share information openly, with community members and partner organisations in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the organisation's programs.

Our marketing and communications activities are guided by principles of openness and authenticity (as referenced within this policy), and financial information is reported via the website, annual reports and upon request.

ChildFund staff regularly respond to enquiries from supporters, stakeholders, media and the general public and readily share information on the organisation's programs, activities and finances. ChildFund proactively publishes information, discloses information on request or gives clear reasons for any decision not to disclose (for example, to respect confidentiality or privacy).

ChildFund's approach to partner engagement is to work with local implementing partners in a spirit of mutual respect and trust. We commit to exercising the highest standards of honesty, transparency and accountability to both our partners and the beneficiaries who are directly impacted by our work.

Policy in action

ChildFund Australia communications by staff and representatives

The Sydney Communications Team is responsible for communications strategy, content scheduling, organisational key messages, brand compliance, and media management. They work in conjunction with country communications staff, marketing personnel and other members of the organisation to create, develop and publish a range of official ChildFund Australia communications.

Communications staff in Sydney and country offices are responsible for ensuring compliance, and implementing training as required, with this policy and related policies (eg, Consent Policy, Communications Procedures).

Any communications produced on behalf of ChildFund Australia must be factual and consistent with ChildFund Australia's values, strategic goals and key messages, and comply with the organisation's key Communication Principles.

ChildFund Australia digital communications

In Sydney, the Communications and Digital Marketing Teams are responsible for managing the head office digital communication channels, including social media accounts and the website. Staff from other departments may be required to assist with this work as part of their responsibilities at ChildFund Australia.

In country offices, Country Directors have primary responsibility for digital communications, with support from their communications and supporter relations staff.

Those authorised to post on behalf of ChildFund Australia must also abide by any relevant laws, terms of use (of social media and other digital platforms) and organisational policies, including protecting sensitive information.

Communication systems and processes

All staff members should refer to the *Communication Procedures* for additional guidance and consult the ACFID Good Practice Tool Kit for Quality Principle 6 of the Code of Conduct, which details how development and humanitarian organisations can communicate truthfully and ethically.

ChildFund Australia staff must also comply with all organisational systems and processes which apply to the collection, review and publishing of all content via the organisation's official communication channels.

In Sydney and country offices, senior managers must review any content before distribution. Where staff members identify an ethical issue or sensitivity which requires additional consideration prior to publication, the CEO and/or Country Director must be consulted for final approval.

Incorrect or inappropriate communications

ChildFund Australia staff and representatives are responsible for reporting any inaccurate, misleading or deceptive information they encounter about the organisation and its activities to senior managers in communications/marketing in Sydney. Feedback in relation to program countries can be provided to the Country Director.

If it comes to ChildFund Australia's attention that a staff member or representative has made inappropriate and/or unauthorised comments about the organisation, a staff member or representative, ChildFund Australia may choose to take action against such person as outlined in the *Code of Conduct*.

Where ChildFund Australia staff members publish incorrect information via the organisation's official communication channels, they are required to immediately inform the relevant staff member (eg, Head of Public Affairs in Sydney; Country Director in program country) and then take the steps advised by those individuals to correct the mistake. Where there has been a significant error, a correction and/or clarification should be distributed to the original audience where this is possible.

Personal communications by staff and representatives

The *Code of Conduct* sets out the commitments and behavioural expectations required of staff and our representatives. These standards of behaviour also apply to staff member's personal communications.

ChildFund Australia supports staff and representatives using digital communications in their capacity as private citizens and encourages them to learn how to use these tools safely and effectively. However, they must also be aware that all content published on social media sites is publicly available – even on their personal accounts.

Staff and representatives should ensure in all personal communications, both online and offline, that:

- they do not make comments that are illegal, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful to, or about, their work or another person or entity;
- they do not disclose confidential or sensitive information about ChildFund, including intellectual property, or other information that is not publicly available;
- their communications are not, or are not perceived to be, made on behalf of ChildFund, rather than an expression of a personal view;
- their communications are not so harsh or extreme in their criticism of ChildFund, supporters or other stakeholders that they raise questions about their capacity to work professionally, efficiently or impartially at ChildFund Australia (staff are encouraged to resolve concerns by

informal discussion with a manager or by using internal dispute resolution mechanisms, including the Employee Grievance Policy & Procedure or Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure if appropriate);

- their communications do not compromise public confidence and trust in ChildFund Australia;
- that their personal use of social media during working hours is kept to a minimum and does not interfere with their normal work responsibilities.

Personal communications by supporters

ChildFund Australia strictly prohibits any direct, unmediated contact between supporters and children, their families and communities (see *Child Safeguarding Policy*). All communication must be vetted by ChildFund Australia Country Offices, or ChildFund Alliance Country Offices, to ensure child and supporter protection.

Unmediated communication places children and supporters at risk and ChildFund Australia will take appropriate action if it becomes aware of unmediated contact. This may result in the cancellation of the supporter and/or the removal of the child and their family from the sponsorship (child or community) program.

ChildFund Australia recognises that supporters may wish to promote the work of ChildFund, and/or share photos or stories of sponsored children or communities. ChildFund encourages supporters to do this in a way that protects the privacy, dignity and safety of the children and families in our partner communities. As such, ChildFund staff will work with supporters to ensure that supporters:

- do not publish the full name, address or other personal details in relation to their sponsored child that identify the child/family or where they live;
- do not publish personal information or photos that could cause distress or increase risk for the child/family; and
- follow consent procedures for taking photos when undertaking a visit to their sponsored child/community.