AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT | **FACTSHEET**

EDMF OVERVIEW

What is an EDMF?

An 'ethical decision-making framework' (EDMF) is an overarching framework designed to help your organisation have a clear process for making decision about the images, messages and stories used in public communications. An EDMF outlines how your organisation will make decisions about its communications materials, particularly those that fall into ethical 'grey areas'. It captures the key issues that your organisation will discuss when making decisions and when these discussions should take place. An EDMF will also outline who will be involved in communications decisions and what people should do if they are unable to make a decision.

Why it's so important

As part of their work, NGOs share some important – yet difficult – stories. Sometimes their stories show injustice and harsh realities. While these are important stories for the world to hear, inherent in undertaking these activities is a level of risk and decisions about what content to use are not always easy to make. Misunderstanding cultural norms and mismanaging storytelling content can harm both the people we strive to support, as well as our organisations.

What does the Code say about it?

Having an EDMF for communications is a verifier for Compliance Indicator 6.2.1 and is also included in the ACFID Fundraising Charter in 8.1.2.

Ethically important moments

1. When scoping a story

WHEN
- Developing a storytelling concept
- Scoping story leads
- Writing a Terms of Reference

ISSUES TO DISCUSS
- Connection to values
- Protection

WHO
- Content gatherers
- Programs
- Child safeguarding
- Marketing

2. When planning to gather content

WHEN
- Planning a content-gathering trip
- Planning a phone/email/video interview
- Sourcing content directly from program staff and contributors

ISSUES TO DISCUSS
- Informed consent
- Fuzzy boundaries (a context analysis is helpful at this point)
- Protection
- Privacy

WHO
- Content gatherers
- Programs
- Child safeguarding

3. While gathering content

WHEN
- While on a content-gathering trip
- While conducting an interview

ISSUES TO DISCUSS
- Informed consent
- Fuzzy boundaries
- Protection
- Connection to values
- Privacy
- Authorship and ownership

WHO
- Content gatherers
- Programs
- Child safeguarding

4. Directly after gathering content

WHEN
- Directly after gathering content from the field or via an interview

ISSUES TO DISCUSS
- Informed consent
- Fuzzy boundaries
- Protection

WHO
- Informed consent
- Fuzzy boundaries
- Protection

5. While creating the storytelling content

⏱ **WHEN**	💬 **ISSUES TO DISCUSS**	👥 **WHO**
• While creating materials to publish, such as writing a story, editing videos/photos, and writing social media content	• Connection to values • Authorship and ownership • Fuzzy boundaries • Privacy	• Content gatherers • Programs • Marketing

6. When publishing a story

⏱ **WHEN**	💬 **ISSUES TO DISCUSS**	👥 **WHO**
• When publishing content on social media and via the website, print (such as DMs) and the news media	• Connection to values • Fuzzy boundaries (a context analysis is helpful at this point) • Informed consent • Protection • Privacy • Authorship and ownership	• Marketing • Content gatherers • Child safeguarding

7. After publishing a story

⏱ **WHEN**	💬 **ISSUES TO DISCUSS**	👥 **WHO**
• Once a story is in the public domain	• Informed consent • Fuzzy boundaries • Authorship and ownership	• Programs • Content gatherers • Marketing

Establishing processes to support decision-making

An EDMF should outline the process staff and volunteers can take if they are unable to come to a decision after discussing key ethical issues. This should include contact information for other staff members who have expertise in a certain area, and information on how to escalate an issue if needed.

Learn more

See an example EDMF

Privacy Law factsheet

Protecting Identities factsheet

Informed Consent factsheet

Unconscious Bias factsheet

Storytelling Risks factsheet

Learn more about EDMFs