

TAKING PHOTOS IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES



OXFAM



Preparing food, Dar es Salaam,
Tanzania. Coco McCabe/Oxfam

TREAT PEOPLE WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT

- Consider how you would feel if you were the one being photographed in that situation.
- Ask people how they would like to be photographed.
- Some people really do not want to be photographed – respect this!
- Be aware of cultural taboos such as the belief that photos 'take souls', bring bad luck or that women may not be photographed.

GET INFORMED CONSENT

- Informed consent is more than someone just agreeing to be photographed. They have to understand who you are, how you will use the photo, and the possible consequences for themselves and their communities.
- Individuals and recognizable groups of people should be asked for consent. For shots taken from a distance or of large groups in public, ask a group representative/ local programme staff member to advise if further consent is needed.
- Give clear instructions on how to revoke consent, and provide contact details. Remember that people may withdraw their consent non-verbally, e.g. by walking away.



Nigerian refugees play cards, Assaga camp, Niger. Vincent Tremaeu/Oxfam



Kids play football at an IDP camp in north-eastern Nigeria. Sam Tarling/Oxfam

ASSESS THE RISKS

- Do a risk assessment. If the risk is too high, or if it's likely to increase over time, don't take or use the photo.
- Read your organization's security guidelines, which often refer to security risks relating to photography. For example, taking photos near airports or military installations is often prohibited by law.
- Think through the possible consequences of taking photos. Could the photo cause problems for the people being photographed? Or if we use their photo publicly? Consult people who know the context well, as risks may not be obvious.

TRAIN EVERYONE INVOLVED

- All humanitarians working in high-risk contexts should understand the principles of responsible photography.
- So should teams that specifically photograph and interview people. Photographers, translators, guides, etc. should be able to carry out their work in line with the principles of responsible data management.

PROTECT IDENTITIES

- In conflict zones, it's very difficult to assess all possible risks. So protect people's identities by default, by taking photos where their faces or identifying features are not visible. You should also do this in other sensitive situations, such as with survivors of violence or abuse.



Woman and child,
Maiduguri, Nigeria.
Sam Tarling/Oxfam

- If you are unsure if you need to protect identities, ask the Country Director/Programme Manager.
- Switch off your GPS on your camera/phone – otherwise location coordinates will be embedded in the photo.

SHARE AND USE WITH CARE

- It's not just about taking photographs with care and consideration, but how we use them too.
- We should only use or share photos in line with the original purpose for which consent was given.
- The text around a photo affects how that image is interpreted. For example, people whose photos are used on blogs about Ebola, child soldiers, rape survivors, etc. will be assumed to have experienced those issues themselves.

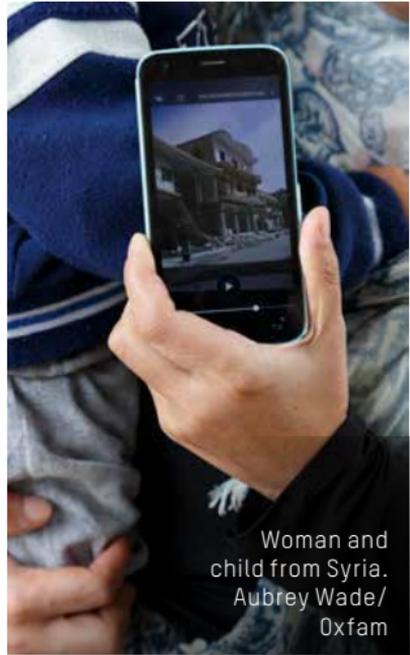
GET APPROVAL

- In high-risk areas such as conflict zones, your organization will have rules about what material can be used publicly.
- 'Sign-off' – getting approval to use images and other material publicly – is part of how we manage risk. Make sure that you know your organization's processes on sign-off for public use.

MAKE IT PARTICIPATORY

- Many people want to have their photo taken and their story told – often, they also want some say in this process.

- If you have time, turn a photography trip into a participatory project. Talk to people about how you want to photograph them, and ask for their ideas too.
- Many people have lost their own family photos, so do give them copies of the photos you take.
- Hand the camera over: Oxfam has done very successful participatory community photography projects in DRC and Mali.



Woman and
child from Syria.
Aubrey Wade/
Oxfam

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE...

<http://ti.me/2kiqWg5>
to find out how to switch off your GPS

<http://bit.ly/2jIYZxi>
to read Oxfam's responsible data policy
(your organization may have its own one too)

<http://bit.ly/2kKl6jL>
for more information on informed consent

USE YOUR IMAGINATION!

There are lots of interesting and innovative ways to take photos that don't show people's identities:

- Use silhouettes, take photos from behind, use depth of field to blur faces, focus in on hands or eyes, use interesting angles...
- You don't always have to take a photo of a person. Try shots of striking scenery, people in the distance, personal belongings, toys, etc.

Personal clothing and items left behind by migrants who travelled by boat from Libya to Sicily. Alessandro Rota/Oxfam



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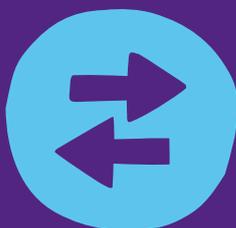


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