



ETHICAL USE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographs help us convey meaning and allow us to share meaningful experiences with one another. They have the power to frame and influence opinions, judgements and experiences so we must be thoughtful about what type of photographs are taken and shared. It can be helpful to think about it from the perspective of having someone from an outside community come to your home to take photographs of you and your family, etc.. All photographs used by GPIC and its partners should be taken – and used – with integrity and respect to promote the dignity of all persons. We encourage you to choose images (and words) that reflect the bilateral nature of your partnership and celebrate the work you do together. One of the most powerful ways to show the impact your partnership is making is through photographs.

Motives

There are many purposes for taking pictures and it is beneficial to examine your motives and the intent for a given photograph. Some purposes include educational (such as clinical teaching photography), raising public awareness or promotion (news or organizational promotion) and personal use. With promotional use, we are often trying to raise awareness about challenges or difficult situations such as poverty or need for palliative care. Be careful that photographs taken for this purpose do not solely harness pity. Words and images that elicit an emotional response by their shock value are manipulative and should be avoided. Using images/words in this manner can demean subjects and fail to give a complete depiction of the situation.

Consent

Those who are in the picture need to provide informed consent, especially if the photos may be shared with others. Receiving consent shows respect for a person's autonomy and their right to accept or decline being photographed. Be careful with the use of photos of children – consent from guardians must be given. Receiving informed consent means that the person is aware of where the picture may be used, who will be able to see it, and whether their identity will be confidential.

Proper use of photographs

Because photographs can be perceived in many ways, providing the proper context in a caption is important. Lack of context can perpetuate stereotypes or false generalizations, and disrespectful portrayal of those photographed can create an unethical narrative. It is incumbent upon each one of us to consider the benefits of using a photograph as well as the potential for harm or unintended consequences of its use. It is also important to ensure that proper credit is given for photographs you did not take yourself. Finally, if you are ever unsure about the use of a particular photograph, it's probably best not to use it.

Principles for taking/using photos:

- Intent and purpose – what is the motive for use of the photo and is there a conflict of interest?
- Beneficence – who benefits from use of the image?
- Non-maleficence – can the image cause unintentional harm?
- Justice and respect – is the subject's dignity respected? Is the image properly used and credited?
- Autonomy – did the subject give consent and has confidentiality been maintained?
- Truth – is the reality of the situation portrayed in the true context?

Additional resources:

- "Ethics and Photography in Developing Countries," Unite for Sight <https://www.uniteforsight.org/global-health-university/photography-ethics>
- "Ethical Photography," The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: <https://globalphoto.unc.edu/ethical-guidelines/>
- PhotoVoice Statement of Ethical Practice <http://www.photovoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/pvethicalpractice.pdf>