

INFORMATION SHEET

REPORTING

THE EFFECT OF PICTURES AND TEXT



REPORTING

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During holidays or work placements abroad, generally speaking, photos will be taken and reports will be written. Pictures and texts convey messages that we are often not aware of. These can either strengthen or weaken stereotypes about developing countries.

On the following pages, tips for reporting and international standards for the use of images and messages are presented. Furthermore, several problematic examples will be listed and suggestions for differentiated reports will be made.



TIPS FOR REPORTING



AVOID GENERALISATIONS

- Exactly describe where you saw whom or what.
- Never talk of an entire country, a continent or the inhabitants of a country or continent in general terms.

DESCRIBING INSTEAD OF INTERPRETING

- Note down observations without judgement or interpretation.
- Clearly mark your own opinions as such (e.g. "I think ..." or "I believe ...")

SHOW DIVERSITY

- Show as much diversity as you can:
 - > not just the foreign and exotic, but also normal day-to-day situations
 - > not just old traditions but also modernity
 - > not just rural areas, but also cities

DESCRIBE THE CONTEXT

- Describe the situation: Where did I take that photo? Why was I at this location?

IDENTIFY SOURCES

- When giving general information, make sure to do your research thoroughly and quote reliable sources.

ASK FOR PERMISSION

- If the photo is to be published (Facebook, blog, newsletter, etc.), the photographed persons must be asked for permission.

TEST: TURN THE SITUATION AROUND

- Would I feel comfortable if I myself or my fellow countrymen were shown or described in such a manner?

STANDARDS FOR REPORTING I/II

CONCORD CODE OF CONDUCT

CONCORD, the European confederation of Relief and Development NGOs, developed a Code of Conduct with the aim to provide a good-practice framework on images and messages. Find below an excerpt from the CONCORD Code of Conduct.

Guiding Principles Choices of images and messages will be made based on the paramount principles of:

- Respect for the dignity of the people concerned;
- Belief in the equality of all people;
- Acceptance of the need to promote fairness, solidarity and justice

Accordingly, in all our communications and where practical and reasonable within the need to reflect reality, we strive to:

- Choose images and related messages based on values of respect, equality, solidarity and justice;
- Truthfully represent any image or depicted situation both in its immediate and in its wider context so as to improve public understanding of the realities and complexities of development;
- Avoid images and messages that potentially stereotype, sensationalise or discriminate against people, situations or places;
- Use images, messages and case studies with the full understanding, participation and permission of the subjects (or subjects' parents/guardians);
- Ensure those whose situation is being represented have the opportunity to communicate their stories themselves;
- Establish and record whether the subjects wish to be named or identifiable and always act accordingly;
- Conform to the highest standards in relation to human rights and protection of the vulnerable people.



STANDARDS FOR REPORTING I/II

DOCHAS CODE OF CONDUCT

In 2007 several NGOs developed the „DOCHAS Code of Conduct on Images and Messages“ in Ireland. The purpose of this Code is to provide a framework which organisations can refer to when designing and implementing their public communication strategy. Find below an excerpt of the Code of Conduct.

IMAGES OF CHILDREN

- Informed consent: Ask for the child’s permission and get parental/ guardian consent for images, including for the retention and use of the image.
- Avoid creating vulnerability where it does not exist (for example, images looking down on children).
- Be careful when revealing too many details about individual children as it may endanger them, although it is desirable to provide some information on the context of a photograph.
- It is best if images focus on an activity and, where possible, feature groups of children rather than individuals. Focusing on a group or family rather than individual children can provide more protection.
- For spontaneous or unplanned images, the relevant people should be informed of the purpose of the photograph as soon as it is taken and asked for consent. If consent is refused, the image should not be published.



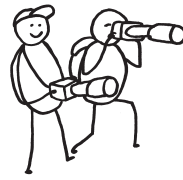
CONSENT

Verbal Consent

- When possible, establish a relationship before you start taking photos. When you approach photo subjects in the field, briefly introduce yourself, be courteous, and explain the purpose of your visit or the reason you want to take photos. In clinical contexts, speak with the clinical director before you begin photographing health workers or clients.
- If you don’t speak the same language, communicate with your body language. At the very least, smile, nod, and point to your camera before shooting. If you sense any reluctance, confusion, or disdain, refrain from taking the photo. Respect a person’s right to refuse to be photographed.

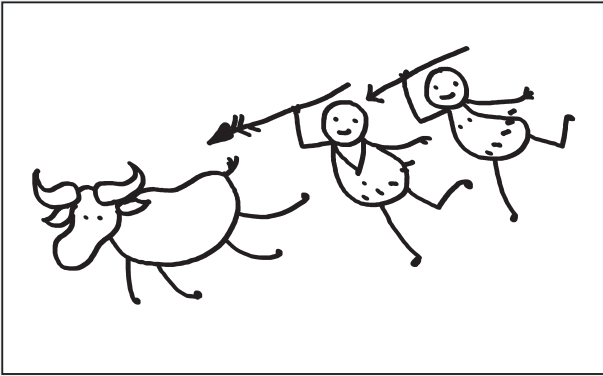
Written Consent

- Obtaining written consent may not be practical in all circumstances. Furthermore, written documents may have little or no meaning to people who speak a different language, people of low literacy, and people who live in cultures where photography or publications are not common.



EXAMPLES & ALTERNATIVES I/VIII

PICTURE 1: HUNTING BUFFALOES

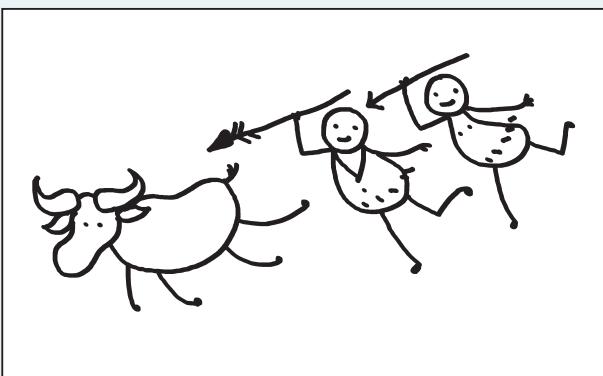


In Africa people hunt like they did 10,000 years ago. Life is uncivilised and primitive.

PROBLEM 1: GENERALISATIONS

The diversity of ways of life and cultures are neglected. Africa is mentioned as an unspecific geographical "mass" without naming specific countries and places. (Africa consists of 54 countries and is 3 times bigger than Europe!) Moreover, the actual situation is not explained.

ALTERNATIVE

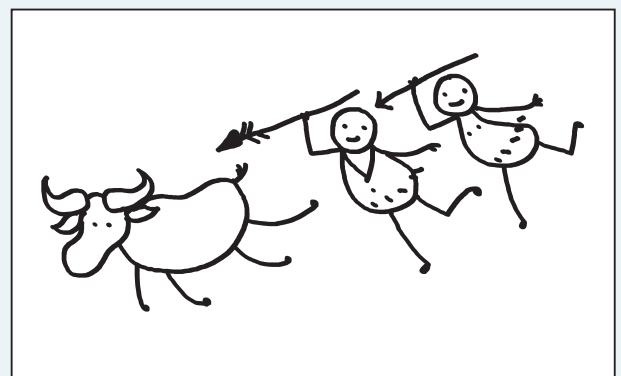


The local tribe the Hadza live in the village Harku in Tanzania. They are one of the last tribes that still live as traditional hunter-gatherers.

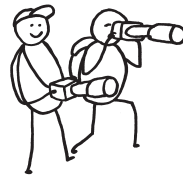
PROBLEM 2: FOCUS ON A SEEMINGLY BACKWARDS LIFESTYLE

People are painted with a broad brush as being "uncivilised" and "primitive". Even when ways of life are different to the ones that we know, that is not reason enough to devalue them and claim that they are at a less advanced stage of development.

ALTERNATIVE



The local tribe the Hadza live in the village Harku in Tanzania. They are one of the last tribes that still live as traditional hunter-gatherers. Their way of life requires a great deal of flexibility, adaptability and special skills.



EXAMPLES & ALTERNATIVES II/VIII

PICTURE 2: WOMEN IN FRONT OF A HUT



In village X in Uganda women live in traditional huts. They are oppressed and uneducated.

PROBLEM 1: MISSING SOURCES

It is not accurate and deprecative to denominate a population or a part thereof (women) as “oppressed” and “uneducated”. Instead it would be interesting to analyse statistics and data by recognised institutions and to use them as subtitles.

ALTERNATIVE

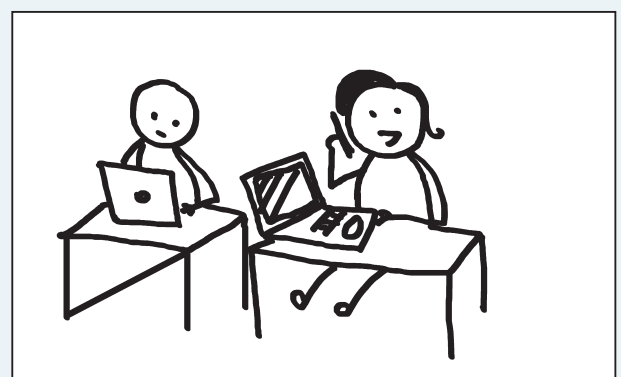


In Uganda only one third of all girls stay in school until they are 18. In spite of this there are also successes. In the year 2013, 35% of parliamentarians were female that easily surmounts the world average of 21% (Sources: CIA World Factbook, World Bank Uganda Country Information)

PROBLEM 2: PERPETUATING STEREOTYPES

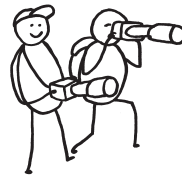
In developing countries many photos are taken of women and children in rural areas and they are given imprecise attributes such as “oppressed” (by whom?) and “uneducated”. In this way whole parts of the world are reduced to poverty, rural living, oppression and lack of education. The existence of modernity is ignored.

ALTERNATIVE

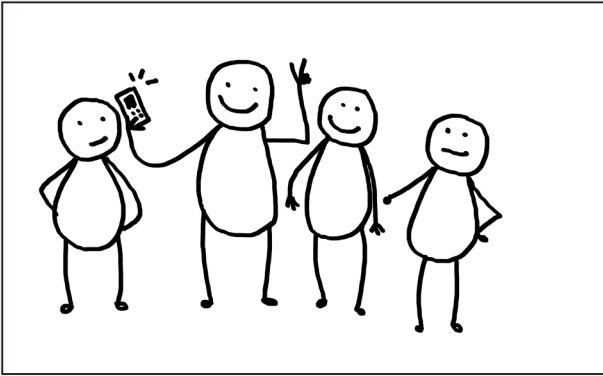


In Kamala, Uganda, I met the successful business woman, Anne Rogo, who has initiated the use of mobile health clinics and mobile telephones to help improve the health of mothers and infants.

EXAMPLES & ALTERNATIVES III/VIII



PICTURE 3: PHOTO WITH CO-WORKERS



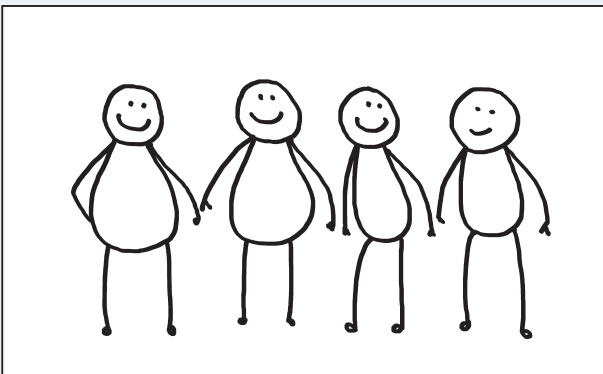
The intern Marta Müller from Switzerland, together with her co-workers in the aid project with whom she worked for three months.

PROBLEM 1:

NO MENTION OF NAMES OR JOB TITLES

Taking photos where only the person working abroad is named or where this person is in the foreground should be avoided. He or she is not entitled to the importance that such a representation conveys. Above all it denies the spectator the possibility to learn about the persons who work in the project permanently and who thus are much more important than a temporary co-worker from abroad.

ALTERNATIVE



Above you can see co-workers from organisation X in Uganda: Director Paul Mwangi, coordinator Cecilia Otieno, the psychologist Francis Kimani and myself – Marta Müller, intern from Switzerland.



EXAMPLES & ALTERNATIVES IV/VI

PICTURE 4: TEACHING



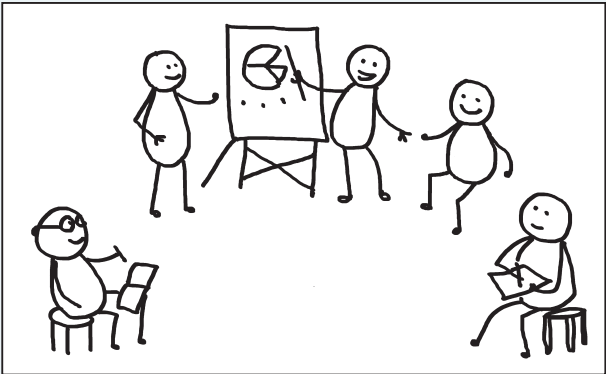
I managed to teach the local people a lot. My contribution improved many people's lives.

PROBLEM 1:

THE INTERN AS THE SAVIOUR

Local people are depicted as the needy and passive recipients of aid and the European intern as the active "saviour" and "hero". This neglects the reality that the interns generally have no expertise. To provide a more accurate picture it is important to present the reality as it is and to accord the co-workers with a more active role.

ALTERNATIVE

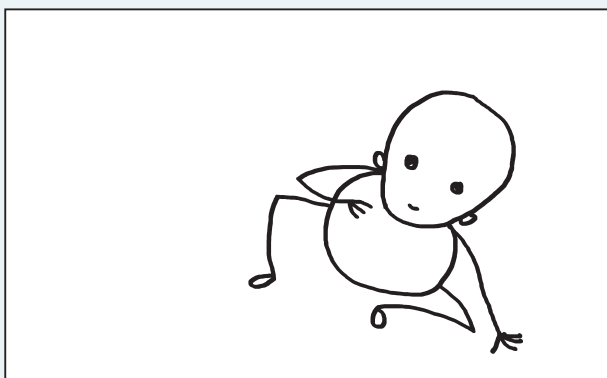


Josefine Mhike, finance manager for the local non-profit organisation X, giving a workshop about micro-funding for her colleagues in Matobo, Zimbabwe, in January 2016. I also took part in the workshop and I was able to learn a lot.



EXAMPLES & ALTERNATIVES V/VIII

PICTURE 5: CHILD

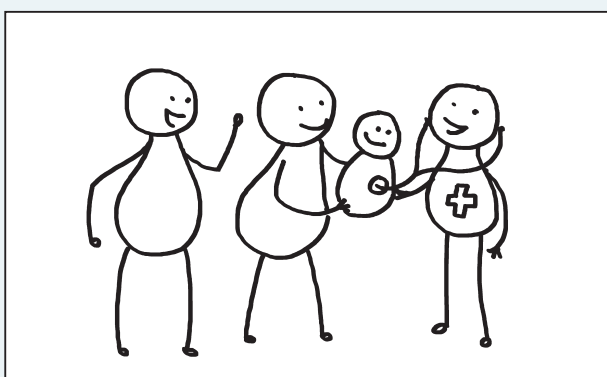


8-year-old Frieda is hungry. Please help by donating!

PROBLEM 1: THE CONTEXT IS NEGLECTED

The missing context makes it impossible for the observer to form a clear picture of the complexities of the living conditions. The picture also provides no idea of what the project could do to improve the child's life.

ALTERNATIVE

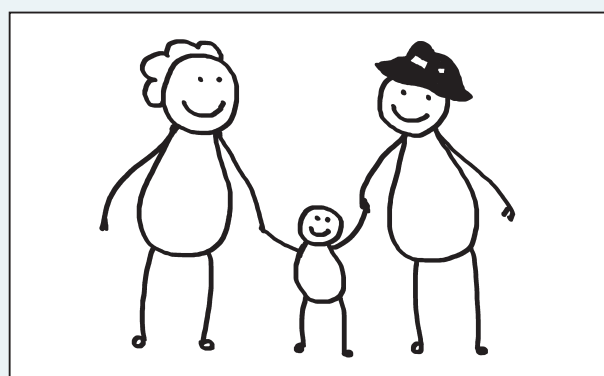


Angela and Thomas Okele in the hospital in Abeche, Chad, where their son Malik is being treated for acute malnutrition. The food crisis has been exacerbated by the extreme drought and speculation on international food markets. (Photo: XY)

PROBLEM 2: THE PICTURE FROM ABOVE

To take a picture of a child from above is fraught with problems: The perspective increases the vulnerability of the child and attests to the photographer's position of power. If possible children should not be photographed alone and photos may never be published without the consent of the parents.

ALTERNATIVE



Every day around 50 children attend the tutoring programme in project X. In the photo above is a family that I got to know last week. Both parents have to work in order to get by, but they provide opportunities for their child wherever possible.



EXAMPLES & ALTERNATIVES VI/VIII

PICTURE 6: DANCE



Wild dances to percussion music in Uganda

PROBLEM 1: EXOTICISATION

Life in developing countries is often depicted as more exciting, wilder and more exotic as life in our own country. People are reduced to the moniker of being “different”. When taking pictures in developing countries it is also important to show daily situations which reflect the reality of the lives of the majority of the people there. Another alternative is to compare traditional rituals in developing countries with those you have in your own country, which to outsiders may also seem to be exotic.

ALTERNATIVE

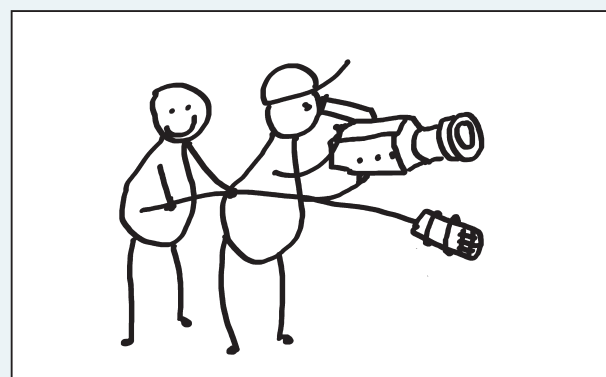


I had many clichéd images of Uganda in my head which were limited mainly to rural life and traditional tribes. However, I have noticed that the majority of people here live just like we do, even though comparatively more people work in agriculture.

PROBLEM 2: IGNORING CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Travel photos from developing countries mainly reproduce clichéd images of traditional art and culture such as ethnic dances and fashion. It follows that contemporary cultural life is largely overlooked.

ALTERNATIVE



Young filmmakers in Kampala making a documentary about the LGBT scene in their city.



EXAMPLES & ALTERNATIVES VII/VIII

PICTURE 7: FAMILY IN TRADITIONAL CLOTHING



This is a typical Bolivian family in traditional clothing.

PROBLEM 1: DIVERSITY IS IGNORED

The picture is only a small extract from reality and does not reflect the varied lifestyles of people in Bolivia. The picture caption creates the impression, however, that all families in Bolivia look like this.

ALTERNATIVE

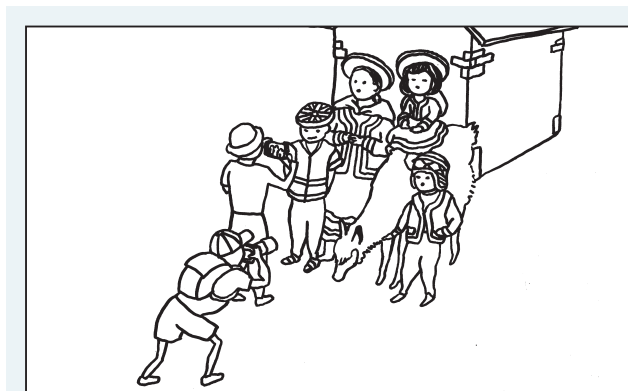


This is a farming family who live in a small village in the Pando region. They are wearing the typical clothing of this village which is worn today only on public holidays or for showing to tourist groups.

PROBLEM 2: THE ROLE OF TOURISTS IS BLENDED OUT

That this photo was arranged for a group of tourists and that it is a part of an organised tour is not broached. The feelings of the person being photographed, who may be uncomfortable in this situation, is also not mentioned.

ALTERNATIVE



Yesterday I took part in a tour through some villages in northern Bolivia. It was obvious that some families in the villages had been directed to wear their traditional clothing and that they are also paid for doing this. I was very uncomfortable with the idea that these people had to “dress up” for us. Conversely, however, it is clear to me that tourism is an important source of income for them.



EXAMPLES & ALTERNATIVES VIII/VIII

PICTURE 8: SMILING CHILDREN

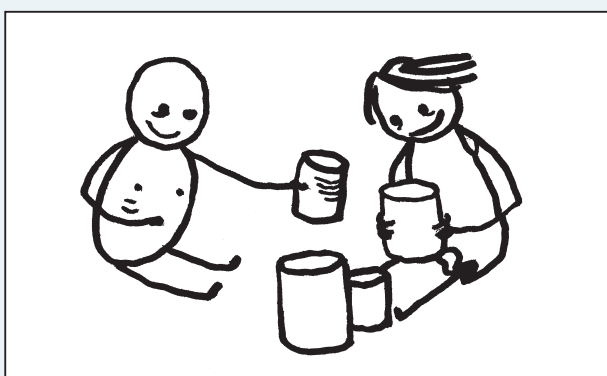


They are poor but happy.

PROBLEM 1: ROMANTICISATION OF POVERTY

People who are very poor often have to struggle with hunger, illnesses and other problems which are not always apparent. Romanticising and idealising poverty does not do justice to the situation and conveys a false image.

ALTERNATIVE



These two children are extremely malnourished and appear to live in great poverty. It shocked me to learn that in this country, although all people are treated for illnesses, there is no state support to help pay for medicine. Those who are not able to afford medicine are the unfortunate ones and in the worst-case scenario they will die.

PROBLEM 2: SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTION

Photos only capture a single moment in time. Just because a person smiles in one particular moment, that does not mean that he or she is happy. It could just as easily be that it is not part of the culture to show negative feelings outwardly. Instead of attributing feelings, one's own perception can be questioned and the picture can be left open to interpretation.

ALTERNATIVE



It amazed me that people living in extremely difficult circumstances still smile. Does that really mean that they are happy? It made me reflect if prosperity really leads to greater happiness.

LINKS & INFOS I/II



GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING



CONCORD Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct on Images and Messages

<http://concordeurope.org/2012/09/27/code-of-conduct-on-images-and-messages/>



DOCHAS Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct on Images and Messages

www.dochas.ie/sites/default/files/Images_and_Messages.pdf



The illustrative guide to the DOCHAS Code of Conduct

Illustrations and examples on the use of images and messages

www.dochas.ie/sites/default/files/Illustrative_Guide_to_the_Dochas_Code_of_Conduct_on_Images_and_Messages.pdf

IRONICAL FILMS & WEBSITES



Let's save Africa! - Gone wrong

About Michael and stereotypes (SAIH Norway)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbqA6o8_WCO



Barbie Savior

Barbie Savior. Jesus. Adventures. Africa. Two worlds. One love. Babies. Beauty. Not qualified. Called. 20 years young. It's not about me...but it kind of is.

www.instagram.com/barbiesavior



How My Dream Gap Year In Europe Turned Into A Nightmare

Tale of one woman's fight for survival, deep in the heart of Cornwall

www.buzzfeed.com/genamourbarrett/how-my-dream-gap-year-in-europe-turned-into-a-nightmare?

DIFFERENTIATED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE WORLD



How Not to Be Ignorant About the World | Hans and Ola Rosling

How much do you know about the world? (TED Talks)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sm5xF-UYgdg



LINKS & INFO II/II



ALTERNATIVE REPORTING



The World's Best News

Stories of hope and change from the developing world.

www.facebook.com/TheWorldsBestNews



everydayafrica

Everyday Africa Photographers living and working in Africa

www.instagram.com/everydayafrica/

