



unicef 

for every child

Europe and Central Asia

REFUGEE RESPONSE- SAFEGUARDING AND COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

*Photo: On 13 March 2022, Leona, nine, gazes into space as she holds her teddy bear at the Blue Dot hub in Sighetu Marmatiei in Romania. Leona and her mother Olga are waiting for transport to Bucharest, where they have friends.
Credit: UN0609836/ Adrian Holerga*

Safeguarding and Communications



Photo: A child therapist plays with Dasha, 4 as her bigger brothers Ilia, 11, (left), and Misha, 10, (not in picture) sit close by on March 16, 2022, inside a tent at a UNICEF-UNHCR Blue Dot centre at a refugee reception centre close to the Palanca border crossing in Moldova, near the Moldova-Ukraine border after they fled from the Ukrainian city of Odessa. Credit: UN0609214/ Siegfried Modola

When in contact with children and vulnerable populations, we must consider their best interests in everything that we do. In terms of communication and reporting, all images, sound recordings and text, including case studies, quotes from children and use of children's details in media have to comply with this fundamental principle.

First and foremost, any person working directly or indirectly in and around children, shall commit to not taking photos of a child or vulnerable adult

that reveal their identity without their knowledge. Below, you will find our requirements for when and how consent must be obtained. **For any material used for public purposes (websites, social media channels or other publications), consent is required.** More information about consent can be found below.

All communication and reporting on children must adhere to the following guidelines¹:

This process begins with building a rapport with children and their families before any formal interviewing is vital. Videographers should spend time getting to know the potential subjects of their stories before formally approaching them with an ask to share their story. Be mindful of people being approached by multiple entities (media, other UN/NGO) asking them to tell their story again and again and consider whether this retelling can cause additional trauma to the subject of the story. Make sure that the subject is interested in continuing to engage and will not be negatively impacted in doing so.

- 1 | Represent children with dignity and respect:** All children have the right to be treated with respect and dignity. At all times, we will take steps to meet our obligations for the best interest of the child.
- 2 | Do no harm:** Questions, attitudes and comments that are judgmental, insensitive to cultural values, cause embarrassment or humiliation, or that reactivate trauma for a child must be avoided. Involving children in a story that puts them at risk of familial, community or political backlash must be avoided. The best interests of the child are to be protected over any other consideration (including advocacy for children's issues).

¹ These safeguarding standards are based on the End Violence Against Children Global Partnership's [Child Safeguarding and Communications Guidelines](#), of which UNICEF is a partner.



*Photo: On 8 April 2022, eleven-year-old Anastasia comforts her six-year-old brother Andrei, as they prepare to leave the UNICEF-supported Blue Dot centre at Sighetu Marmăției, Romania for their next destination.
Credit: UN0627046/ Alex Nicodim*

3 | Privacy and confidentiality: For the security of the child, use of the child's full name or information that identifies the child's place of residence are not permitted. If the child is known to be a victim of abuse, their face cannot be shown. If a young person is over 18 and wishes to have their identifying information shared, we must take all precautions to ensure this is an informed decision. Children's wishes not to have something reported must be respected and complied with. Children's right to participate should also be taken into consideration. However, the best interest of the child should take precedence. When sending images electronically to outside parties, file labels must not reveal identifying information about a child.

4 | Consent: Before approaching the family for consent, check and reconfirm with local staff, check especially with Child Protection team, before filming a child to make sure the situation allows for that, and all necessary

safeguarding standards are followed. Make sure to receive a formal signed consent from anyone being filmed (or their legal guardian in case of a child).

The child and the child's parent or guardian must give permission for images or text about the child/family to be used and explanation of the intended purpose explained. Children and parents/guardians must never be coerced into providing consent.

Group photos: As with individual photographs, it should be explained to the group of adults and/or children what the photographs will be used for and consent should come from individuals in the group. Any individual who does not wish to be part of the photo, should be able to opt out, without it negatively impacting their participation in the event.

General Photos: When using images of children in crowd scenes where it may be difficult or impossible to get consent, please consider:

- Would they expect their photograph or video to be taken at the event?
Is it a public space/event?
- Is it unlikely that anyone would object to the photo or video being taken?

When taking photos or video at a planned event, please let people know in advance that this will happen and how the images will be used so that they can opt out of the event or notify the organizers that they do not want their image used.

5 | Authenticity: Images and text should accurately portray the child in their environment. 'Staging' of stories is not acceptable (where children/ community members are asked to adopt a contrived, artificial position/ stance or tell a story that is not their own).

Communications should seek to understand and present the child's reality and context. Accurate captions should accompany all photos. (Please note, guidelines for taking quality photos are listed in the Communications Guidelines.) When taking a photo, please consider that images can be cropped.

6 | Empowerment: Communications should aim to give as much control as possible to the children. Children's views about their situation and their direct quotes should be used as much as possible. Practices that give control over production of the story to children are encouraged; for example, children to record images in the way they choose, children acting as journalists, youth as paid reporters, etc.

Reporting back to children after the story or photo or video has been published is strongly encouraged as a mark of respect and to increase children's understanding about how their input has been used.

7 | Storage of images: Images taken by staff for work purposes of children or vulnerable adults should be shared only through password protected sites viewable only by staff.

On and off the field, the protection of children and refugees is our first priority. Any written, recorded, or multimedia content should retain children's privacy and present them in a dignified way. Please ensure that content and/or captions include none of the following information:

- **For content and captions, do not include any of the following:**
 - Last name
 - Medical information
 - Location information (nothing more specific than city)
- School details (including name of school)
 - Any identifying personal information
- For images, do not include any of the following:
 - Any identifying information in the background (including the name of a school, hospital, village, etc.) or in the child's hands
 - Any identifying information on the subject's clothes

- Please ensure that:
 - ✓ The subject is appropriately clothed
 - ✓ There are no naked people in the background or foreground
 - ✓ There are no genitals or private body parts exposed
 - ✓ Subjects are not posed sexually
 - ✓ Subjects are not asked to show any wound or disability
- The image or video also cannot contain any inappropriate matter in the subject or in the background including children holding a gun, person threatening a child, inappropriate words on clothing, children with flies on faces, or humans defecating/urinating.

Is the subject of this content sensitive and does it include a child or adult who has experienced any of the following: HIV or AIDS, child marriage, child labour, sexual exploitation, trafficking, domestic violence, corporal punishment, child soldier, children in conflict with the law?

If so, you must ensure the following requirements, in addition to the above, are met:

- Image/video has been captured in a way that naturally obscures visual identity through silhouetting, shadows, obscuring the face, creative use of focus. Obscuring the face in postprocessing is not acceptable.
- The first name only is used, or the name is changed to a culturally appropriate pseudonym, to be decided based on the best interest of the child.
- Beyond the consent given, an adult closest to the story has considered any potential harm to the person and has approved the sharing of the story, and/or noted any limitations in sharing the story.

Stories and images about beneficiaries



*Photo: On 16 March 2022, 4-year-old Marc sits with his mother Veronica from Odesa at the UNICEF Blue Dot hub at the Palanca border point, Republic of Moldova.
Credit: UN0609292/ UNICEF*

When producing a story, either in written or audio-visual form, everyone should abide to strict standards. These include (but are not limited to):

- Keep the interests of children/beneficiaries in mind at all times. The best interest of each child is to be protected over any other consideration. Always prioritise survivors' rights to dignity, privacy, confidentiality, safety, security and protection from harm or retribution and consider if and how a story could potentially violate any of these core principles.
- Do not dwell on the negative aspects of the child's history, excessively exposing traumas and socio-economic difficulties. The best interests of each child/beneficiary(ies) are to be protected over any other consideration.

- Do not victimise the child/ beneficiary(ies) as if he or she were a passive actor in the more general context at hand. Avoid using a judgemental language (e.g. avoid mentioning contextual factors, such as what he/she was wearing, where he/she was) and victimising terminology. Always focus on the strength and resilience of the child, portraying how they made the situation better for themselves through their resourcefulness.
- Do not use fabricated quotes or quotes that come off as self-congratulatory. E.g. "Thanks to UNICEF, I am now [happier/safer/etc.]" However, do talk about the programme and organisation(s) that reached and supported the child.
- If applicable, give voice to children and adolescents and promote their opinions.
- Always change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as vulnerable, unless an adult beneficiary, a parent, or a guardian gives fully informed consent in consultation with the child. When talking about a survivor of violence, never report details that could put the survivor at further risk. Names, photographs, or other identifying information of survivors, their family members, or even at times those actors who are providing assistance (depending on the context), should not be used. Any use of images should present the subject in a way that upholds their dignity.
- Reflect the values, operational principles, intentions, and identity of your organisation, and never disregard the values, principles, intentions, and identity of your partners, including UNICEF.
- When interviewing a survivor of violence, specific ethical and safety considerations should be taken into account, including: ensuring a secure and private setting in which the survivor is comfortable, avoiding questions, attitudes, or comments that are insensitive to cultural values or probing into details that reactivate pain and grief, respecting the survivors and his/her privacy, providing detailed and complete information about the topics to be covered, and fully informing the survivor on how the information will be used.

When using pictures and visual representations of children and beneficiaries, make sure to have a **signed consent form** that allows their use and publication. For minors, release forms will need to be signed by a parent or legal guardian. However, release forms are not sufficient from an ethical perspective: whoever signs the form, as well as the child portrayed in the images, will need to be fully informed of how the images will be used and where they will be published. Remember that all visual representations of a beneficiary will need to portray him or her in full respect of their dignity and rights. Never portray someone in a way you would not want to be portrayed. When in doubt, show the photos and videos to the beneficiaries and ask for their feedback.

Interviews with beneficiaries

Interviews with highly vulnerable people are always discouraged, and should only be conducted by professionals with an adequate level of experience, after the interviewee (or her/his legal representative) has given her/his informed consent to the interview. In order to safeguard interviewees' interests, the presence of a psychologist or Child Protection Officer throughout the interview should always be considered, and is mandatory for particularly vulnerable beneficiaries. In addition, individual interviews with survivors of GBV are not recommended. If survivors want to tell their stories, additional considerations should be taken into account. Please refer to <https://gbvaor.net/coordination-tools-and-resources/advocacy#engaging-media>. Telling the story of a survivor of violence should be done only in specific circumstances and after discussing with the relevant focal point from UNICEF.

Below follows a **checklist** everyone should follow when conducting interviews:

1. Ask if you can record the interview. In case anything happens, recordings will be used as evidence of the interviewer's adherence to guidelines and standards.
2. Make sure to thank the beneficiaries and appreciate the effort they are doing.
3. Tell them how the interview will be used and where materials will be published.
4. Tell them the topics you want to ask about. Ask them if they wish to go through the questions together. In case the interviewee is a child, always go through the questions with a parent or legal guardian.
5. Make sure they know that if they don't feel comfortable, they can take a break or stop the interview.
6. Tell them that they can choose not to answer questions.
7. Tell them that if they want they can have someone they trust with them, as well as a psychologist or protection staff.
8. Read the conversation and act accordingly.
9. Be professional at all times, but without forgetting to show empathy and tact. You will need to be genuinely interested in what they are saying by actively listening to the conversation. Do not spend the interview thinking about follow up questions.
10. When using a vendor (videographers, translators, etc.), make sure to work with vetted professionals who are trained in humanitarian communication principles and are closely familiar with UNICEF's safeguarding guidelines

Media Requests

UNICEF Supported Project Media Requests

- When contacted by journalists/media organizations requiring statements/ interviews related to projects supported by UNICEF and donors:
- **Inform UNICEF & Office** (Communication Specialist and Partnership focal point) as soon as the request is received.
- Make sure to **follow the UNICEF/donor visibility guidelines** (proper mention, visibility).
 - **Share draft** versions of articles/interviews to be published for review and clearance.
 - **Share outcome** (article, video interview, etc.) with UNICEF for further outreach amplification.

Beneficiary Interview Requests

In case you are contacted directly by a journalist/media agency requesting an interview with beneficiaries:

- **Inform UNICEF's** Communication Specialist/partnership focal point as soon as the request is received.
- Make necessary arrangements for a **Child Protection Officer** to be present during the interview.

- **Identify and inform beneficiaries** prior to the arranged meeting and remind them of their right to not share any personal/private information or recall painful events, as well as their right to stop the interview at any point if they feel uncomfortable.
- Collect signed **consent forms**.
- **Remind journalists of guidelines and limitations** when it comes to interacting with beneficiaries.
 - We suggest that **names and locations** are changed in order to protect the identity/privacy of the beneficiary.
- **Share outcome** (article, video interview, etc.) with UNICEF and relevant partners for further outreach purposes.
- * Even if a journalist or a media agency claim that they have been instructed by UNICEF to contact a partner/beneficiary directly, partners must inform UNICEF teams prior to any further arrangements. It is highly unlikely that UNICEF's Response team will forward a request without consulting you first.

Ethical Guidelines

<https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/ethical-guidelines>

Consent Form

link form when hosted