

DZI

Deutsches Zentralinstitut
für soziale Fragen

VENRO

VERBAND ENTWICKLUNGSPOLITIK
UND HUMANITÄRE HILFE

Guidelines

Ethics in Fundraising Videos



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INTRODUCTION

Background

In today's media age, fundraising videos are an important component of non-profit organisations' work. The possibilities range from image videos and project films to appeals for donations on websites, social media platforms or TV and movie screens. Fundraising videos can help increase public awareness about humanitarian and developmental projects and various other charitable activities, and they provide donors with an opportunity to fulfil their philanthropic interests. Many charities rely on effective fundraising work in order to raise the funds needed to fulfil their aims. Over the last few years, the way in which aid agencies ask for public support has changed dramatically. Print campaigns are increasingly supplemented or replaced by digital media, with video advertising, especially on the Internet and in social networks, becoming more and more popular. Whereas in the past, the options were limited to television and cinema advertising, today's era of Internet technology, social media and virtual reality opens up countless new possibilities for online video advertising. Advertising films can be integrated into corporate or external websites using video banners. Other options include posting advertising films on video platforms (such as YouTube or Vimeo), via short message services (such as Twitter), messengers (such as WhatsApp or Telegram) or in social networks (such as Facebook).

One of the primary goals of charitable organisations is to help people in need. Part of this mission is to inform stakeholders and the general public as to why this work is important and how it can be supported. The organisations are faced with the difficult task of conveying a truthful picture of the world, of informing and also of stirring the debate, while also trying to encourage donations. And one question that will inevitably arise during the process is: What are the limits of what can and cannot be shown in a fundraising video? For example, the use of shocking footage of people in extreme situations is already the subject of controversial debate in media reporting, and this applies no less to fundraising advertising.

As far as the guidelines of the German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI) and VENRO are concerned, fundraising may use the power of images and seize the opportunity to emotionally engage donors. At the same time, fundraising advertising must respect certain ethical limits. There are three dimensions to be taken into account: 1.) the obligation of the organisation to carry out all fundraising in

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an open and honest manner with a reasonable use of funds and in the interest of the beneficiaries, 2.) the target audience, i.e. the donors, must not be misled or put under undue pressure by advertising films and 3.) the dignity of the depicted persons, irrespective of their life situation, must be respected, and their story should preferably be embedded in a factual context. If it is possible to reconcile these dimensions instead of weighing them against each other, the product – in this case the fundraising video – will enhance trust between the donors, beneficiaries and fundraising organisations in the long term.

Purpose of these guidelines

It is the aim of these guidelines to provide a practical orientation and offer guidance to organisations planning and implementing video advertising campaigns. They specify the relevant rules as set up by the DZI and VENRO so as to facilitate their comprehension and their application in practice. They are, however, not a substitution of these rules, and they will not become part of the original standards. On the basis of the sets of rules of DZI and VENRO and the experience of numerous non-governmental organisations, examples were collected and categorised. It is the intention of VENRO and DZI to reconcile the interests and ethical views of the audience, organisations and beneficiaries of fundraising videos and to help improve the production process in general. It is not the aim of these ethical guidelines to catalogue and assess all conceivable types of fundraising videos, nor to promote a practice of avoidance or standardisation of image use when it comes to distress and suffering, illnesses or the cruelty of war, expulsion and exploitation. Rather, their aim is to demonstrate how film footage and various stylistic devices can be used in fundraising campaigns and the communication with donors to create trust and preserve the dignity of the filmed persons.

These guidelines are primarily intended as a working resource and guide to illustrate the existing principles of the VENRO Code and the DZI Guidelines in an easily understandable and applicable manner by means of examples. A main focus will be on videos produced for the general public. This includes appeals for donations, but also advertising and image films, project videos and short films in news reporting style produced for websites, social networks, television or cinema. The aforementioned formats are to be distinguished from films produced for documentation purposes or training videos aimed at an expert audience (e.g. doctors).

Creation of these guidelines

These guidelines were developed in a participatory process by PR and fundraising experts of development and humanitarian aid organisations of different sizes as well as employees of the VENRO head office and DZI. They draw on the positive experience of the guidelines »Ethics in Fundraising Mailings« published by DZI and VENRO in 2013. These new guidelines are primarily aimed at employees and executives of PR and fundraising departments in non-governmental organisations whose responsibility it is to ensure ethical fundraising practices. At the same time, they are intended to encourage service providers involved in the creation and production of fundraising videos to deal with this topic, as they act as important advisors for many organisations.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

These guidelines make clear by means of examples in the category »... is ok when« how fundraising videos take on their function of advertising in an ethically acceptable manner. However, they also show that from the perspectives of DZI and VENRO, fundraising advertising may collide with ethical principles. The degree of ethical deviation corresponds with the degree that features of the problematic category can be observed. Design elements under the heading »We consider as unacceptable ...« are to be rejected.

For practical reasons, these guidelines are divided into the chapters »Visual language«, »Text/Language« and »Post-production«. The purpose of this division is to facilitate the search for individual elements. However, in view of the ethical evaluation of a finished fundraising video, it should be borne in mind that these three aspects will ultimately influence each other.

STANDARDS AND CODES

The most important reference points for these guidelines are the sets of rules of DZI and VENRO. Specifically, these guidelines are based on the principles of the VENRO Code for Development-Related Public Relations and on the DZI Seal of Approval Guidelines.

Excerpt of the relevant sections from the
DZI Seal of Approval Guidelines

DZI Seal of Approval Standard

3.a – Clarity

- (1) Fundraising materials and public relations are clear, comprehensible and informative.
- (2) Misleading depictions in texts and images are omitted. Any danger of confusion with the name or the appearance of other organizations is avoided. Information about the way that funds are used is not hidden.

3.b – Truthfulness

- (1) Fundraising and public relations adequately and truthfully reflect the work of the organization and its main focal points.
- (2) The information which is provided both in texts and in images accurately reproduces reality. No false, deceptive or exaggerated details are circulated.

3.c – Objectivity

- (1) Fundraising and public relations present in an informative and well-justified way the importance of the chosen causes and the suitability of the planned measures for best supporting these causes.
- (2) Inappropriately emotionalizing or pressurizing depictions in texts and images are omitted. Depictions are inappropriate when, for example, donors are made to feel guilty about the cause of, or the resolution to, the charitable cause; or when a time-pressured urgency to donate is assumed but not sufficiently justified or objectively presented, and as a result, potential donors' ability to form a judgement and make a decision is impaired.

3.d – Openness

Information which is spread through fundraising and public relations is transparent and conveys an accurate portrait of the organization and its work.

3.e – Respect for dignity

- (1) Depictions in texts and images which are degrading or humiliating for those affected, or which violate their dignity in another way, are omitted.
- (2) Topics or wordings which either discriminate against someone or could be understood as discriminating are left out.
- (3) Neither a selection (like you might find in a catalogue) of individuals, nor a random »exchange« of individuals to be supported, will be available.
- (4) The depiction of distress and suffering of those affected is proportionate to the information conveyed about the plans to be carried out and measures to be taken by the advertizing organization as well as – as far as can be presented – with the participation of those affected. A degrading, dishonest or sensationalist depiction of distress and suffering is omitted.

3.f Dispensation with unfair advertizing

- (1) The organization behaves fairly and respectfully with regard to other organizations. Defamatory or misleading statements as well as comparative statements which degrade other organizations are not included.
 - (2) Statements about the quality of the organization itself are accompanied by clear, comprehensible information.
- (Source: <http://www.dzi.de/dzi-institut/downloads>)

Excerpts of the relevant sections from the
VENRO Codes

The VENRO Code of Conduct on Transparency, Organisational Management and Monitoring Chapter »Communication«

The fundraising activities undertaken by VENRO members with regard to development co-operation and humanitarian aid are professional, qualified and ethically sound. Fundraising must be credible and honest, both in regard to the instruments used to procure funds as well as the contents that are communicated. ... VENRO members expressly exclude fundraising methods that are immoral or are based on the malicious deception of donors.

The VENRO Code of Conduct for Development-Related Public Relations

Obligation regarding dignity

Development-related public relations values the dignity of persons in a particular way: It assumes that people on all continents are the subjects of their actions, and not the objects of aid. It demonstrates this in all forms of expression such as word, image and sound.

Obligation regarding constructive changes

Development-related public relations does not exhaust itself with illustrating individual suffering or general misery. It describes the causes and effects of poor living conditions, exploitation and repression, and identifies possible ways of achieving constructive change. This also includes measures designed to improve the political, economic and social framework conditions in industrial nations in favour of the countries in the South. Development-related public relations shows whether one's own performance corresponds with the objectives described in the VENRO statutes.

Obligation regarding openness and truth

Development-related public relations ensures truthful and factual presentations, and makes its own value background, motives and actions transparent. It conveys a general sense of openness to various possible actions and wants to support people to be able to decide between the various approaches for solutions. Honest and credible development-related public relations does not generally make allegations that would indicate a specific development strategy, a certain form of aid or a certain development-pedagogical approach as the only solution. It realistically assesses the effectiveness of its own efforts and the work of the NGO in general. In addition, it is concerned with providing the appropriate presentation of government development aid and the changing longer-term challenges for development policy.

Obligation regarding appropriate communication tools

Development-related public relations addresses itself to emotion and reason. It uses simplification to illustrate complex facts, but it does not outthink or strain the target group with words or images. This also includes a need to avoid contents or formulations that may be understood as discriminating. It opens up opportunities for communication, and is therefore incompatible with strategic methods designed to blindside people with indoctrinating opinions. The communication tools that are used cannot breach the concepts of partnership, openness and truth. Development-related public relations is not morally conceited, takes into account the local societal situation and thus endeavours to identify the interaction between life in our society and the problems of developing countries wherever possible.

Obligation regarding women-appropriate representation

Gender equality is a part of stable human development. Development-related public relations takes care to ensure that the life situation of women is generally taken into account, that women and their concerns are suitably represented in texts and images, and that they are not stereotypically represented as dependent victims. It aims for creating greater awareness of the unequal gender-specific distribution of resources, co-determination and power, and wants to make a contribution to changing established modes of behaviour and structures that disdain women.

Obligation regarding generally applicable guidelines

Development-related public relations must be shaped in accordance with the applicable principle of journalistic and ethical honesty. It is based on guidelines that were defined at the international (Code d'Athènes) and national (press code of conduct) level.

(Source: <http://venro.org/english/venro-codes/>)

Other sets of rules

There are also national and international codes of self-regulation related to fundraising, press and public relation activities that should be known when producing fundraising videos.

- **German Fundraising Association:**
19 basic principles of good ethical fundraising practice (German only)
https://www.dfrv.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Broschuere_Ethikregeln_Kommentare.pdf
- **German PR Council:**
The Communication Code
<http://drpr-online.de/kodizes/komm-kodex>
- **German Advertising Standards Council:**
Code of conduct on advertising with and for children and adolescents in television, radio and telemedia
https://www.werberat.de/sites/default/files/uploads/media/german_advertising_standards_council_code_of_conduct_on_advertising_to_children_2017_0.pdf
- **International Press Code »Code d’Athène«**
https://www.ipra.org/static/media/uploads/pdfs/ipra_code_of_athens.pdf
- **German Press Council: German Press Code**
http://www.presserat.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads_Dateien/Pressekodex2017english.pdf

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Already in the planning phase of a fundraising video project, several aspects need to be considered in order to ensure an ethically sound creation and use of the image material. These are cornerstones of quality assurance, which may vary in nature depending on the organisation's field of activity. Generally, however, care must be taken to ensure that the dignity, safety and participation of the depicted persons is guaranteed and that their personal data and image rights are protected. Moreover, creating a culture of open and respectful communication is crucial.

This is already expressed in the knowledge that shooting a film (which is often a time-consuming process) can have a drastic effect on the habits of those filmed as well as long-term consequences for their lives or status in the community. The proportionality of the effort involved – also from a technical point of view – must be taken into account from the outset.

Aid agencies should provide written rules of conduct for those involved in the production of fundraising videos. This may include providing information on the purpose of filming, questions of child protection, codes of conduct, guidelines for reporters or declarations of consent. According to the European Data Protection Regulation (DSGVO – <https://gdpr-info.eu>), a clear and unambiguous declaration of consent is required, depending on the use of the produced image material and the collected personal data, which specifies an explicit consent for each possible use. Blanket approvals are not valid. The declaration of consent must be written in clear and plain language so that the person depicted is able to assess the use and effects of releasing the image material. The person depicted shall have the right to withdraw his or her consent. In the case of children and adolescents, the additional consent of a legal guardian is required.

In order to protect the persons recorded on video and in sound and to minimise the risk of negative consequences, special safety measures should be applied. In some cases, the identities of those filmed should or must not be revealed. The individual aid agencies also have manuals available on how to deal with identifying features and changes of locations or names.

In the planning phase, organisations must also carefully assess the risks for project staff or interpreters. Finally, the question of compensation or remuneration of the local participants needs to be addressed prior to filming.

Post-production also includes sharing the finished films with the depicted persons where possible. The depicted persons are entitled to view and listen to the final product created with their help.

Quality assurance for advertising films also includes avoiding prejudices and stereotypes through the perspectives, texts and images used. Where socially disadvantaged groups are depicted in advertising, educational or information materials, organisations should

have a clear strategy in place to avoid or eliminate stereotypes. Here, the checklist for the prevention of racism developed by the association Berliner Entwicklungspolitischer Ratschlag (BER) can help provide guidance (in German: <http://eineweltstadt.berlin/wie-wir-arbeiten/rassismuskritik/checklisten-zur-vermeidung-von-rassismen>). For further advice please see the publications of Neue Deutsche Medienmacher e.V.

Finally, the aspect of storage and backup of visual and audio footage should be taken into consideration, including its distribution and potential use outside the originator's control. The question as to how long the video material is to be stored and reused and whether there will be a possibility of removing it from the Internet should be thought of and answered at the very beginning.

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The depiction of persons

... is ok when:

- ... the dignity of the persons depicted is protected, for example by avoiding from above perspectives where the viewer mostly looks down on the depicted. This includes showing people as active agents and not as passive victims, dealing sensitively with cultural contexts and taboos and avoiding stereotypes.
- ... the portrayed living conditions are depicted in a realistic way. This may involve showing people in difficult situations, e.g. a person that has to get by with little food and dirty clothes or that it is suffering from an illness or disability.
- ... the visual information provided about persons is documentary and conveys a truthful picture of their living conditions, for example by avoiding that poverty is aestheticised or cultivated (e.g. by deliberately removing modern clothing from the image section).
- ... it is clear why the organisation works with the depicted person, or that the depicted person with his or her story is an example of the organisation's work. This is especially true for fundraising videos that focus on personal stories (see also chapter »Post-production« in these guidelines).
- ... the footage serves the purpose of realistically conveying an example of the organisation's work and is used to illustrate an authentic human interest story; when the earnest consideration of people's concerns and the reasons behind complex living conditions and dependencies become more transparent and comprehensible through the film.

... is becoming problematic when:

- ... the dignity of the persons depicted is compromised by the images used (for example by showing them ill, humiliated by others or obviously ashamed of their situation).
- ... people are no longer shown authentically, but above all as helpless victims in order to intensify emotions and generate pity (e.g. suffering, desperate, abandoned, crying, severely malnourished, very poor, partly undressed).
- ... individuals are presented as direct recipients of a donation, in particular when the footage is combined with a direct appeal or when a direct connection is established

between a possible donation and the depicted person, i.e., when it is suggested that a dedicated donation is made to this particular person without dissolving this impression in the fundraising video.

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... when people in difficult circumstances are exposed and depicted in a degrading manner (for example by showing them naked or with severe anatomic distortions) and are offended in their dignity. The resulting emotional pressure on the viewer is intensified even more when this kind of visual language is accompanied by an appeal for donations.
- ... footage of people in extreme situations, provided that it is merely aimed at evoking a shock effect in the viewer (e.g. footage of dying people, use of violence or its direct consequences). This also applies to truthful and authentic depictions which are related to the work of the organisation.
- ... footage that manipulates or distorts the real situation (including exaggerations and false assumptions).
- ... images that make viewers feel guilty or even responsible for the suffering and misery of others, putting them under undue pressure (for example using images of dead people to illustrate the refugee crisis).
- ... footage that may endanger and/or stigmatise the persons depicted.
- ... a focus on individual persons or footage of private homes when the filmed persons have not given their consent under the general right of personality to use the material (see in particular sections 22 and 23 of the German Art Copyright Act [KunstUrhG] and section 201a of the German Criminal Code [StGB]), and, in the case of children or adolescents, when the legal guardians have not given their consent.
- ... when the depicted were not, or not sufficiently, informed about the intended use.

Direct look of the protagonist to the viewer

... is ok when:

- ... the depiction can be characterised as: appropriate, respecting people's dignity, moderate, sensitive, on eye level.

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... the person portrayed in the film has a connection to the story told and the narrative serves the purpose of giving a truthful example of the organisation's work. In this case, it is permissible to capture people with sad or thoughtful facial expressions as far as this is in line with the content of the exemplary story or when the film gives an explanation for the facial expression.

... piteous scenes are provided with a context which mitigates their effects and relates them to circumstances like, for example, illness.

... is becoming problematic when:

... the direct look is a pleading, help-seeking gaze intended to evoke strong pity or when the scene gives the impression of misery without any context.

... the misery of a particular person is brought into focus without providing a context to explain that this is only an example in the sense of »pars pro toto«.

... the look is alienated and thus intensified with the help of other attention-grabbing post-production effects, such as light, colour, shadows, back-ground music or sound effects, creating a dark and depressing atmosphere.

... the context shows that this single person is subject to an existential threat.

... a person's name is given together with information on his or her personality so as to create the impression that the donation will directly go to this person.

... a direct, pitiful look is accompanied by an appeal for donations.

We consider as unacceptable:

... a direct, pleading or help-seeking look of the protagonist to the viewer in combination with other reinforcing elements, such as images of people in extreme situations (desperately crying, abused), appealing to the emotions of potential donors in a disproportionate manner by the combination of stylistic devices.

Using footage of children and adolescents

... is ok when:

... the children's and adolescents' right to special protection is respected.

... children and adolescents are supported by the organisation, that is, when minors are addressed by the organisation's work.

... is becoming problematic when:

- ... the footage harms the interests of children or adolescents or exploits their inexperience.
- ... a fundraising film repeatedly and predominantly shows children with sad and piteous facial expressions, which means that a child is being »used« to build up/influct pressure on the audience.
- ... children and adolescents, while being potential beneficiaries of the organisation's work, are used for advertising purposes without any indication of how the organisation provides support to minors.

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... when images of children and adolescents occur in an advertising film without any reference to the organisation's field of activity, just in order to provoke pity, but minors do not receive any support.
- ... filming in which children and adolescents are subjected to undue stress (e.g. long shooting times).
- ... when images of children and adolescents are used without their express consent and that of their legal guardians (e.g. secret recordings in intimate or difficult life situations).
- ... fundraising videos showing minors in dangerous situations without good reason.
- ... the representation of children and adolescents in a sexualised context.
- ... promotional films in which minors are directly asked to encourage third parties to make a donation, or in which minors directly ask for a donation.
- ... promotional films in which minors are stigmatised (e.g. as victims of sexual abuse, child soldiers).

The depiction of distress and suffering**... is ok when:**

- ... the relevance and connection to the topic are clearly explained.
- ... proposals for action are given. In addition to pointing out problematic situations, social causes should also be addressed and, if possible, pragmatic, action-oriented

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ideas for dealing with distress and suffering should be presented, so that the viewers are not given an exclusively pessimistic view of the world.

- ... the portrayal of real, difficult living conditions is essential to illustrate an organisation's specific activities and funding measures, for example through a fundraising video about freezing and starving inhabitants of a town affected by war or a natural disaster.
- ... the effects of drastic images of people in distress are mitigated by showing the success of the help provided, for example by means of a pre-post comparison.
- ... the right balance is achieved, without resorting to sensationalism. Footage of distress and suffering is justified because, and when, it shows circumstances and situations which call for urgent solutions.

... is becoming problematic when:

- ... extreme distress and suffering is shown, such as severely malnourished people, images of children with swollen bellies, protruding ribs, flies landing on the eyes or untreated open wounds.
- ... situations are shown where exaggerations or misinterpretations are possible.
- ... images romanticise or aestheticise need and misery, for example a sunset over a landfill site, or a can of coke, an electricity pole or a modern T-shirt deliberately removed from the image section.

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... scenarios or stories of distress and suffering that are constructed to generate attention.
- ... footage that contains deliberate disinformation. When footage is manipulated in such a way that a situation of need is presented more dramatically than it actually is in order to attract more attention and thus drive more donations.
- ... when scenes of extreme distress and suffering are shown in rapid succession and in big close up (e.g. children with swollen bellies, protruding ribs, flies landing on the eyes, untreated open wounds).

Images of war, violence, terror, expulsion, destruction, exploitation and oppression

... are ok when:

- ... circumstances and situations are shown that actually take place and that are not artificially dramatised.
- ... reality is not distorted in the portrayed scenes on war, violence, destruction etc., for example by showing serious crimes disproportionately often.
- ... the depiction is necessary to raise awareness of the problem in society.
- ... it is the objective of an organisation to mobilise public opinion against violence and develop strategies on how to prevent war, terror, violence etc. in the future.

... are becoming problematic when:

- ... violence and war are depicted to attract attention, but don't have any direct relevance to the organisation's current aid portfolio.
- ... the depictions strongly emphasise violent aspects, for instance beatings, mutilation or humiliation.
- ... the depiction of violence and terror may worsen conflicts.
- ... the informational value of an incident is sacrificed in favour of thrill or voyeurism.
- ... real persons are filmed in dangerous situations or during war, e.g. using footage of war correspondents.

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... when acts of violence are given a forum in advertising films, for example because shocking scenes heighten the viewer's attention level and hence public awareness.
- ... when the form of presentation glorifies or trivialises war, violence, terrorism, terror, expulsion, destruction, exploitation and oppression or violates human dignity. This also applies to animated or virtual representations.
- ... when traumatised people who have not expressly agreed to be filmed are shown in advertising films.
- ... when real, but barbaric (brutal) situations are shown that will trigger feelings of horror among viewers, such as executions or the sight of dismembered bodies.

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- ... when cruel scenes are shown in a seemingly endless loop, teaching viewers that they are just powerless witnesses of horror (e.g. scenes of badly injured or starving people, rolling tanks or burning houses).
- ... when violent, aggressive or antisocial behaviour is stimulated or condoned.

The depiction of illness and death

... is ok when:

- ... the illness plays a role in the organisation's aid portfolio and is presented authentically in all its facets.
- ... it is important to highlight problematic situations the organisation seeks to solve.
- ... persons with infectious diseases (e.g. Ebola) are shown anonymously, protecting their identity.

... is becoming problematic when:

- ... illness and death are depicted without context and used as a kind of »constant companion« (wallpaper) to trigger emotions.
- ... the dignity of the people depicted is offended, for example by showing them malnourished or with disfiguring diseases.
- ... people may be stigmatised by being depicted, e.g. people affected by HIV/AIDS.

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... when persons are shown desperately suffering (e.g. screaming in pain) in an advertising film.
- ... images that could trigger a reaction of shock in the viewer (e.g. images of accident victims, people who are severely disfigured by disease).
- ... to show the moment when a person dies.
- ... when a strong focus is placed on illness and death in order to get more attention by highlighting misfortune and suffering.
- ... when images of dead people who have fallen victim to illness, conflict or natural disasters are shown, even if the footage is authentic.
- ... when a scene is changed on purpose to make the depicted look more vulnerable, for example when parents or medical staff are asked to leave the scene during filming.

The use of actors or animated/virtual characters

... is ok when:

- ... the re-enacted, animated or virtual scenes present the facts and the story in an authentic way.
- ... it is clear what is documentary and what is played.
- ... the real person, e.g. a victim of abuse and violence, is not to be shown to protect his or her identity.
- ... nothing is depicted which in reality does not or did not exist.
- ... it is made clear to the viewer that the fundraising film features actors or that scenes have been re-enacted.

... is becoming problematic when:

- ... facts are changed such that situations are portrayed in a more positive or negative light than in reality.
- ... fictional characters interact with real people and it is no longer recognisable to outsiders who is real. A mixed form (documentation and fiction) can be quite useful to communicate difficult topics, provided that its use is evident.
- ... actors or fictional characters are used to increase emotionalisation.
- ... the use of fictional characters perpetuates stereotypes and clichés.

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... when the use of actors is not announced or made clear.
- ... when re-enacted scenes significantly change or distort the authentic character of the story.
- ... when animation is used to ridicule serious topics, for example by heavily caricaturing vulnerable protagonists.

TEXT/LANGUAGE

Statements of urgency

... are ok when:

... the urgency communicated is comprehensible, plausible and believable, for example in the case of acute emergency assistance.

... are becoming problematic when:

... urgent expressions are used cumulatively, like, for example »it's urgent«, »immediately«, »help«, »this very day« or »desperately«.

... the urgency communicated is comprehensible, plausible and believable, but the images shown in this context appear pressurising (e.g. images of extreme distress and suffering, such as children with swollen bellies or diseases).

... a repeated direct appeal/plea is implicitly aimed at causing a bad conscience (»Please, give him a chance!«).

... textual contradictions arise, for example in the event of an urgent appeal for donations, where an organisation is already working on the spot and it must be assumed that the depicted persons have already received help within the scope of the project.

... Are considered ethically unacceptable:

... when the idea is conveyed to the viewer that he or she bears a personal responsibility for alleviating the suffering or even a personal guilt for its persistence (e.g. by formulations such as »Without your help this nightmare will continue«, »Do you really want to let this happen ...?«).

... when viewers are repeatedly asked to donate »now« or »immediately«, while emotionally touching images (e.g. pictures of emaciated children) are shown.

Wordings like »donating and saving lives«

... are ok when:

- ... the organisation is engaged in acute lifesaving interventions, for example in the fields of emergency and disaster relief and if there is an acute emergency situation.
- ... they are used rather cautiously as general phrases.
- ... they are used objectively in the context of medium- and long-term lifesaving and life-preserving activities with an appropriate chain of effects.

... are becoming problematic when:

- ... they suggest unrealistic, distorted or exaggerated causalities.
- ... in the context of a medium- and long-term lifesaving and life-preserving activity, the goal of »lifesaving« is semantically emphasized.
- ... the organisation is engaged in acute lifesaving interventions and there is an acute emergency situation, while the images shown in this context appear pressurising (e.g. several shocking images in a row).

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... incorrect claims as to a lifesaving effect.
- ... when the individual donor is directly addressed suggesting he or she bears an immediate responsibility for life-and-death consequences.
- ... when such wordings convey to the viewer the idea that he or she bears an immediate, personal responsibility for a single fate, the appeal for donations is linked to statements such as »Your donation saves lives« and the images shown in this context (e.g. of a child strongly affected by illness) appear pressurising.

Narrator's voice/spoken word recordings

... is ok when:

- ... the narrative account of the experiences/living conditions of those affected is authentic: »They told us«, »We saw«, »We spoke with« (ideally supported by images of the relevant scene).

... is becoming problematic when:

- ... the circumstances are strongly exaggerated and the spoken text merely serves to reinforce the (visual) impression of distress and suffering (e.g. »Poverty nightmare«, »She's afraid she's next«).
- ... the narrator's voice is charged with emotion, e.g. urgently appealing to the audience, amplifying deep sounds or applying an extremely dramatising tonality.
- ... when the spoken text intensifies the impression of suffering of a particular individual.

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... frightening or depressing situations, which are reinforced by the linguistic presentation (dramatic choice of words and intonation).
- ... language characterised by prejudice or discrimination.
- ... when the organisation itself does not understand the spoken text (e.g. rare foreign languages or dialects).

Simplifications

... are ok when:

- ... it can be assumed that the thematic context is common knowledge.
- ... complicated situations are explained in an easily comprehensible and descriptive way, provided that the content is limited to brief information.
- ... a precise language is chosen to ensure that the descriptions are easily understandable, focusing on the essentials.

... are becoming problematic when:

- ... contents are simplified/reduced in a way that the context cannot be established, leading to wrong assumptions.
- ... stylistic exaggerations are made like »thousands will be helped« and it remains unclear whether this number will really be achieved.
- ... they result in secondary aspects being in the foreground.
- ... completely unrelated sentences are arranged in a random order.

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... a passive depiction of persons which turns them into mere objects of assistance.
- ... when the information about the reasons of the suffering provided in this context does not correspond with the actual context.

Forms of address in the context of child sponsorship**... are ok when:**

- ... the viewer is addressed from the perspective of the impersonal 3rd person (for example in formulations like »Become a sponsor!«, »Do you want to become a sponsor?«).
- ... it is clear that individual children or their family environments are presented as examples of financial assistance in the form of child sponsorships without creating the impression that the request for a donation is related to the particular child in question.

... are becoming problematic when:

- ... the impression is created as if the child presented is himself/herself addressing the audience (for example by formulations like »Can you become my sponsor?« or »Become my sponsor!«).
- ... a film conveys the impression that the donor can immediately take over the sponsorship of the depicted child.
- ... the nature and the extent of the assistance provided by a sponsorship is presented in a misleading or untruthful way.

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... when the request to take over a sponsorship is voiced by children or adolescents.

News reporting style

... is ok when:

- ... it serves the purpose of providing a descriptive insight into the living conditions of other people.
- ... an individual case is described to illustrate general truths.
- ... the facts described are truthful and authentic.
- ... the people described really exist (for the protection of the individuals their names can be changed or omitted).

... is becoming problematic when:

- ... the news reporting style is misused to create strong emotional pressure or fears by means of exaggerations, superlatives, extreme presentations etc.
- ... an emergency situation is exclusively reduced to a personalised example.
- ... the news reporting style is the only stylistic device used in the video and the video does not include any information as to the actual facts or the general situation.
- ... no real information is provided (e.g. if universal phrases are used to create a news reporting character) and the spoken text is combined with a sequence of highly emotional pictures.

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... when the problematic characteristics described are combined in a cumulative manner.

Anticipated thanks

... are ok when:

- ... they are used in a formulaic way in the framework of an established culture of politeness, even if it is not clear whether the viewer will give a donation (e.g. »Thank you for your help«, »Thank you for your interest«).

... are becoming problematic when:

... they occur unreasonably frequently, implicitly aimed at causing a bad conscience (e.g. »Thank you for giving him a chance!«).

We consider as unacceptable:

... a repeated expression of gratitude linked to life-and-death consequences, for example by formulations such as »Thank you for saving lives with your donation«, »Thank you that these children do not have to suffer from hunger«.

Mentioning names/personalised fundraising videos**... is ok when:**

... an incidence is described using the exemplary story of a particular person, provided it is authentic.

... the name assigned is the real name of the person in question and is meant to underline the reliability and authenticity of the story.

... a pseudonym is given together with an indication that the real name has been changed.

... is becoming problematic when:

... the person is merely an interchangeable »example«, but it is not clear whether the person is a beneficiary of the planned help.

... a particular person may be perceived as being a direct recipient of the donation, while this is not the case.

We consider as unacceptable:

... when a child or vulnerable person can be identified by its name, and thus, contacted or visited.

... when it is claimed that a particular person is a direct recipient of the donation, while this is not the case.

Statements concerning the work of the organisation

... are ok when:

... the focus is on the organisation's work »on the case« and the use of the funds (the concrete measures) in connection with its own value background.

... are becoming problematic when:

... the organisation's work is portrayed in an exaggerated/distorted way.

We consider as unacceptable:

... when the statements about the work of the organisation are untrue.

POST-PRODUCTION

Use of stock footage

... is ok when:

... the consent of those affected has been obtained, the film scenes used are authentic and the actual field of work or an existing project of the organisation is shown.

... is becoming problematic when:

... the depicted context is merely inspired by the real circumstances and it is not indicated that what is shown does not correspond to the actual situation.

We consider as unacceptable:

... when the filmed persons have not given their approval for usage of the material and they have not been informed about the intended use.

... when a completely changed context is shown without pointing this out to the filmed persons and the viewers.

Focus on individual life stories

... is ok when:

... the story was chosen because many people can relate to it and this is communicated accordingly.

... the exemplary life story helps to present complex contexts in an easily comprehensible and descriptive way.

... is becoming problematic when:

... the depicted person(s) may have to fear disadvantages within their community as a result of the (participation in the) film shooting.

POST-PRODUCTION

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... an advertising film that highlights the individual fate of a (particularly vulnerable) person and, in this context, uses post-production techniques to change the narrative linguistically and visually in such a way that the image conveyed no longer corresponds to the actual circumstances.
- ... when the particular circumstances of a person's life, which are clearly different from those of other persons, are presented as if this individual fate applied to a large number of people.

Mood, tonality of voice and sounds

... are ok when:

- ... the mood and tonality reflect the real situation.
- ... atmospheric descriptions make the fundraising video appear vivid and lively, but the tonality is not used as a stimulating element.

... are becoming problematic when:

- ... a tonality is chosen that changes the effect of the narrative in such a way that the spoken text appeals more to the emotions.

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... when the mood/tonality does not match the reality, thus painting a false picture of the situation.

Technical effects

... are ok when:

- ... it is clear that the technical effects (e.g. slow motion, flashback) are used as a stylistic device to tell an informative story or to make complex contexts easily comprehensible.
- ... as a stylistic device, they do not distort the facts.

... technical changes are made only insofar as they illustrate the experienced reality in the footage (e.g. through colour correction, time lapse, slow motion, switching from black and white to colour etc.).

... are becoming problematic when:

... stylistic devices are only used for the sake of sensationalism.

... they contribute to distorting the truth.

... real events are depicted in such a way that conventional recordings appear more dramatic and threatening to the audience than they actually were (e.g. when a particularly thrilling, charged atmosphere is created by synthetic sounds or sound effects).

We consider as unacceptable:

... when technical effects that are not recognisable as such are presented as truth.

... when effects manipulate real images in such a way that a new imagery is created.

Voice-over

... is ok when:

... it is used to translate foreign voice recordings.

... the voice-over is not dramatised and it is clear that the voice belongs to a speaker.

... where possible, women are spoken by female voices, men by male voices and children by children's voices.

... is becoming problematic when:

... the tone of the off-camera commentary appears emotionally charged rather than neutral.

... the translation of the original sound clip is shortened, not preserving the exact wording.

... the original sound clip is cut randomly in the post-production process due to a lack of language skills.

POST-PRODUCTION

We consider as unacceptable:

... when the foreign-language original is not faithfully reproduced (translated) and the spoken message is changed.

Film editing

... is ok when:

... the film has to be shortened.

... sequences from different film locations are combined.

... sequences are removed to preserve the dignity of the filmed persons (e.g. dead, severely suffering or naked people).

... sequences are cut out that would put the viewer under undue pressure.

... is becoming problematic when:

... the editing results in a confusing succession of scenes.

... the pace and rhythm of the film is changed to such an extent that the film's message clearly deviates from the real events, painting a picture that differs from the actual situation.

We consider as unacceptable:

... when the process clearly changes the original story or fate of a person and the narration no longer reflects the true situation.

... when statements are intentionally altered through the editing process and the viewer is deliberately deceived.

Use of external (purchased) footage

... is ok when:

... reliable sources, such as »news« material are used to describe a specific situation and it is not suggested that the footage shows the work of the advertising organisation.

... is becoming problematic when:

... the truthfulness of the purchased material cannot be verified.

We consider as unacceptable:

... when the purchased image/film material creates the impression that an organisation operates in certain countries and sectors while this is not the case.

Technical image editing

... is ok when:

... it does not change the meaning of the images (e.g. cropping).

... colours are balanced, for example because the footage is too bright or dark, in order to make info text easy to read.

... identifying features are removed, e.g. because they must not be visible (name tags or logos).

... the image is only mirrored.

... is becoming problematic when:

... post-editing of the image distorts (e.g. dramatises) the real situation, even if the editing makes the image more interesting for the film.

We consider as unacceptable:

... when technical changes manipulate the visual language such that the narrative no longer corresponds to the facts.

Captions and subtitles

... are ok when:

... the subtitles help to better understand the film, explain scenarios and give protagonists a name.

... they indicate, for example, that a scene has been re-enacted and/or that the footage has been retrieved from an archive or external sources.

POST-PRODUCTION

... a foreign language is spoken or parts of the film are difficult to understand.

... **are becoming problematic when:**

... the subtitles are ambiguous or even confusing.

We consider as unacceptable:

... when captions/subtitles contain discriminatory language, incorrect translations or other verifiable untruths.

... when they are meant to put the audience under undue pressure (for example by formulations such as »Donate now to save this child from starvation«). See section »Text/Language«.

Music

... **is ok when:**

... it helps enhance the effect of the images without the need for text and its use does not evoke feelings of oppressiveness or guilt.

... **is becoming problematic when:**

... in combination with the images used or an emotionalising language, it evokes a negative mood such as grief or fear in the viewer, or makes the viewer feel guilty about the cause or the persistence of the suffering.

... **Original sound clips/sound collages**

... **are ok when:**

... protagonists get a chance to speak and the situation is presented in an authentic and objective way.

... rendered in such a way that they do not evoke feelings of oppressiveness or guilt.

... **are becoming problematic when:**

... it is not clear to the viewer in which context the sound clips were recorded.

... emotional and drastic sounds are implicitly aimed at causing a bad conscience.

We consider as unacceptable:

- ... when sound clips are attributed to persons who have not expressed them (e.g. »Please help me!«).
- ... when a sound clip does not correspond to the truth, for example, when it is claimed that cholera has broken out in a crisis region, even though this is not the case.
- ... when a translation does not render the content of a sound clip correctly in accordance with journalistic standards.

VENRO is the umbrella organisation of development and humanitarian aid non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Germany. The association was founded in 1995 and comprises around 130 organisations. Their backgrounds lie in private and church-related development co-operation, humanitarian aid as well as development education, public relations and advocacy.

VENRO's central goal is achieving justice in globalisation, and in particular eradicating global poverty. The association works towards realising human rights and conserving natural resources.

VENRO

- represents the interests of the development and humanitarian NGOs in the political sphere
- strengthens the role of NGOs and civil society in development policy making
- represents the interests of the developing countries and of poor population groups
- raises public awareness for development topics

VENRO – Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid NGOs
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Since its foundation in the year 1893, the **German Central Institute for Social Issues** has been documenting information from the fields of social work, social pedagogy and the fundraising sector.

- The DZI Donor Advisory Service provides information on the integrity of nearly 1,100 organisations, it compiles tips for donors on a variety of topics, and it awards the DZI Seal of Approval as a guarantee of trustworthiness in the fundraising sector.
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