

How To Communicate The World:

A Social Media Guide For Volunteers and Travelers



Volunteering programs are expanding rapidly. An increasing number of people spend their holidays or gap years travelling, while at the same time doing something meaningful and different. The world of social media poses both challenges and opportunities. This is your go-to guide before and during your trip. Use these four guiding principles to ensure that you avoid the erosion of dignity and respect the right to privacy while documenting your experiences abroad.

Principle 1: Promote Dignity

Promoting dignity is often ignored once you set foot in another country, particularly developing countries. This often comes from sweeping generalizations of entire people groups, cultures, and countries.

Avoid using words that demoralize or further propagate stereotypes. You have the responsibility and power to make sure that what you write and post does not deprive the dignity of the people you interact with. Always keep in mind that people are not tourist attractions.



Principle 3: Question Your Intentions

Why do you travel and volunteer? Is it for yourself or do you really want to make a difference? Your intentions might affect how you present your experiences and surroundings on social media, for instance by representing the context you are in as more "exotic" and foreign than it might be.

Ask yourself why you are sharing what you are sharing. Are you the most relevant person in this setting? Good intentions, such as raising awareness of the issues you are seeing, or raising funds for the organization you are volunteering with, is no excuse to disregard people's privacy or dignity.



Principle 2: Gain Informed Consent

Informed consent is a key element in responsible portrayal of others on social media. Respect other people's privacy and ask for permission if you want to take photos and share them on social media or elsewhere.

Avoid taking pictures of people in vulnerable or degrading positions, including hospitals and other health care facilities. Specific care is needed when taking and sharing photographs of and with children, involving the consent of their parents, caretakers or guardians, while also listening to and respecting the child's voice and right to be heard.



Principle 4: Use Your Chance - Bring Down Stereotypes

When you travel you have two choices: 1. Tell your friends and family a stereotypical story, confirming their assumptions instead of challenging them. 2. Give them nuanced information, talk about complexities, or tell something different than the one-sided story about poverty and pity.

Use your chance to tell your friends and stalkers on social media the stories that are yet to be told. Portray people in ways that can enhance the feeling of solidarity and connection. A good way forward is to ask the local experts what kind of stories from their life, hometown, or country they would like to share with the world.



checklist

before you post on social media:

- ✓ Ask yourself: "What is my intention with sharing this post?"
- ✓ Gain informed consent from the person in the picture and/or the caretaker. If you can't explain why you are taking photo, find a translator
- ✓ Know the name and background of the people portrayed
- ✓ Offer the person in the photo a copy
- ✓ Avoid sweeping and simplified generalizations, include informative text with names, place, etc.
- ✓ Be respectful of different cultures and traditions
- ✓ Ask yourself: "Would I have appreciated to be portrayed in the same manner?"
- ✓ Avoid sensitive, vulnerable situations and locations such as hospitals and health clinics
- ✓ Don't portray yourself as the hero in the story conveyed
- ✓ Challenge the perceptions, bring down stereotypes!

Check if your organization have their own guidelines or a Code of Conduct for imagery. If they don't, share this guide and encourage them to use it!

For more information and resources, visit www.radiaid.com!