

GRAM VIKAS
GUIDELINES FOR ETHICAL IMAGE PRODUCTION & USE



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Gram Vikas is a community development organisation guided by the vision of an equitable and sustainable society where people live in peace with dignity. We partner with historically marginalised, and disadvantaged communities to build their capabilities and strengthen their institutions to empower them to advance their lives.

Images play a vital role in our documentation, reporting, storytelling and other communication about our work. It helps us do effective messaging about what we do, why we do it, our partnerships, and their impact. The word images in this document, refer to both still (photographs) and moving (videos).

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that the images taken from the Gram Vikas partner villages safeguard the dignity of the people portrayed, honours their safety, and respect their autonomy.

1. APPLICABILITY OF CODE

From 1 May 2021, all staff, contractors, volunteers, interns, partner representatives, and media who take images from Gram Vikas partner villages will be bound by these guidelines.

The guidelines will apply to images taken for all purposes, including reporting, social, digital, and print media communication, research, evaluation, fundraising, donor, supporter, and public engagement.

The guidelines will apply even if the images are taken for archival purposes and not intended for immediate publication.

All images taken under this policy will be governed by the Creative Commons license Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0

International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). Please learn about the license terms [here](#).

The Gram Vikas Ethical Images Production & Use Guidelines will be applicable in the following instances.

- All use of Gram Vikas images by those outside of Gram Vikas will be governed by the [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) licensing conditions. The conditions laid out in this policy shall apply in all cases.
- The [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) licensing conditions will be applicable for all Gram Vikas sourced images i.e., all pictures taken from Gram Vikas platforms or partner villages.
- Gram Vikas sourced images are those where a person, individuals, and/or their location becomes identifiable. This does not apply to images of landscapes or nature or where people are not identifiable and where there are no clear geographical markers for identifying the location.
- Informed Consent is not applicable for images taken before 1 May 2021 but the [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) licensing conditions will apply.

2. COLLECTING IMAGES

Gram Vikas Communications Team will manage all photographic or video assignments. All staff of Gram Vikas, who is the point of contact or coordinating external visitors to Gram Vikas field areas, will inform the Communications Team about the date of taking images and the purposes for which it will be used.

Photographers or filmmakers should show a sample of the photos taken to the people whose images are taken at the end of the assignment to give them a real sense of the portrayal.

This will hold true for all staff, and anyone else taking images from Gram Vikas partner villages, and whose visit to the village is due to their association with Gram Vikas.

Interns and volunteers will need to sign an agreement, on the date of joining, stating that they fully understand and consent to these guidelines.

See Annexure 1 for the form for the agreement.

2.1. Images of Children

Images of children who are fully or partially naked or sexually suggestive cannot be taken. These also cannot feature as part of an image where the child is not necessarily the main subject of the image. This holds irrespective of the sex of the child.

2.2. Images that Stereotype

Images should honour the dignity of the people featured. This means that people should not be shown as victims or objects of desire or portrayed obscenely. Images of practices that reduce the dignity of people, such as open defecation, will not be taken.

Many of the communities Gram Vikas works with are historically marginalised, such as the Scheduled Tribe communities, whose portrayal demands special consideration and mindfulness to avoid stereotypical romanticisation of their lives, looks, costumes, ornaments, or culture.

2.3. Protecting the Privacy of Vulnerable People

Survivors of sexual exploitation, gender-based violence, or abuse should not be identified as such, unless it is an objective of a project with informed written consent.

An individual's status as a person living with HIV, TB, or any other serious health conditions must not be revealed without written consent.

Care must be taken to not exploit an individual's vulnerability while photographing at times of trauma or grief or in times of crisis.

2.4. Content Collection during Natural Disasters

Many of Gram Vikas partner villages face and survive natural disasters. In such times, communication aids our efforts to gather support for disaster response and relief measures. But these are also times when photographers and filmmakers have to tell the story without compromising the commitment to honour the dignity of the affected communities.

Gram Vikas adheres to the following stipulation from the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief:

“In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects. Respect for the disaster victim as an equal partner in action should never be lost. In our public information we shall portray an objective image of the disaster situation where the capacities and aspirations of disaster victims are highlighted, and not just their vulnerabilities and fears. While we will cooperate with the media in order to enhance public response, we will not allow external or internal demands for publicity to take precedence over the principle of maximising overall relief assistance. We will avoid competing with other disaster response agencies for media coverage in situations where such coverage may be to the detriment of the service provided to the beneficiaries or to the security of our staff or the beneficiaries.”

3. INFORMED CONSENT

Gram Vikas staff or representatives accompanying an external photographer or filmmaker will administer the Gram Vikas Consent Form to individuals, parents or guardians of children, or groups whose images are being taken.

The consent form has to be read out exactly as written and in full. The administrator should ask the person(s) if they have fully understood the content of the consent form.

People should be given time to absorb, respond, or seek clarifications before they give consent. This should be actively encouraged. They should not be hurried or pressured into giving consent due to inadequate planning or preparation.

If the consent is discussed at a group or community meeting, the formal leader of the group or a person chosen by the group can sign the form or give recorded verbal consent.

Requests for consent must be carried out in local languages. The signature can also include a thumb impression.

See Annexure 2 for Gram Vikas Informed Consent Form.

3.1. Consent for Images of Children

When images are taken of those below 18 years of age, consent has to be taken from their parent or legal guardian.

Images from Gram Vikas Residential Schools or other schools in our villages will require prior planning of at least a month in advance. This is to make sure that signed parental consent is given in paper or voice recorded a week before the day of the photography or taking of the video. The Communication Team will need to confirm the consent and then approve the assignment.

The signed parental consent can also include a thumb impression.

3.2. Right to Refusal

People have to be informed that they have a right to refuse to have their images taken. They should be reassured that a refusal will not lead to an absence of support from Gram Vikas or its staff or prevention from

participating or benefitting from the programmes in their community, village, or habitation.

Images cannot be taken if people refuse even after the approval from the Communication Team. The right to refuse, of those whose images are taken, is absolute. People can also change their minds about prior consent given and refuse to have their images taken.

People have the right to ask the photographer or filmmaker to delete their images as the assignment progresses or at the end of it. The photographer or filmmaker cannot nudge, coerce, negotiate or influence the people in any way to allow for their images to be taken.

4. IMAGE USE & DISTRIBUTION

Images can only be used for the purposes for which they were taken and consent obtained. Photographers or filmmakers must always explain the use of images, if possible, show examples.

Images from Gram Vikas partner villages cannot be used for sale or other commercial purposes.

Images or information that have any chance of resulting in discrimination of the subject (for example by disclosing someone's medical or humanitarian status by including their image) should not be used.

However, Gram Vikas cannot fully guarantee about the different ways in which the images will be used once they are published. This should be made clear to those whose images are taken. False promises should not be given or suggested.

4.1. Image Use in Personal Social Media Accounts

Images can be used in the personal social media accounts of the photographers or filmmakers only if they have permission from the people whose images are taken.

However, images of children below 18 years of age, from Gram Vikas partner villages, cannot be shared on personal social media accounts of anyone who has visited or accessed the children due to their association with the organisation in any capacity.

4.3. Manipulation of Images

Authenticity should be maintained in any digital process involving image manipulation. The following points should always be considered.

Changing colour: In altering the colours of an image, no changes should be made that alter the concept of the image. For example, images should not be changed to duller or sepia tones to make the situation look worse than it is.

Cropping: Cropping must never be done in a way that alters the context or atmosphere of the image.

Enhancement: Enhancements should not alter the context of an image. For example, it is acceptable to remove a red eye from a photo but not to change the colour of water in an image to make it look worse. A viewer should be able to rely on them as 'credible evidence' and proof that something happened at a certain time and place.

Editing: Film footage should not be edited in a way that changes the reality of the footage. Edited pieces should always accurately represent the story.

Transposing: Images should not be reversed as this does not represent the picture that was taken.

4.4. Use & Distribution of Children's Images

No information will be given out that will allow an external person to contact a child in an image. The location of the child or the child's surname should not be mentioned or given out.

4.5. Approval from Gram Vikas

Images chosen for the final publication will have to be submitted to the Gram Vikas Communication Team for consideration of accurate portrayal, adherence to the stated purpose of the assignment, and terms of use agreed upon before taking the images.

Those taking images are bound to make full disclosure about the complete set of images taken.

5. CREDITS

Photographers have to credit the photos from Gram Vikas partner villages in the following way: Photographers Name/Gram Vikas. If Gram Vikas uses images from a commissioned or freelance photographer, the photographer will be credited as mentioned above.

ANNEXURE 1

Agreement to 'Gram Vikas Ethical Image Production & Use Guidelines'

I hereby confirm that I, Person's Name, agree to adhere to the Gram Vikas Ethical Image Production & Use Guidelines.

I have come to Gram Vikas from Organisation's Name for the purpose of (state the purpose of visit - internship/volunteering/media etc.) from date to date.

I will grant Gram Vikas a non-exclusive license to use and permit others to use all footage taken on the trip for any purpose in perpetuity and will agree not to use the said footage in any way that would disparage or discredit Gram Vikas.

Gram Vikas undertakes to credit and instruct others to credit all footage and photos: Person's name/Gram Vikas. Gram Vikas and I retain rights to grant permission of use to appropriate third parties providing that this is in line with Gram Vikas's ethical image production & use guidelines.

I undertake to maintain confidentiality of all information I learn about Gram Vikas and its work. Gram Vikas can terminate this agreement if I commit a material breach of this agreement. I agree to comply with the Gram Vikas Ethical Image Production & Use policy at all times.

Signature	
Date	
Name of the person	

ANNEXURE 2

Form for Informed Consent

I, NAME OF THE PERSON/GROUP LEADER declare that I have understood the purpose of the captured photos and/or videos. I understand that the refusal will in no way (positively or negatively) affect the services received from Gram Vikas.

I hereby consent that Gram Vikas shall have the right to copyright, publish or use any photographs, video-recordings or other electronic media and/or sound recordings, or any part thereof, they have taken of me or GROUP NAME or NAME OF THE CHILD for any lawful purposes.

Date:

Signature:

Printed Name:

Event/Reason:

Location:

ANNEXURE 3

The following sections have been adapted from these sources:

Section 1.3. – [Code of Ethics](#), Photographers Without Borders

Section 2.4. - [The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#)

Section 4 - IMC Worldwide Group [Ethical Image Policy](#)

Section 4.3 - [Ethical Image Policy](#), Water Aid