

# SAFE STORYTELLING

*Best Practices for  
storytelling in a  
safe, ethical and  
honourable way*

# WHAT IS SAFE STORYTELLING AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT ?

- Telling someone's story without compromising their story, their security and their overall wellbeing – emotionally, mentally, psychologically.
- It's ethical storytelling – not merely to sensationalise and gain an audience but to authentically present someone's life to share their story in an honourable way.
- It should be an avenue for the person to feel a sense of release and never left to feel distress, vulnerable or exposed.
- It is important for the person who is sharing their story to trust you and to feel safe when sharing their story. If confidentiality is promised then it must be delivered.

# 4 KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER FOR SAFE STORYTELLING

- 1. The person's IDENTITY** – location, work, family, physical attributes
- 2. Key DESCRIPTORS** – details that can leave them compromised or exposed
- 3. CONFIDENTIALITY/Consent** – what is promised and agreed to
- 4. Including OTHER'S HISTORY and info in the stories** – how much is too much?



# **TELLING THE STORY**

## *HOW TO NAVIGATE THROUGH SECURITY-SENSITIVITY?*

### **I. IDENTITY**

- Keep it general.
- For names use initials but not according to their actual names – best option is always to use a generic pseudonym that does not resemble them at all.
- For location, step away from the actual location, city, district, and in some cases the actual country. Opt instead for the region or continent.
- Unless, it is part of the story – best to keep details of family out of it. If needed for the story, keep it general as well. But pay close attention, Family details and history can actually give away more details about a person than we realise.

# TELLING THE STORY *HOW TO NAVIGATE THROUGH SECURITY- SENSITIVITY?*

## 2. KEY DESCRIPTORS

- Refrain from using keywords and descriptions that can point to the person's identity – especially in cases when the person's job, or sphere of mission or ability is a very specialised or niche and using key descriptors can narrow down the possibilities to their identity.
  - Treat their current situation or history carefully when including it in the story - it matters that their dignity is preserved, and their vulnerability is looked after.
- Only use details and descriptions that will help move your story forward and tell their story better – things at are important to their story.

# TELLING THE STORY

## *HOW TO NAVIGATE THROUGH SECURITY- SENSITIVITY?*

### **3. CONFIDENTIALITY / CONSENT**

- Be very clear as to what you are promising and agreeing to when interviewing the person. If necessary, obtain a written consent.
  - Make sure both parties are clear what the parameters of confidentiality is. Do not promise to keep something out of the story and then go back on your word.
- Be sensitive on what their security concerns are – if you are aware that some details may compromise their security and they are not as cautious, take the initiative and advise them if you need to.
- Bring it to their attention and double check. You do have a responsibility to voice out your concern, even if they miss a point.

# TELLING THE STORY

## *HOW TO NAVIGATE THROUGH SECURITY-SENSITIVITY?*

### 4. OTHER'S HISTORY/INFO

- How much is too much? Be mindful of the details you include in your story
- Details about other people who work with the main subject can often give away a person's identity. Only use what is crucial to move your story forward and is important to the main story.
- Details about the surrounding area, culture, environment can all be tell-tale signs and offer insight to a person's identity.

For e.g., if you are simply mentioning a region/continent for the location of the main subject and not mentioning the actual country for security reasons, including specific cultural details may end up telling readers which country.

# SAFE STORYTELLING

*Remember, when telling a story within a missional context, you have as much responsibility to the subject you are telling about, as you do to your readers.*

*Take care to not compromise their story, their security and their overall wellbeing – emotionally, mentally, psychologically.*

*Make sure that you are ethical in your storytelling – not merely to sensationalise and gain an audience but to authentically present someone's life to share their story in an honourable way.*



THANK  
YOU