

Internal document name:	Communications & Transparency Policy	
Year created	Revised/Approved (Reledev Board)	Next review date
2020	May 22, 2020	May 2023

Purpose

This policy outlines Reledev Australia Limited's commitment to transparency in all its work. Reledev is accountable to all its stakeholders, partners, donors, members, volunteers, the general public, and host governments. Reledev is committed to building trust through open and accurate information.

Scope

This policy applies to anyone involved in Reledev activities, including but not limited to; Board members, staff, partner organisations, contractors, consultants & volunteers.

Definitions

Transparency is the quality of being open in all activities and providing honest information on all projects, including where and how they are undertaken.

Informed consent: Permission requested before collecting a story, image or data that ensures the person involved understands explains how it will be used

Fundraising: All activities geared towards generating financial support, promoting and requesting donations from individuals, businesses, charitable foundations, or governmental agencies.

Donors: Those who are financially contributing to Reledev's operations or projects

Overseas Development Partners (ODP): Organisations that Reledev works with, accompanies and supports to deliver humanitarian and development programs or activities.

Australian Partners: organisations who have an agreement with Reledev and jointly undertake projects in overseas development.

Australian Non-Government Cooperation Program (ANCP): A program of the Australian Government which provides Australian Aid to accredited organisations. Reledev is a base level accredited organisation of ANCP.

Policy principles

Dignified: The inherent dignity of each person is at the foundation of everything we do. The privacy, values, history, religion, language and culture of the people we portray is respected. People will be shown as active partners in the development process with hope for change and will not be portrayed as victims or passive recipients of assistance.

Honesty: We are truthful, clear, concise, consistent and informative in our communication. We depict people and their issues, experiences and lives accurately, respectfully and truthfully ensuring honest visual portrayals and stories

Transparent: We are transparent when communicating the results of our programs and the effectiveness of our work. We share appropriate information, in a timely and accessible manner, such as use of donated funds, financial statements and reports. We will not embellish, exaggerate, manipulate or alter meaning, facts, or context.

Representative Our materials provide clear examples of our work with communities, partners and participants, as well as the impact of this work.

Ethical We obtain information for communication materials ethically and responsibly. We follow the principle of “do no harm” and mitigate any potential risk of someone telling their story. Appropriate informed consent is always sought as a pre-requisite for the use of any content.

Accurate We ensure that materials used for fundraising accurately reflect the context, situation, proposed solution and meaning provided by our communities, partners, and participants, in Australia and overseas.

Policy commitments

Collecting, storing, and using personal stories and images

We treat partners, program participants and others with respect and dignity when collecting and sharing stories.

Informed consent

When possible, consent should be requested before obtaining images, video or other personal representations, allowing the person sufficient time to consider their decision.

When obtaining written permission, the person(s) involved understands:

- Why their image story or personal details are being collected.

- Where and how they will be used and over what period of time
- Their participation is voluntary, and will not be identified unless they consent. Children are never to be personally identified.
- They may withdraw consent at any time, Reledev will make all reasonable efforts to give effect to this request.

In the case of children, consent must be provided by an adult guardian and children will not be identified in any publication or use of material.

Project partners in Australia and overseas are compliant with this policy for obtaining appropriate permissions and on any

Recording of personal and visual information

Maintaining records includes

- The origins of images and case studies
- Permissions obtained for their use.
- Key details including name, age, location, date, program association and consent forms

Photo data (such as file labels, meta data or text descriptions) do not reveal information about a child that could identify them, such as their name or location. GPS tracking is turned off before taking photos.

Portrayal of individuals and their local context

Attention is given to collect, store and use only material that reflects a persons dignity and portray them in a way that does not demeans or could be detrimental to the people or communities involved.

We give particular attention to the following:

- Participants are portrayed in a context relevant to Reledev's work.
- All persons, but especially children are adequately clothed, and visual representations do not show them in a vulnerable, submissive, or sexually suggestive manner.
- Respect for indigenous peoples includes their unique history, diverse cultures and customs and protect their heritage.
- Advice is sought from schools where projects are being conducted to ensure permissions are sought and apply to each person.

The quality and accuracy of information including visual representations are confirmed with directly with the person or organisation wherever possible. This includes seeking of

feedback or approval about how information is reformulated/interpreted for the purpose of communication.

Working with Partners

Partner organisations receive training and support to ensure they understand and can comply with their obligations regarding transparency and communication.

Reledev works with each organisation to encourage development of their own policies and procedures in guaranteeing transparent and honest communication.

Reledev acknowledges that such requirements may be more difficult to achieve in developing countries and may appear to be 'out of sync' with normal practices and therefore take time to appreciate.

Reledev works with partners towards.

- a. Understanding how to communicate to the public and the own communities in an accurate and honest way.
- b. Use images, videos and stories in an ethical manner, by maintaining the dignity of those featured in the stories, ensuring personal consent is obtained and minimising any potential risks, especially in regards to children and vulnerable adults.
- c. Acknowledge the support of Australian Aid funds from ANCP and Reledev through following the guidelines provided by Reledev on public communications. This extends to all forms of communication of the funded project(s); such as use of social media handles, logos, acknowledgement in press releases, newsletters, annual reports, on websites and project material and signage.
- d. Develop an understanding of, and value for separation between development and non- development activities in fundraising and communication materials, particularly in relation to religious or other non-development activities.

Procedures

Reledev has procedures in place to ensure that project information, images, personal information, and stories are obtained and used according to ethical principles, and ACFID's Fundraising Charter

1. Project documents specify requirements for collecting visual images or footage including photographs and videos.

2. Reledev's Communications Compliance checklist assists to Reledev staff and personnel from other organisations who implement a Reledev project to use external communications in a way that complies with the principles of this policy.
3. The use of a Reledev approved image consent forms for all projects. All projects must, in principle seek to obtain prior written consent for the use of images taken during activities.
4. Where a project is with an ODP, keeping record of consent forms and method of storing of information is part of Reledev's spot checks when undertaking a monitoring trip.

Public access to information

Reporting to external stakeholders

Information about Reledev's projects and their partners are disclosed periodically through annual reports, regular updates via quarterly newsletters and social media posts to listed donors, members, partner organisations, volunteers and any interested individuals or other stakeholders.

Reledev publishes any project evaluations which have been completed during the course of the year. These evaluations are reported in on our yearly Annual Report, and summary articles are published on Reledev's website.

External evaluations are carried out at a minimum of every 3 years for international projects, the majority of funds are attributed to these projects. Copies of the full evaluation are available on request. A summary of the results are published in our Annual Reports and also on our website.

Annually: Annual and Financial Reports are published online following Reledev's Board approval. Both the Annual Report and Financial Report are sent directly to members, donors and interested stakeholders as part of the AGM invitation.

Access to these documents prior to the AGM allows member and donors to review the performance of the organisation and ask any questions about our performance during the AGM.

Quarterly: newsletters are sent out via email to subscribed lists.

Donors: with their EOFY receipts are given an update on significant projects

Monthly: updates to social media accounts with photos and posts on recent stories and activities.

The main method of disbursing this information to individuals is via email with the option to 'unsubscribe' if they no longer desire to be informed.

If a person does not use email, they may find the same information available on our website or they may request information to be sent to them with an alternative method.

Governance and Financial Reports

Reledev openly shares information on their governance structure, legal status and mission and values. Information on Reledev can be found at www.reledev.org.au or <https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/11a8c551-38af-e811-a963-000d3ad24077/profile>

Reledev is committed to transparency in financial management.

Reledev has an independent (external) accountant, and the Full Financial Statements and Financial Summary are audited annually by an external registered company auditor. The board reviews financial statements for final approval.

The full Financial Statements and Financial Summary which is part of the Annual Report are prepared in accordance with the requirements set out in Australia Council for International Development's (ACFID) code of conduct.

The reports are made available on Reledev's website, they are also submitted to relevant public authorities, the ACNC, ACFID.

Project work and partner information

Reledev requires implementing partners to hold similar transparency and communication standards. If an implementing partner does not have their own policy, they are required to adhere to similar standards and practices outlined in this policy.

Reledev seeks for all implementing partners to disclosing timely, relevant, and accurate information in an accessible format. In working with ODP Reledev verifies the transparent use of funds throughout the normal reporting cycle and every 3 years a project is visited during which time documents are checked for compliance with transparency and good practice standards.

Reledev requests partners to have annually externally audited Financial Statements and provide a copy to Reledev which is reviewed by a designated person on Reledev's Board.

Public promotion and fundraising

General promotion, fundraising events and financial appeals are carried out by Reledev's staff or Board members periodically. Such activities may include visual presentation of information about our projects, promotion of joint projects through Australian partners and pitches to corporate or funding bodies. End of Financial Year appeals are also carried out via e-communication.

All fundraising practices are developed in line with the

- Australian Charitable Fundraising Authority (CFA) of the NSW government
- the ACFID Fundraising Charter and
- ACNC Governance Standards.

Materials and presentations include the following information.

- Our identity including name, address and Australian Business Number will always be provided on materials.
- State the specific purpose for which funds are being raised.
- Clearly explain where and how funds will be used
- A declaration about how excess funds, if any will be spent,
- Any other information as required by appropriate Federal and State Legislation.

Acknowledging grants and income

Public disclosure of the sources of our funding is part of published Annual Financial Reports which includes the amount of funding contributed by the Australian Government through ANCP and other schemes as well as the sum of private donations to Reledev raised from Australian individuals and corporations.

All organisations who contribute funding to Reledev are acknowledged across digital platforms, and published / disbursed materials.

Overseas partner organisations

Reledev's Overseas Partner agreements and contracts including the reporting guidelines reflect Reledev's commitment to ANCP communication guidelines. Reledev works with overseas partners to build awareness of the need to acknowledge Reledev and Australian Aid.

Acknowledgement involves.

- Use of the Australian aid logo and wording.
- In-country publicity through use of logos and social media handles
- Ensuring program participants understand sources of support.
- Focusing on project outcomes and impact when promoting Australia's aid funded projects.

We work with partners to also be engaged with The Australian Government by:

- Encouraging visits by Australian officials;
- Keeping Australian Embassy personnel informed including invitations to key events.

Donation integrity

Donation acceptance

Prior to accepting donations over \$1000 or for regular on going donations of any size, Reledev ensures that the donor is a reputable individual or company and that it's ethics/values align with Reledev.

Under the requirements of the Counter- Terrorism Policy Reledev checks the identity of donors annually against DFAT's consolidated list.

The majority of Reledev's donations come from personal donors, many of these having had some past connection with Reledev as volunteers. The majority also donate on a monthly basis.

Reledev considers each donation individually, acceptance is based on the following.

- The donation source is identifiable, to at least be able to be screened against public listing with any terrorist or criminal lists.
- Not be from organisations or individuals whose values are in opposition to the values of Reledev or its related partner organisations.
- Receiving the donation must not damage the integrity and/or reputation of Reledev or its partner organisations.
- The potential for conflict of interest is considered prior to accepting a donation and raised with the Board should this be a concern.
- Must not impinge on Reledev's autonomy and independence in decision making including all Board members.
- Receipt of a grant or donation does not impose reporting and compliance obligations beyond Reledev's capacity to reasonably achieve or result in conditions which adversely affect Reledev's commitment to other donors/funding bodies.

Donation acknowledgement

Reledev on receiving a new donor or any individual (not regular) donation the receipt of the donation is acknowledged and a Tax Deductible Receipt is issued.

If thereafter the donor makes regular payments a Tax Deductible Receipt is issued in the first week of July, following the end of the Financial Year.

Donors also receive Reledev's updates via email which are issued quarterly and some project specific donors may receive a periodic update on the project's progress for which their donation is intended.

Donor privacy

Individual donors are not normally publicly disclosed and never without prior consent. Their details are used only for Reledev's internal use and not provided to any other third parties.

Donors normally receive periodic communication via email from Reledev but they may at anytime opt out of receiving any direct form of communications.

Donors are made aware of how they may contact Reledev or lodge a complaint via footers on these emails and on our website.

Request for further information

Anyone can request further information on Reledev's projects, policies and processes by any of the following:

- Online website contact us form
- Phone: 0422 368 876
- email to: email@reledev.org.au
- mail: PO Box 224, Kingsford NSW, 2032

How Reledev will respond to requests for information:

- The senders request will be acknowledged
- Reledev will confirm if the information requested is approved for distribution (Reledev takes privacy very seriously and will not disclose information that is private or confidential in nature)
- Gather requested information and send

Related policies

Privacy policy

Complaints policy

Child safeguarding policy.