

Guidelines for Writing

In everything we write—from stories, to captions to status updates—we represent Hands and we educate our readers about the work we do. So before publishing any of our written work we need to ensure that proper checks have been made and standards have been adhered to. You should reference this guide to aid you in any writing you do for Hand at Work in Africa. Thank you for helping us to tell God’s story of hope and healing in Africa.

Whether writing stories, captions, or status updates try to answer the questions: who, what, where, why. Be specific and don’t assume that your reader knows anything (i.e.) what Hands values are, why we work in a particular community, where a particular community is...

Language

- We use South Africa/UK English spelling and grammar. An exception would be articles that are country specific. For example: a story posted on the US webpage for US readers.
- For specifics, refer to: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/> and chose to use British/World English
- See the [Tips and Hints for Writers and Editors](#) document for more information

Voice

Our writing and communications come from three voices:

- Hands at Work – this is the most common voice used in our communications. We write as the voice of Hands, representing the organisation. This is the voice used in most of our online communications and written reports.
- First person – this voice may be used in testimonies from volunteers, visitors, teams, and other members of the Hands at Work community. First person voice should rarely be used in stories about Care Workers or children unless they have personally written or directly verbalised their story to someone else.
- George Snyman – George’s voice is heard directly from him in some of our communications on Twitter, Facebook, in ‘Letters from George’ newsletters, newsroom posts, and videos.

Terminology

INTERNAL AUDIENCE (HANDS FAMILY):

With internal communication we make assumptions and use terminology/lingo that is known to the Hands family. The message to both the external and internal audiences can be essentially the same, but the way that we present it is different.

As much as possible we want to direct our content at the audience it was intended for. Sharing

internal communication on a platforms like our general Facebook pages or the website can cause confusion.

One way to share internal communications would be to create a Facebook group with specific people to share things like Hands on Deck Newsletters, WatchWord Audio and other family matter with them. It can also be a great way to interact as a community.

Terminology that we use to a Hands Family audience (in the structure of Hands - offices, management teams).

- Community Based Organisation (CBO), Regional Support Team (RST), Service Centre (SC) - *use when needed, only use acronym when the term is appearing more than once in a paragraph or the document using the term is multiple pages and it is referred to often.*
- Hands Village, Hands Hub, Kachele Village (not Kachele Farm) - *use freely with an audience who has been to these places. For an audience who has not been then take the opportunity to explain what they are.*
- Primary Caregiver – *use freely with an internal audience who has an understanding of Hands. For external audiences, explain the role of the grandmothers, aunts, single fathers, and oldest siblings who become the primary givers of the children we care for.*

EXTERNAL AUDIENCE (FRIENDS AND FUTURE):

We are very carefully to make sure our communication to an external audience is accessible to everyone including Hands friends and future friends. We use terminology and concepts that are easily understood by someone with no knowledge of Hands at Work.

Terminology that we use to any audience (note capitalisation):

- **Life Centre** not Care Point/Care Centre/Feeding Point
- **Care Worker** not HBC Worker/Caregiver/Volunteer (note: Care Worker is 2 words, not 1). Although Volunteer is not the title we give to a Care Worker, we encourage you to educate our audience by describing them as someone who “volunteers their time”
- **home visits** not Home Based Care/Community Visits/Community Care Visits
- **local [Zambia] office** could work instead of Service Centre
- **Hands at Work office in ...** instead of International Office
- **community** or **village** or **slum** could work instead of Community Based Organisation
- **“supporting”** or **“providing”** not funding or sponsoring
- **partners** not donors
- **“child has been orphaned”** not “child is a double/single orphan”
- **orphaned and vulnerable children** - use when needed, but never use the acronym (OVC)
- **health care** not healthcare. Over the years British english has started to join the two words, but both are accepted. Since the definition differs between the 2 in North America

(healthcare is a system, health care refers to provider actions) and we have a broad audience that includes North Americans we keep the 2 words separate.

- We don't use the phrases '3 essential services' or '3 essential services program' in our external communication. Based on context you would choose from a number of alternative phrases. When generalising our "reaching" the child you can say "care", and when detail is needed then you explain it with detail. In some circumstances you could say: 'ensuring access to food, education and basic health care,' in others you might need an entire paragraph to explain the care given. This is ok, since one of our prime goals is to educate our audience on what proper 'care' of an orphaned child looks like.

Titles

- The story title should reflect the essence of the story. Often a "pull-out" from an impacting part of the story can work, or something that says it similarly. When making posts and titling stories make sure to **capitalise the first word and any other word that would otherwise be capitalised** (names of people or places, etc.). Not all the words should be capitalized for the simple reason that we often have longer titles that don't lend themselves to that style. **Periods are not to be used in a title** even if it forms a full sentence.

Attributing Authorship

- If the story is written about a general experience with Hands projects, highlighting a child, patient or volunteer and is written in the third person (i.e. "Maria is a volunteer in Swaziland") the writer should receive credit at the end of the piece in italics (i.e. *Dayla Loewen, a nurse from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, volunteered with Hands at Work for 3 months in Spring 2009.*)
- If the story is written in the first person (i.e. "I visited Swaziland") or is a personal account of an experience, the writer should be stated at the beginning of the piece in italics (i.e. *Dayla Loewen, a nurse from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, volunteered with Hands at Work for 3 months in Spring 2009. She spent a month in DRC.*)

Call to Action

- A "call to action" helps readers to make the next step in joining hands with us and our work. They often appear at the end of a story or article. Three simplified ways we strive to get people involved are: come, advocate and/or give. Different stories will lend themselves more readily to different calls to action. It is good to be more specific than less. For example, a story of a pastor and his experience would lend itself well to a link to come on a vision trip.

Consent

- Whenever possible, stories should have a consent form filled in by the Service Centre or whoever is getting the story and signed by the caregiver or child. This consent form states whether consent is given to 1. share their story, 2. share their name, 3. share their photo. The Communications Team should be informed if this form is filled in and what consent is given in order to inform what information is shared in the story being written. In the event that we do not have a consent form filled in, the details of the story will need to be changed so that the identification of those in the story is not recognisable.
- Disclosing HIV/AIDS status of a person alive or dead in a story needs to be done considerately and sensitively. If we have changed the details of the story so that their identification is not recognisable, then their status can and should be shared as it helps our readers to understand the unique challenges brought on by the epidemic of this disease that we are facing in our work in vulnerable communities.

Themes

Here are some key aspects about us that should be reflected in our communications as much as possible. Instead of reverting to a statement, time and effort should be given in order to explain exactly what that looks like in Hands at Work's model of care.

- **Hands at Work serves the church and works through the church.** The church should see themselves in us as much as possible.
- **Caring for the most vulnerable.** This means going to communities where HIV/AIDS, orphans and poverty are at overwhelming levels and support structures are very low. Institutional models of care are overwhelmed and unable to respond to the need, while communities need to be mobilised and equipped to respond.
- **Hands at Work's role in stirring up and supporting local communities.** This vision needs to be cast over and over again. We identify local Christian leaders within vulnerable communities who are already demonstrating a passion to serve the poor and care for orphaned and vulnerable children. We support those leaders in organising local volunteers to serve those in need in their community and begin a long-term relationship to increase the community's capacity to provide care in an effective and holistic manner.
- **Caring holistically.** The word 'adoption' can be confusing but the concept is what we want to portray in our communications. "With the concern and urgency of a parent, local care workers volunteer their time to find and care for those most in need. Through regular home visits, Care Workers ensure that these vulnerable children remain in homes within their community and have access to basic health care, food and education."
- **The audience's role.** "African leaders are reaching out to care but they need your help."

Captioning Photos

Photos leave a memorable impression on people. And our captioning of photos gives us a powerful opportunity to inform others about what we do.

Consider entering this information for each photo (who, what, where, why)

- **Where** it was taken: location, community name, country (i.e.) Hands at Work office near Gondola in Mozambique.
- Explanation of **who** is in photo and **what** is going on (i.e.) Loveness, who is volunteering her time cooking a meal everyday for vulnerable children in her community, tells me that she works not for man, for if she was she would have quit long ago, but she works for God.
- **Why** it is relevant (i.e.) Bushbuckridge is a homeland community formed during apartheid with little to no employment opportunities so men often stay away from their families working in mines for months at a time.