

MEDIA POLICY

MERCY HANDS FOR HUMANITARIAN AID

1. Scope and Purpose

This media policy is intended to provide a guide to staff interaction with members of the media. This policy is designed to ensure that any comments made to the media are consistent and in accordance with Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid policy.

Media coverage of the work and activities of MH and its staff can provide a valuable opportunity to promote the work of the organization. However, any contact between MH staff and the media carries the risk that MH will be exposed to negative scrutiny or misrepresentation, perhaps unintentionally.

This policy outlines the procedures to be followed by MH staff when interacting with the media.

2. Applicability and Target Groups

The policy applies to all MH staff. This includes permanent staff, temporary staff, contractors, volunteers, and work experience staff. All MH staff must comply with this policy. Managers should ensure that all relevant staff members know about this policy and how to apply it.

If anything in this policy is unclear, or you are unsure about how to apply the policy, contact the person listed on the cover page of this policy.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, all representatives of media organizations, including reporters, researchers, managers and technical staff, are referred to as journalists.

The media includes newspapers, magazines, journals, bulletins, newsletters, radio programs, television programs and electronic media such as online journals, online news websites including alternative news websites, weblogs, podcasts, electronic newsletters, electronic noticeboards and social media sites.

4. Responsibility of Managing Media Liaison

The Public Relations Manager is responsible for managing all liaison between staff and the media. In particular, the Public Relations Manager manages media enquiries from media outlets, writes and distributes media releases on behalf of MH, develops and executes media strategies for the handling of major announcements or policy changes, monitors media reporting and briefs the Executive Director (ED) and relevant Directors on pertinent media reports.

If you have any questions about this policy or want to find out who has been delegated to speak to the media on any given subject or require media training, please contact the Public Relations Manager.

The current Public Relations Manager is Duaa Falah, who can be contacted on +964(0)7724210176 or duaa.falah@mercyhands.org.

5. Standard Operating Procedure

5.1 Media enquiries and requests for filming and recording

Any media enquiry – whether seeking comment or information, or permission to take a photograph or produce an audio or video recording of MH staff and/or beneficiaries – should be directed to the Public Relations Manager. The Public Relations Manager is responsible for liaising with the media to obtain details of their enquiry, provide an authorized response to the journalist and, where appropriate, facilitate an interview with a MH spokesperson.

Who is authorized to speak to the media depends upon the type of media enquiry, as outlined below. The Public Relations Manager will obtain approval from the Executive Director as appropriate and advise staff if they have been authorized to speak to the media.

Anyone authorized to provide media comment should follow the relevant protocols in this policy.

5.2 Publicly available information of a general nature

All staff are authorized to provide to the media basic publicly available information such as copies of MH brochures and general information about MH programs.

Staff should only provide such factual information and avoid making any comment or opinion.

5.3 Enquiries about humanitarian affairs

Staff who are experts in their particular field (accredited or otherwise) may in certain circumstances provide comment to the media, but only if approved first by the Executive Director.

Such authorization might be an ongoing authorization specific to a position holder. Alternatively, the authorization might be for a restricted period of time or in relation to a restricted topic area or both.

When media comment is limited to general information including the promotion of MH, such as outreach and project locations, staff who are experts in a particular field may receive authorization from their line manager to provide media comment about details of these projects.

5.4 Sensitive, contentious, political and organizational enquiries

Only the Executive Director is authorized to make official comment to the media about sensitive or contentious issues, issues of a political nature, or issues relating to MH funding, organizational structure or management.

The Executive Director can authorize other staff members to speak to the media on his or her behalf in relation to any issue.

5.5 Initiating media contact

Any proposals for initiating media contact should be discussed in advance with the Public Relations Manager, who will provide advice about the proposal, seek authorization and liaise with the media about the issue if approved.

The Executive Director can authorize the Public Relations Manager or other staff with the relevant expertise to initiate media contact for reasons such as:

- generating media interest about a new MH project
- increasing community awareness and understanding of our projects
- promoting awareness of a particular cause

Staff with the relevant expertise may draft their own media releases, but these should be reviewed by the Public Relations Manager, unless otherwise authorized.

The Public Relations Manager will arrange for the Executive Director to approve all material to be provided to the media.

Media releases or media statements on behalf of MH should not be issued without the knowledge of the Public Relations Manager or without prior authorization. They should only quote authorized spokespeople.

5.6 Responding to incorrect information or misquotes

If an article or report appears in the media containing an inaccurate quote from a MH staff member or incorrect information about MH, the Executive Director will determine the appropriate response. If staff become aware of any such errors then they should bring them to the attention of the Public Relations Manager who will inform the Executive Director and advise on the appropriate response.

5.6.1 Posting on MH social media sites

Social media sites are increasingly important public communications tool for organizations, including MH. Social media sites allow MH to communicate directly with community workers, partners, donors and other members of the public.

Social media sites are run by the communications team in MH headquarters. Only authorized staff are allowed to post content on the official MH social media sites.

The Public Relations Manager is also the Social Media Manager, she coordinates the posting of content on social media sites. All content should be in line with MH goals and objectives.

The MH Social Media Policy (under development) further governs the official use of social media, as well as the private use of social media by staff.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This document is to be reviewed every two years. The first review will be in March 2020.

Depending on the circumstances, non-compliance with this policy may constitute a breach of employment or contractual obligations or misconduct under the Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aids' Code of Conduct.



Last update: October 2020

Khaldobn Al-Moosawi
Executive Director