[http://t3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTn8LRdQigtzkMoEXf35_X_B9mvCZ6O2RH7fF9Gexwrrg7ccZ8&t=1&usg=__5t1TMfx00UxouoS5MfXldNTSo0g=http://t3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTn8LRdQigtzkMoEXf35_X_B9mvCZ6O2RH7fF9Gexwrrg7ccZ8&t=1&usg=__5t1TMfx00UxouoS5MfXldNTSo0g=](http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.onlinevolunteering.org/resources/design/logo_unv_tag_en.gif&imgrefurl=http://www.onlinevolunteering.org/&usg=__iQBo1EurSb0UGLfVEtD9-WQqBUQ=&h=73&w=215&sz=8&hl=en&start=5&tbnid=nM5LgtBa_5z5iM:&tbnh=36&tbnw=106&prev=/images?q=UNV+volunteers+logo&um=1&hl=en&biw=1259&bih=879&tbs=isch:1&um=1&itbs=1)**Social Media Guidelines**

**Introduction**

Communities have the power to make the world a better place. We know this, because we see it happen every day through the work of volunteers, consultants and staff throughout the United Nations system.

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme embraces the fact that today’s communities do not only exist in the physical world, but also online. UNV leadership recognizes that online communities have a wide reaching impact and are growing in size and scope.

Social media is the term for Internet-based tools used for publishing, sharing and discussing information, and includes blogs, wikis and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, Instagram and LinkedIn. These emerging platforms are fundamentally changing the way we engage with people, allowing us new ways to reach our partners and stakeholders, current and former UN Volunteers and staff, as well as potential UN Volunteers and other interested parties. These guidelines\* should provide guidance to UNV staff when using social media. Nothing in these guidelines modifies UNV or UN codes of conduct.

UNV staff may use social media as either representatives making official comment or in their private capacities as citizens. These guidelines are designed to provide helpful, practical advice and also to protect UNV staff worldwide.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact the Communications Section in Headquarters. ([marcos.mendez-sanguos@unv.org](mailto:marcos.mendez-sanguos@unv.org))

***Who these guidelines are for***

These guidelines are meant for all UNV affiliates who want to utilize social media to help us contribute to peace and development through volunteerism. The guidelines will **familiarize you** with our overarching social media philosophy, **encourage you** to *find*, *join*, and *participate* in our overarching social media presence, and **help direct you** while forming your own social media plan. We are extending our ever-growing community by using social networking. However, a social media strategy at a national office location is a significant commitment of your time and even resources. When you enter the online sphere, please ensure that you have a plan in place to allow for a smooth transition to all forms of social networking.

These guidelines are to help us take part in global conversations related to the work we are doing at UNV, our volunteers, projects, and all the things about which we are passionate. If you are using social media tools such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr or YouTube, if you are blogging or if you are posting comments on other people's blogs, then these guidelines are for you.

***Why "personal" and "private" are not the same***

While communication through social media networks is primarily a *personal* matter, this is not the same as it being *private*. In a lot of cas­es, written conversations inside these networks can be found through search engines such as Google or Bing. Even in cases where only your contacts can see what you write, there is a possibility that one of them will for­ward what you say and make it visible to a wider audience; this is especially true with the ‘print screen feature’. As a result, personal conversation(s) within social media networks should be consid­ered public rather than private.

**Guidelines**

These guidelines consist of three parts: best practices, moderation guidelines, and recom­mendations. This is followed by a summary of the rules and obligations that are already in place and how they apply to staff use of social media.

***Best practices***

**1) Respect people’s privacy**

Respect people's right to privacy. It is your job to *protect vulnerable people*, not to exploit them. Always ask for people’s permission to take photos and always ask for people’s consent before posting anything about them on social media platforms.

**2) Be a good ambassador**

You should always be aware that your be­haviour and opinions reflect on the organization.

**3) Be credible**

Be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent. Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation.

**4) Be passionate**

Passion is contagious. Share the passion you feel for your work and talk about the successes in which you have partaken. The more effort you put into posting, the faster your audience will grow.

**5) Add value**

UNV believes that sharing of information and experiences benefits the whole volunteer community and ultimately the people we serve. Feel free to share and discuss your experiences in your work e.g. elections, field communication, crisis recovery, etc. If UNV staff is perceived to be knowledgeable and helpful this will reflect positively on you and on the organization. Obviously, use common sense where information is concerned that is internal and/or confidential. If in doubt - ask the owner of the informa­tion you want to share. In short, *write only what you know*!

**6) It is a conversation**

Talk to your readers like you would talk to real people in professional situations. In other words, *use plain, jargon-free, accessible language*. Note that even if we think things are common – eg. NGO/CSO – they might not be to the end user! Don't be afraid to bring in your own personality and say what's on your mind. Consider content that's open-ended and invites response. Encourage comments. Ask questions. You can also broaden the conversation by citing others who are blogging about the same topic and allowing your content to be shared or syndicated.

**7) Think of CNN, your mother and your boss**

Don't say anything online that you wouldn't be comfortable seeing quoted on CNN or having to justify to your supervisor. Things employees write about employers are permanently indexed in digital form by Google, Bing, and dozens of other search engines and thus made publicly accessible. Whenever you write anything about UNV, it could be accessible by these parties and more. Never participate in Social Media when the topic being discussed may be considered a crisis situation.

**7) Example**: The postings on this site are my own and don’t necessarily represent positions, strategies or opinions of my employer.

**8) Use a disclaimer on personal blogs**

If you have a personal blog and talk about work-related issues, add a disclaimer to each page making clear that the views you express are yours alone. Be aware that this disclaimer doesn't free you from the obligations you have under UNV, UNDP or UN codes of conduct. If you have an “about me” page, we advise against using photos where you stand in front of one of the UNV or UN logos. You are personally responsible for all content on your personal site or content posted to UNV sites in an unofficial capacity.

**9) Feel free to correct others but stick to the facts**

UNV and the United Nations are complex organizations, and we work in complicated legal and operational contexts. People frequently misunderstand or choose to misunderstand us. If you come across a misrepresentation of the organization or the system, feel free to identify yourself and organizational affiliation and correct their mistake but do so with respect and with facts.

If you don’t feel comfortable doing it yourself, please contact the Communications Section in Headquarters ([marcos.mendez-sanguos@unv.org](mailto:marcos.mendez-sanguos@unv.org)). In most cases people won't mind being corrected and they will fre­quently even distribute the correction themselves. However, if you get the feeling that someone deliberately misinterprets everything you say, just ignore them.

**9) Example**: “Updated, July 5 2010: There were 100 volunteers present – not 20 as I previously wrote.”

**10) Be the first to admit a mistake**

If you have made a mistake, be upfront about it. Admit and correct the mistake. If you correct an earlier post in a blog do so visibly, e.g. by using the strikethrough function and adding a paragraph that explains the update at the end.

**11) Use your best judgment**

If you are about to publish something that makes you even the slight­est bit uncomfortable, let it sit for a few more hours or a day and think again whether this is what you want to say. If it still makes you feel uncomfortable, ask your supervisor for advice. If something happens, whether at work or something you read about in the news, take time to reflect on your feelings before posting something. Remember, even if you delete a post, it is not possible to really retract something you put online – always be an ambassador for UNV.

**12) Protect your own privacy**

A lot of web sites allow you some form of control over who can see your material. *Use these features!*

* 1. On Facebook, control your privacy settings under “Setting🡪Privacy Settings🡪Profile.” We recommend that you set all of these except for “Profile” to “Only friends.”
  2. On Facebook, beware of clicking bogus links. These may not only harm your computer, but could also hack into your ‘friend’ list – giving everyone with whom you are friends the same bogus link.
  3. On Twitter, there is an option to protect your tweets. If someone wants to follow you, you must manually approve this. For more information on protecting your tweets, please visit: [https://support.twitter.com/articles/14016#](https://support.twitter.com/articles/14016)

**13) Keep security in mind**

Be particularly careful with what you are discussing online if you are in an operational context. Please make sure that you have read and fol­low your unit's security requirements. Never talk about things like routes or times of planned convoys. If in doubt, talk to the security unit. Never post personal details such as your home addresses or those of your colleagues. Bear in mind that personal details of local staff members can be very sensitive in many operational areas – this includes their names and pictures.

**14) Spread the word and connect with your colleagues**

Don't only talk about yourself. Try also to discuss the successes of your col­leagues. Connect with them through social networks and spread their success stories.

**15) Get advice**

If your unit, programme or office wants to use social media to promote UNV activities, please contact the Communications Section in Headquarters ([marcos.mendez-sanguos@unv.org](mailto:marcos.mendez-sanguos@unv.org)), which has the lead on social media activities for UNV and can ensure consistency and help with best practices.

***Moderation Guidelines***

Moderation is the act of reviewing and approving content before it's published on the site (This applies to social media content written on behalf of UNV, whether the site is on unv.org or affiliated with it in some way). UNV does not endorse or take responsibility for content posted by third parties, referred to as user generated content (UGC). This includes text input and uploaded files (video, images, audio, executables, documents).

Social Networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube don’t currently allow you to moderate comments before they’re published for the world to see, so it is necessary to check all your UNV-sites as often as possible, especially on Monday morning.

If you have a blog, you can usually moderate your comments before they’re published to your site. If you’d like to moderate your comments, you can use this language:\*\*

“Remember, we encourage you to comment on this blog. All viewpoints are welcome, but please be constructive. We reserve the right to make editorial decisions regarding submitted comments, including but not limited to removal of comments. The comments are moderated, so you may have to be a tiny bit patient in waiting to see them. We will review and post them as promptly as possible during regular business hours.”

While we encourage user participation in all forms, there are some guidelines we ask you to follow to keep it safe for everyone. Here are some ***guidelines around the moderation of UNV official sites***.

**1) Add a disclaimer**

To ensure safety of all users, add the following disclaimer to all social media sites:

*Comments/opinions available through this page are for informational purposes only. The contents in and linked to this page do not reflect the policy or position of UNV and should not be construed as a substitute for professional decisions/advice. Reliance upon the content in or linked to this page is solely at the user’s own risk.*

**2) Ensure balanced conversation**

Even if we can only think about positive things to say about UNV, it doesn’t mean that we should filter all negative opinions about our organization. If the comment is negative or ‘mean,’ but it is constructive or adds to the conversation, we should allow the dialogue to continue. To have a meaningful online conversations, we must allow both opinions to be heard—both those favorable and unfavorable—to allow for two-sided conversations. If the comment is constructive, try to engage the user. Even if you lack answers, other users might be able to add to the conversation and help clear up any misunderstandings the user might have. If the comment is not constructive nor aligns with the fundamental principles of UNV, the content can be removed (see offensive content in 3.)

**3) What if the content is offensive?**

If the content is **offensive**, **denigrating,** **racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic, classist, religiously intolerant,** or just **completely out of context,** UNV has the right and obligation to **remove the material from our page**. Personal attacks and foul language should be removed ASAP.

**4) Be professional**

Even if the post is negative, try to remain professional. If the post was constructive, take time before responding to ensure a thorough, informative and cordial response. If the post was offensive and no one has commented on it, *do not make mention of it*—simply remove the post and act as if it never happened. The more you mention it, the more you are giving negative posts the spotlight – let the positive posts shine through. If others have responded to the perpetrator, simply write, “This post was removed for offensive language.” Remember, for every one negative comment, there are hundreds of supporters of UN Volunteers and their work with communities throughout the world.

***Existing rules and obligations***

**1) Observe neutrality**

Don't get involved with political initiatives. In the context of social media, it is important to remember that this applies not only when you represent UNV or dur­ing working hours but around the clock and even when you are on leave. This is especially true online.

**2) Don't use the UNV emblem on personal blogs or social media profiles**

You cannot use the UNV emblem as any part of your personal blog or social media profile.

**3) Stay focused on your job**

While the UNV leadership encourages the use of social media and on­line communities for business purposes and recognizes that these can be a valuable resource, keep in mind that you were not hired to spend time on Flickr and YouTube for personal matters. *Make sure that your online activities don't interfere with your job.*

**4) Keep your manager in the loop**

UNV requires that you obtain permis­sion before publishing anything related to your function or assignment. This also applies to blogs and similar online publications. To avoid prob­lems, discuss your work-related social media activities with your man­ager.

**5) Observe IT security rules**

Don't download or install software that you find through social net­works on your work computer. If you have questions, please contact your IT focal point.

**6) Be careful when quoting numbers**

Numbers are very attractive for the media and if you don’t reference the numbers correctly, a personal blog post could quickly turn into a headline that reads “UN says 10,000 injured in Alphaland.”

**\*CREDIT: These guidelines are taken largely from UNDP, UNAIDS, UNOCHA, IFAD, UN DPI and based on social media policies from the International Federation of Red Cross\*\* and Red Crescent Societies, with contributions from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, the United States General Services Administration and The Wall Street Journal.**