

DOs & DON'Ts for UN Free & Equal social media video:

UN Free & Equal is a global United Nations campaign for equal rights and the fair treatment of lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people everywhere. The campaign was launched in July 2013 and led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Campaign materials – including videos, factsheets and infographic materials – have been viewed and shared hundreds of millions of times on social media and generated widespread coverage in print and broadcast media. Celebrities and other influencers help carry campaign messages to the widest possible audience, and the campaign has provided a platform for high-profile events at UNHQ and on the ground in more than 30 countries around the world.

The overall aim of the campaign is for the United Nations to raise awareness of sexual, gender and bodily diversity and advocate for equal rights and fair treatment of lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people everywhere. The campaign pursues this goal by:

- Disseminating messages from the United Nations in support of LGBTI equality and acceptance and countering prejudice and harmful stereotypes directed at LGBTI people, in both traditional and social media.
- Supporting country-level United Nations advocacy for the human rights of LGBTI people, including through distribution of public information materials and tools.

Target Audience:

The campaign's primary audience is the so-called "movable middle" of public opinion – principally straight, cis-gendered people who might be generally supportive of equality and human rights, but uncommitted – possibly even uncomfortable – when it comes to LGBTI issues.

Gearing up to launch a national UN Free & Equal campaign? Here are some tips to try and traps to avoid:

DO:

Do create a communication/advocacy strategy. Getting it right requires clarity when it comes to aims, objectives, audience and methods. What are you trying to convey? Can the video support UN advocacy efforts at national level or efforts by LGBTI rights defenders? Who are your target audience? How can you communicate in a way they can relate to and understand? By which means can you best reach them? Remember that the goals of the video must contribute to the goals of the global campaign (above).

Do tailor your message and language to your audience. The target audience of the UN Free & Equal campaign is the general public, not LGBTI people themselves or activists, so keep language simple enough so that your target groups will understand. People often know a lot less than you think. Don't

assume that activists airing grievances will necessarily resonate with target audiences. Positive, “feel-good” stories are more effective than tales of discrimination and abuse. Include the voices of straight allies and family members of LGBTI people and focus on creating empathy rather than sympathy or pity.

Do stay on message. Effective messaging presents a positive image of LGBTI people. Open people’s eyes to the rich contributions that LGBTI people make to their families and communities, as well as to the economy and wider society. Focus on everyday issues rather than abstract concepts around human rights and equality – people are more likely to empathize when they understand that many LGBTI people do not have access to things other people takes for granted -- like family support and acceptance, being able to walk down the street without fear of attack, going to school without getting bullied, being treated fairly at work etc. Challenge negative stereotypes of LGBTI people as highly sexualized, or hedonistic or a threat to traditional values. Wherever possible, use local data and statistics when illustrating the scope of human rights challenges.

Do customize your communications strategy to the local historical and political context. Social attitudes and legal contexts vary from context to context. What are the key human rights issues facing the LGBTI community in your country? What is shaping discussions around LGBTI issues? Should the video advocate for legal change, such as decriminalization or hate-crime protection, or is awareness raising and changing attitudes a greater priority? These decisions should be explored in collaboration with local community members and other stakeholders and reflected in the communications strategy.

Do follow the guidelines for use of the UN Free & Equal logo. Local campaigns are part of a global OHCHR-led public information initiative and campaign materials should in addition to the UN Free & Equal logo include either 1) the OHCHR logo plus logos of partner agencies participating in campaign at national level, 2) the UNCT logo if the national campaign has UNCT backing, or 3) the general UN logo. Remember that the global UN Free & Equal team should sign off on all designed materials featuring Free & Equal branding.

Do get local celebrities and public figures involved as supporters of the campaign. Celebrity allies can bring attention to the national campaign by starring in videos, speaking at events, appearing in traditional media, sharing campaign materials on social media and more. Be sure to brief celebrity champions on the goal and tone of the campaign to ensure that they stay on message (and avoid that they use their connection to the UN to convey messages not in line with UN principles). Straight, cis-gendered allies are often more effective messengers than members of the LGBTI community. Remember to do your due diligence before signing off on any national champions – a thorough background check can help prevent scandals from resurfacing and putting a negative spotlight on the campaign. Examples of effective collaborations with celebrities at national level include Brazil (with support from musician and UN Equality Champion Daniela Mercury and her wife, Malu Verçosa Mercury), Cape Verde (musician Mayra Andrade and First Lady Lúcia Fonseca) and the U.S. (tennis legend Martina Navratilova and former NBA star Jason Collins).

Do engage with the LGBTI community. Meaningful engagement with LGBTI community members and activists should be the first step towards building a national Free & Equal campaign. What are their advocacy goals and priorities? What openings do they see for political advocacy? What are their take on the risks associated with UN advocacy on this issue? Local LGBTI activists’ priorities might be

different from those of the UN national team, but it's important to take them into consideration when building a strategy.

Do a thorough risk assessment. What are the risks associated with your strategy? Can it cause a backlash in public opinion? Can it lead to more attacks against the LGBTI community? If so, how will you mitigate these risks? Building political support with key decision makers and service providers, tweaking messaging and not featuring anyone in communications output who could be attacked as a result are some examples.

DON'T:

Don't use language likely to be off-putting or confusing for the target audience. Examples include legaleze, UN-eze and jargon commonly used by activists and technical experts. Don't assume that lawyers, diplomats or LGBTI activists will necessarily know the best approach, arguments and language to use when appealing to the general public. Try to make sure that everything the campaign puts out, whether in video form, or in print or on social media, is concise and in plain, accessible, everyday language.

Don't overuse – or misuse – the “LGBTI” abbreviation. Remember that many target groups will be unsure what “LGBTI” stands for. Unpack the LGBTI acronym and address the different concerns of lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex people separately to make it more understandable. Avoid incorrect use of “LGBTI” if not every category is represented or included – are the concerns of bisexual, transgender and intersex people really reflected in the particular output you're producing?

Don't refer to local or national celebrity supporters as UN Equality Champions. Equality Champions are nominated by the High Commissioner for Human Rights only after a formal vetting and review process and have a recognized role in the global campaign. Any celebrities recruited at a national level to support national campaign efforts should be referred to as celebrity supporters or messengers or small “c” champions – but not as UN Equality Champions.

DOs & DON'Ts for social media:

DO:

Do keep videos short. Videos that are less than two minutes and twenty seconds long can be uploaded natively to Twitter, which will greatly increase the number of views. If you want to upload to Instagram, videos must be less than one minute long.

Do invest in production when creating videos. High-quality, eye-catching and snappy is the goal. Videos should always be able to convey their message without sound – most people do not turn the sound on when they watch videos on social media – so avoid voice over or add subtitles.

Do invest in social media promotion to ensure that your message reaches the intended audience. Paid promotion on social media ensures that messages reach target audiences at the national level – people who might be influenced by campaign content but who would be unlikely to seek it out or

come across it organically. If done right it can ensure that campaigns get maximum value and impact from your content.

DON'T:

Don't publish videos with lengthy interviews with activists or high-level UN representatives. Videos featuring people talking should be short and snappy and feature B-roll of the person doing other things, so as not be disengaging.

Don't use language or terms that unconsciously propagate harmful narratives or alienate a general audience. Examples include the term "LGBTI rights", which implies that LGBTI people are asking for special rights rather than the same human rights as everyone else, or sexualized images or imagery of gay people kissing, which have been shown to repel more conservative audiences.

Good luck