

Annex to the Brochure

Of Drummers and Helpers

**Checklists for Avoiding Racism
in Development Policy Public Relations**



Imprint



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Moving Berlin forward! Showing global responsibility at local level. The BER (Berliner Entwicklungspolitische Ratschlag - Berlin Advisory Group on Development Policy) is the umbrella organisation for development policy NGOs in the German capital. It offers its 80 member organisations both an external voice and a forum for internal networking. It raises awareness of the One World Idea because a fundamental change in outlook is needed in the North if living conditions for people in the South are to improve.

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ASW Aktionsgemeinschaft Solidarische Welt (Action for World Solidarity), EPIZ Entwicklungspolitisches Bildungs- und Informationszentrum (Berlin Development Education and Information Centre), global, KATE Kontaktstelle für Umwelt und Entwicklung (Centre for Ecology and the Environment), Oxfam Germany, Südasiens-Informationsnetz (South Asia Information Network) and Watch Indonesia!

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Foreword

I. Introduction – The Role of Checklists

Public relations activities by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the development field frequently reproduce stereotypes and examples of racism. In the North-South context, for instance, Black People and People of Colour are often portrayed as objects and the receivers of aid or assistance, while their white counterparts are depicted as active subjects and experts.

The BER's anti-racism committee sought to counter this trend by producing checklists designed to stimulate and encourage member organisations to reflect on their work practices and ensure they avoid racism in both words and images.

The fight against racism is a long-term process. The problem cannot be tackled or overcome by ticking boxes on checklists. By their very nature, checklists are of limited value and cannot act as a substitute for intensive engagement with racism and prejudice. Employing non-racist language is not a solution either. Preventing racism demands that organisations reflect critically on and, where appropriate, change the structure of their work practices and relationships with partners in the global South.

The checklists are designed solely for use as a guide by members of development NGOs in their day-to-day activities. All too often, resource and time constraints result in NGOs taking entirely avoidable PR and advertising decisions that directly contradict the fundamental principles on which they are based.

II. Background – Colonialism and Racism

The relationship between the global North and South continues to be characterised by structures of power and exploitation and can only be understood in the context of the colonial past. Critical reflection on colonial power relations is needed to ensure these structures are not replicated. Racism is a significant element of colonialism. It serves as an ideological construct for legitimising the disempowerment of non-white people and the systematic violation of their human rights and human dignity.

Colonialism uses the concept of “development” as a means of constructing legitimacy. It facilitates the development of a hierarchy of societal forms and underpins the concept

of “underdevelopment”. If we are to break with colonial practices of power and domination, we must fundamentally challenge the concept of “development” and the ideas underpinning it.

III. Core Values – and what to avoid

The core values that should, in our view, underpin the PR activity of development NGOs are human dignity, respect, partnership and a commitment to equality and the truth. These values, alongside an awareness of hierarchies and dependencies, form the normative basis for the checklists.

Asking the following questions offers a useful but basic guide to those seeking to eliminate racism in PR work: How would I portray the persons or issues if the context were different, i.e. white? What would I do if I was in my home country? What is the appropriate approach in the circumstances?

Offering solutions that could be best described as a form of apolitical “trading in indulgences” should be avoided at all costs. Examples of this include encouraging people to make a donation or purchase a fair trade product to salve a guilty conscience. Instead, people should be encouraged to engage in political action aimed at securing a structural correction in the North-South relationship.

Consideration should be given to what impressions words and images (or a combination of both) can make and whether they can be made consistent with core values. Moreover, the practice of aestheticisation through the use of words or images and exoticism (an example of which is the image of the “noble savage”) should be avoided. Racism, even if it is well-intentioned (e.g. positive stereotypes), is still racism.

IV. The Editorial Team – Drawing up the Checklists

The editorial team of BER's anti-racism committee is composed predominately of white members of NGOs. The fact that the checklists have been written primarily by and for white people reflects the continued marginalisation of Black People and People of Colour in German development policy. This problem must be addressed.

In our view, the task of eliminating racism primarily lies with white people because racism is a form of violence that was conceived and practised by whites. One of the features of racism is that white people enjoy the privilege of not having

to confront it. For this reason, we encourage people to engage with non-governmental organisations when they encounter racism or stereotyping in an NGO's PR work so that the problem can be addressed through dialogue.

These checklists were developed using the knowledge of Black People and People of Colour. Der Braune Mob (The Brown Mob) is an organisation which runs an important and useful website (www.derbraunemob.de) on everyday racism in Germany. A number of black activists and academics provided feedback on the checklists and their ideas, for which we thank them, were incorporated in the final draft.

The BER, in conjunction with the One World regional networks in Hamburg and the states of Hesse and Saxony, explored the issue of racism in development policy in its brochure "Of Drummers and Helpers: Essays on Non-Racist Approaches to Education and Project Work in Development Policy". The document includes substantial contributions on language, history, imagery, domestic and international work and a brief guide to additional sources. The checklists are included as a practical annex to the brochure.

Notwithstanding the limitations and weaknesses of checklists, it is hoped they will have a positive impact on work practices and stimulate deeper reflection among NGOs on racism in their internal structures. The BER checklists should be viewed as preliminary recommendations and works in progress. They do not purport to be exhaustive and the BER would welcome constructive feedback. Please send comments to: beratung@ber-ev.de.



Text Checklist

Notes

General

- Does the text show respect for all cultural orientations and outlooks insofar as they do not offend against human dignity?
- Are human activities presented in a value-neutral and respectful manner?
- Are names, places and personal data accurate? Have details such as names and back stories been fabricated?
- ▽ (NB: Ensure personal rights are protected and obtain the consent of individuals and organisations before publication. Use the German Press Law as a guide)
- Where possible, have people been given an opportunity to express themselves through the use of quotations, interviews or texts they themselves have provided?
- Has care been taken to avoid presenting “development” in hierarchical terms and the “western development model” as universally valid?
- Does the text refer to and describe specific resources and opportunities, rather than focusing on the shortcomings of daily life?
- Is the outlook of the author discernible and is the use of an ostensibly neutral writing style avoided?
- Does the text provide detailed descriptions of specific circumstances as opposed to making sweeping statements and generalisations (e.g. “Poverty is widespread in Africa.”)?
- Does the wording reflect partnership rather than paternalism (“In project XY near the Bolivian capital Sucre...” rather than “In our project in Bolivia. ...”)? Is a colonial outlook (e.g. “Discover Africa”) avoided?
- Are individuals presented or described as complex and real people, rather than being identified by certain characteristics such as poverty or ethnic origins? Does the text avoid clichés?
- Are those who are described in the text portrayed as actors and subjects rather than objects or the recipients of aid?
- Does the text refer to the causes and origins of any problems it describes? Where appropriate, does it refer to global dependencies and the relevant actors, e.g. poverty caused by the European Union’s policy of agricultural dumping? Does it provide a political frame of reference for the reader and avoid focusing on “pity”?
- Where the colonial past impacts on a current situation, is this made clear in the text?
- Are readers offered a means of engaging that goes beyond participating in what could best be described as apolitical “indulgence trading”, examples of which include making charitable donations or fair trade purchases to salve a guilty conscience? Does the text encourage political action aimed at achieving a structural correction in the North-South relationship?

Terminology

- Has the author chosen his or her words carefully and does the text reflect the fact that language is never neutral? (Adopting a contrary position is a useful way to test the choice of language).
 - Does the text portray people in the global South as the antithesis of Europeans (certain concepts may be presented as mutually exclusive, e.g. nature versus culture, corruption versus democracy), depict them as “the other” or define them by their “otherness”? Are the same concepts, labels and explanations used in the European context?
 - Where possible, are the people described or otherwise portrayed given the power to “self-identify”?
 - Does the text avoid racist terms such as “tribes”, “Black Africa” “primitive” and “coloured”? (The following are useful reference works for these and other terms: Arndt/Hornscheidt (ed.): Afrika und die deutsche Sprache, Münster 2004 and Nduka-Agwu/ Hornscheidt (ed.): Rassismus auf gut Deutsch, Frankfurt a. M. 2010).
 - ▽ NB: Inserting new terminology can perpetuate racism (e.g. using the terms “ethnic group” or “culture” instead of “race”).
 - Have terms such as “aid”, “victim”, “developing country” and “development” been subjected to critical reflection? (“Social transformation” is a useful alternative to the concept of “development”, which is an ideologically loaded term that suggests a hierarchy of societies. The former perspective is more focused on transformation processes without the pursuit of development goals.)
 - ▽ NB: Racism can occur even when non-racist language is used, for example, when ostensibly value-neutral language is used in a different context (“huts” to denote “houses” or “dialect” to denote a “language”) or when the choice of words reinforces stereotypes (e.g. “emotional” and “traditional”).
- Does the text allude to “whiteness”? (“Our team met with project partners” is neutral in this respect).
 - ▽ NB: The use of passive constructions often renders white actors invisible (e.g. “Bolivia is being exploited”) and reproduces a Eurocentric outlook that ignores other perspectives (e.g. “America was discovered in 1492.”).

Working with Partners in the Global South

- Are partners from the South given a voice? (Ensure structures are established to facilitate this, even if this is time-consuming and costly!).
 - ▽ NB: There is a danger that statements will be chosen primarily to reflect the interests of the northern NGO. Moreover, partners may vocalise what they perceive to be interests of the NGO from the North. Both possibilities should be subjected to critical reflection.
- Are partner organisations presented in an accurately and precise manner that reflects a spirit of partnership and respect? Is reference made to their objectives, organisational type (for instance, social movement, co-operative or NGO), names of staff and number of members?
- Have details about the partner organisations and individual projects been agreed with partners prior to publication?

Image Checklist

Notes

Photographer

Protecting personal rights and privacy

- Has consent been obtained from the person or persons photographed?
- ▽ NB: Consent can and should also be obtained where groups are photographed.
- Have the subjects been informed of the intended use of the photograph?
 - Were they given an opportunity to refuse consent?
 - Were they shown the photographs on the camera display where a digital camera has been used?
 - Did they agree to the intended use of the images? (A photograph published on a website will have a much larger reach than one published in a German print publication).
- Have asymmetries and possible dependencies in the relationship between the photographer and subject been reflected on and taken into account?
- Was parental consent obtained where children have been photographed?
- Was the German Press Law consulted for guidance in cases of doubt?
- ▽ NB: Photographs that do not feature images of persons can also violate privacy, for example, images of living areas or sacred objects.

Compliance with Journalistic Standards

- Have first names, surnames, locations and times been noted correctly?

What is being photographed and how?

- Is the human dignity of the subjects protected? The following questions should be asked:
 - Has a camera angle been selected to avoid the subject being pictured from above?
 - Are people portrayed as active subjects rather than passive victims?
 - Are cultural contexts and taboos treated sensitively?
 - Are illness and suffering treated sensitively?
 - Are dress and nudity treated responsibly?
 - Are stereotypes and traditional colonial imagery avoided (e.g. rather than showing white people standing and black people seated or vice versa - black people standing behind seated white people – is everyone at the same level)?
- Does the photography reflect a documentary style and depict reality in all its variety? For example, have the images been
 - aestheticised or romanticised (examples include removing details such as a soft drinks can, power pylon or modern t-shirt)
 - and has poverty been aestheticised or sensationalised (e.g. the image of a sunset over a rubbish dump)?
- Have filters or other technical processes been used in a manner that distorts the images?

Photo Editing

Choosing Images

- Is a documentary style used (see above)?
- Are clichés avoided? Examples include frequent use of “folkloristic images” (e.g. groups of drummers or dan-

cers), equating Africa with nature and infantilising non-Europeans (e.g. focusing on children)? Where possible, are common clichés deconstructed or challenged through the use of positive alternatives? Do images reflect personal aesthetics, also in relation to whether they are appropriate to the context?

▽ NB: Substituting one image with another one does not necessarily prevent the transmission of a racist idea (showing Black people in traditional costume rather than naked perpetuates rather than challenges the underlying myth that “Black” is not modern).

- Do images featuring “white experts” and “Black project partners” express a sense of partnership or do they suggest authority rather than dialogue? Have photos been selected which feature “partners” speaking or explaining to others?

▽ NB: Black people and People of Colour are often shown engaged in “marginal activities” such as cooking or harvesting crops and rarely depicted engaged in activities other than those connected with securing a livelihood (for example, as political actors, aides or specialists).

Presentation

- Is the link between image and text clear and correct? (Have the photo and text editors taken a co-ordinated approach? Have places or people been wrongly identified?)
- Are all photos accompanied by captions? Where pictures are used solely for layout purposes, are they accredited in the inside cover? Answer the following questions:
 - Are date, location and context identified?
 - Has the photographer, agency or licensee (e.g. Creative Commons) been accredited?
 - Are “partners” named in addition to “experts”?
 - Where appropriate, are identities protected, for example, are victims of violence, people with HIV and child soldiers given anonymity?
 - Does the caption undermine the message behind the photograph?
 - Does the language chosen avoid reproducing clichés and hierarchies (e.g. a white person “briefs” others while a black person “talks” to them)?
 - Are people presented as individuals and are generalisations avoided? Does the text avoid using individuals as representatives of a collective?
- Has the picture editing been done responsibly?
 - Has cropping resulted in a loss of context that is misleading?
 - Have the potentially negative consequences of image inversion been considered (e.g. showing someone eating with the left rather than right hand)?
 - Has the choice of colour been thought through (e.g. what impression will be given if black and white photographs are used)?

Communications

- Do the images reflect a spirit of partnership?
 - Were photographs belonging to partner organisations used?
 - Were partner organisations given access to all photos?

Other Types of Image

- Have these points been considered in respect of drawings, comics, pictograms, line art and photographs which are used for symbolic or layout purposes?
- Are historical images referred to as such and given a context (e.g. colonialism)?

Glossary

Exoticism

Exoticism is a form of racism in which non-whites are ascribed, from a white perspective, specific, universal and (ostensibly) positive characteristics that depart from white norms. The white perspective is normalised or neutralised, while the exotic is presented as both alien and desirable – frequently with sexual connotations. As such, exoticism and sexism are connected. Exoticism implies mechanisms of power and superiority that seek to appropriate that which is “exotic”. Thus, the positive associations of exoticism extend only as far as they refer to the “other” and do not challenge the self in any substantial manner. See Nduka-Agwu/Hornscheidt (ed.): *Rassismus auf gut Deutsch*, Frankfurt a. M. 2010 (“Racism in Good German”).

People of Colour

People of colour is a self-identifying term used by people who are considered non-white by a host society and routinely subjected to institutional and other forms of racism as a consequence of being racially defined. The term expresses the experience of minorities in a dominant white culture, which is one of marginalisation and discrimination and in which their collective existence is devalued by virtue of a colonial legacy or presence. See Nduka-Agwu/Hornscheidt (Publisher): *Rassismus auf gut Deutsch*, Frankfurt a. M. 2010.

“Race”

The term “race” as it relates to people is scientifically untenable and obsolete. There is no scientific evidence for the existence of different human “races”. On the contrary, evidence shows that the genetic differences within a so-called race are more significant than those between two so-called races. Nonetheless, the term appears in legal texts, including the German Constitution, which states that no person may be treated less favourably “because of” his or her race. However, a draft German law proposes to outlaw discrimination “on the basis of race”. This phrase was chosen to make clear that the legislation does not make assumptions about the existence of different human races but that such assumptions are a characteristic of those who behave in a racist manner. Legislation should also refer to “discrimination on racist grounds” or on the basis of race as “ascribed to a person”. Race is a product of racism rather than vice versa.

Source: www.ida-nrw.de/Diskriminierung/html/fglossar.htm

“Black” and “white”

The term “Black” is not used as a biological attribute in this document but as a means of denoting a political and social construct. In the aftermath of the Black Power movement in the United States, the word “Black” came to be used as a symbol of resistance against racism and refers to the use of the social construction of skin colour as a form of differentiation. In addition, the use of the upper case bespeaks a strategy of self-empowerment. Although the term “white” is also an historical and social construct, the lower case is used here to distinguish it from the self-empowerment attendant on the word “Black”.

