



VERBAL IDENTITY

WVUS Activation Guide

Whether you're a World Vision U.S. staff member or an external agency partner, this document was created for you! It will help you practically apply the direction provided in "[Our Verbal Identity: A guide to communicating in World Vision's unique voice](#)" (released by the World Vision International Global Brand team in February 2018). Make sure you're familiar with that document before reading on.

Note: For matters of style, use the [WVUS Editorial Style Guide](#)—it takes precedence over the style tips on page 13 of Our Verbal Identity, which were intended for an international audience. This robust (84 pages and counting!) guide covers how to treat general words and punctuation, biblical and religious terms, legal and marketing language, online terms, and much more. **It's an essential resource for everyone who writes for World Vision.**



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What are the benefits of World Vision's verbal identity?

One brand » Ensure that our brand personality shines through all our communications. Show our audience how we're unique from other humanitarian organizations.

One message » Avoid misperceptions and strengthen the brand by communicating the same core messages to every audience.

One voice » Unify copy from different parts of the organization so they have a "family likeness"—recognizing that not all groups can speak to their audiences in exactly the same way (see "Register" on page 6).

Our verbal identity is key to communicating our **brand proposition**:

"The joy of transforming vulnerable children's life stories."



What we say and how we say it



Brand messaging is what we say: two themes.

- “Better together” focuses on viewpoint:
 - » Refer not just to ourselves but to the **global “we”**—think of our donors, the people we serve, and our staff as a triple-braided cord (Eccl. 4:12, NLT)
 - » Use **inclusive phrasing**—“we are partners”
- “Proving what’s possible” is about communicating proof of impact:
 - » Share **specific examples of change**
 - » Transparently share our **goals**, while being honest about **challenges**
 - » Use Global Power Claims and other **success metrics** to show results

Brand voice is how we say it: two imperatives.

- “Talk straight” and “Inspire action with courage and love” guide our word choices:
 - » **Simple, clear, concise**—use everyday words, not jargon; cut redundancies
 - » **Uplifting**—frame harsh circumstances as opportunities for positive change
 - » **Warm phrasing, active constructions**—inspire engagement and response
 - » **Creative**—use fresh, varied language to keep people’s interest
 - » **Confident**—share our Christian faith as an asset and our motivating force

- Talk about our partnerships with churches and bridge-building interfaith work
- Weave our Christian identity and God’s call for our work naturally throughout copy; use supporting Scripture, but don’t rely on a tacked-on verse
- Balance talk about our faith with talk about our staff expertise, financial integrity, and program results
- Highlight stories that emphasize the faith of program participants and staff
- As needed, mention that where we’re not permitted to speak about our Christian faith, we witness by showing Christ’s love and being peacemakers
- **For more, see Giving Word to Our Faith and pages 6–8 of Our Verbal Identity.**

Reaching the right audience in the right way: voice, register, and tone

VOICE conveys *the unchanging personality* of our organization. This means that our character and how we work come across the same to everyone. Our words always reflect our values, in particular the God-given dignity of every person and our commitment to partnership.

TONE varies depending on *the goal of the piece*. We're more serious when talking about a disaster response where lives were lost. We're more upbeat and celebratory with, say, community birthday parties or clean water milestones.

REGISTER is *the level of formality* in our chosen words. For corporate audiences, our communication is more *professional*—though still conversational, clear, and warm. For mass and church it's *informal*, using colloquial, casual language. Because connecting with youth and through social media depends on relationship, we can be more *familiar* with these audiences. Like we're talking to a close friend—including a light sprinkle of slang and pop-culture references. (Remember that any writing in this register has a *short shelf life*!) **Note:** Even World Vision's interactions on social media platforms vary in register. Twitter is most professional, Instagram more informal, Facebook the most familiar.

THE TAKEAWAY

Regardless of the audience or purpose of a piece, our brand voice is always the same: *talking straight, inspiring action with courage and love, driven by the joy of transforming vulnerable children's life stories.*

Practical application: helpful writing tips

Do

- ✓ Write like a **real person**, not a corporation or a technical manual.
- ✓ Use **common contractions** (but avoid weird ones like “had’ve”).
- ✓ Use **sentence fragments** for effect in the most casual contexts. Be careful not to overdo this! Vary sentence length and structure to hold the reader’s attention.
- ✓ Say **kids** sometimes—mix it up with **children**.
- ✓ Be **chatty** when you can—we want our donors to feel that we’re real people making a connection with them.
- ✓ Replace:
 - Long words with **short words**
“Facilitate” → “help”; “utilize” → “use”
 - Complex words with **clear words**
“Liaise” → “meet”
 - Redundant/bloated phrases with **single words**
“End result” → “result”;
“Make a decision to” → “decide”;
“Conduct an examination of” → “examine”
 - Fluff and buzzwords with **substance and specifics**
Instead of “state-of-the-art” or “cutting-edge,” just say what we do
- ✓ Write **plainly** and keep it **brief**. That means shorter, simpler sentences almost all the time. (Studies show that people absorb sentences best when they’re under 14 words.)
- ✓ Re-read and **edit your own work**. Have you repeated the same idea (or the same word)? Simplify!
- ✓ Choose **interesting words**. Replace tired phrases like “make a difference” with more specific, vibrant language.
- ✓ Use **phrases full of movement**. Choose active verbs, where the kids and families are doing the moving.
- ✓ **Honor people’s dignity**. Ask “how would this person feel about my description of them?”

Don’t

- ✗ Make World Vision (or the donor!) out to be the “savior” or sole actor in creating transformation.
- ✗ Pressure people to respond, or be emotionally manipulative.
- ✗ Overpromise.
- ✗ Go overboard with pop culture references, or be flip and/or comedic.
- ✗ Devalue people by implying they’re helpless or voiceless.
- ✗ Lapse into internal acronyms, technical or clinical terms, or development-speak.
- ✗ Tell a negative story without showing how our supporters helped solve the problem—or offering a way to do so.
- ✗ Say we “bring” fullness of life to anyone, in any context. **Only God brings fullness of life.** We simply open doors, lay foundations, and walk with kids and families on their path toward the abundant life Jesus mentioned in John 10:10.

Applying the four themes and imperatives of our brand messaging and voice

Text examples: before and after

The real-life examples on pages 8 through 11 show how copy that was written with our older approach was revised to reflect our current verbal identity.

- **Better together (messaging)**
- **Proving what's possible (messaging)**
- **Talk straight (voice)**
- **Inspire action with courage and love (voice)**

MIDDLE DONOR audience

direct mail letter | Women's Empowerment Fund

original

Women around the world work hard to give their children the best opportunity to succeed in life. Yet, women who live in poverty often struggle to provide their children with food, clothes, and a chance to go to school at all.

With [Thin Thin's] first loan of \$400, she purchased fertilizer, insecticide, and flower seedlings. With this help, Thin Thin's flower business grew quickly. Her family now enjoys increased—and more reliable—household income.

Today, there are 1.1 billion women like Thin Thin that don't have access to the financial services they need to improve their businesses and the lives of their children and families.

You can help address the need to provide women with access to financial services—and end extreme poverty. Your gift today to support the Women's Empowerment Fund will multiply 2.3x in impact to help more women.

- \$250 multiplies to \$575 to provide loans for two women, enabling them to earn better incomes
- \$500 becomes an investment of \$1,150 that can help four women succeed in their own businesses
- \$750 can provide \$1,725 in loans that can help six women create a better future for their children

We're so grateful that you've chosen to help families like Thin Thin's. Together we've impacted the lives of over 200 million vulnerable children by tackling the root causes of poverty.

"I also liked the savings component of the program because I could use it for my children's education," says Thin Thin. "I want my children to be able to fulfill their desires and be able to do whatever they want to do."

P.S. Please respond today to help women like Thin Thin overcome extreme poverty and change the lives of their children and the course of their family's future.

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MIDDLE DONOR audience

direct mail letter | Women's Empowerment Fund

revision

Moms everywhere want to give their kids the best chance in life. But mothers who live in poverty find it tough just to provide basics like food, clothes, and an education.

With [Thin Thin's] first loan of \$400, she bought fertilizer, insecticide, and flower seedlings. This boost was what their business needed to grow and thrive! Her family's income, and quality of life, have dramatically improved.

Today, there are over 1 billion women like Thin Thin who have great ideas for starting or improving businesses—but can't get the financial services they need.

You can help women get access to loans, savings groups, and more so they can care for their children the way God intended. And your gift today will multiply 2.3x in impact to make even more loans to women!

- \$250 becomes \$575 for two loans to help women earn better incomes
- \$500 becomes \$1,150 for four loans to help women grow their businesses
- \$750 becomes \$1,725 for six loans to help women build a stronger future for their children

We're so grateful that God has given you a heart for people in need, and that you've chosen to help families like Thin Thin's. Through World Vision, every 60 seconds, a family gets the tools to overcome poverty—another example of how together, we're empowering real and lasting change.

"I ... liked the savings component of the program because I could use it for my children's education," says Thin Thin. "I will keep growing the flower business so that my children are able to fulfill their desires." Today, Thin Thin is the leader of her community's savings group—and her daughter dreams of a career as a teacher.

P.S. Please send a gift today to provide loans for women like Thin Thin—giving them the spark they need to drive their families' futures.

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SINGLE GIFT audience

email | Hurricane Florence emergency appeal

original

Powerful Hurricane Florence ripped into the East coast this morning with winds up to 120 mph and a massive storm surge. Life-threatening heavy rainfall is expected to cause devastating flooding throughout the region. Please give now to support our relief efforts.

World Vision has truckloads of supplies en route to the area and we will be responding with emergency supplies including food, clean water, hygiene kits, temporary shelter items like tents and sleeping bags and more.

Thousands are in need of immediate relief. Please give now to help families devastated by the storm.

Join us in prayer and know that your gift will help us provide urgent relief to families in the worst-hit areas.

revision

Powerful Hurricane Florence ripped into the East Coast this morning with winds up to 120 mph, driving a massive storm surge. **Heavy rainfall is causing** devastating flooding throughout the region. Please give now to **care for children and families caught in its path**.

World Vision is **reaching the most vulnerable** with emergency supplies like food, clean water, hygiene kits, tents, sleeping bags, and more. Your gift will help provide what **families in the worst-hit areas need most**.

So **many kids and families** here at home are in need of immediate relief. Please give now **to respond to destruction with God's love**. And join us as we **lift up these families** in prayer.

Text examples: before and after

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ADVOCACY audience

email | influencers survey

original

As an advocate and contributor to the communities where you live and work, your voice and opinions carry significant influence, often in ways you may not realize. We value your support of World Vision and want to give you an opportunity to share issues that are important to you through a brief, five-minute survey.

Your survey response will help us develop a more effective advocacy strategy, strengthen the impact of World Vision's work, and enhance the opportunities you have to act on behalf of children around the world.

revision

You're an advocate for kids worldwide — but you're also a **vital part of your own local community**. **You** carry significant influence, often in ways you may not realize. **And your partnership in advocacy is valuable to us**. **Would you take a moment to share what's important to you** through a five-minute survey?

Your **thoughts** will help us **develop more effective strategies**, **strengthen our impact together**, and **open doors for you to act** for children around the world.





Gold-star executions

The samples on pages 12 through 15 show good application of one or more of the four themes and imperatives of our brand messaging and voice, along with several examples of great Christian messaging. See how many you can identify!

MASS (digital) audience

webpage | detail from worldvision.org/our-work

Our Work Is

 <p>Christian We love because Jesus loves. His big heart for the poor drives us.</p> <p>Learn more about Faith in Action</p>	 <p>Child-Focused Kids are at the center of all we do. If a child is thriving, everyone is thriving.</p> <p>Learn more about Sponsorship</p>	 <p>Community-Based The best way to help a child is to sustainably grow their community.</p> <p>Learn more about Community Implementation Model</p>	 <p>Measurable We constantly track our progress and share the results with everyone involved.</p> <p>Learn more about Financial Accountability</p>
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webpage | detail from worldvision.org/about-us

What happens when you give \$1 to World Vision?

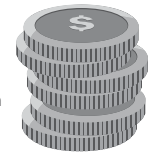
Most of it (**about 60 cents**) is sent to local community programs around the globe.



The rest (**about 40 cents**) is invested in global networks and capabilities that stretch the power of your dollar:



That 40-cent investment generates around **70 cents** worth of grants and donated goods ...



... which means 70 cents *more* to programs that care for children and communities.

The bottom line?
Every \$1 you donate = \$1.30 in impact.



That's a smart investment.

Gold-star executions

SPONSOR audience

letter | welcome kit

October 12, 2019

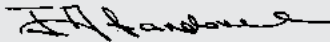
Dear Anna,

Of all the potential sponsors that Moraima could have picked, she chose you! You've become a special part of her community in the Dominican Republic—and it'll be so exciting to see how that connection affects both your lives.

What's more, Moraima's choice shows she believes that you can help her community thrive. Ephesians 3:20 tells us that we serve a God "who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us ..." (NIV). We know that God's power is miraculous—so we believe that a world of change is possible, no matter the circumstances.

And that may be the most beautiful part of all this: even before Moraima chose you, God already had chosen you both. He has something in store for you. I'm excited to see how you will discover that together.

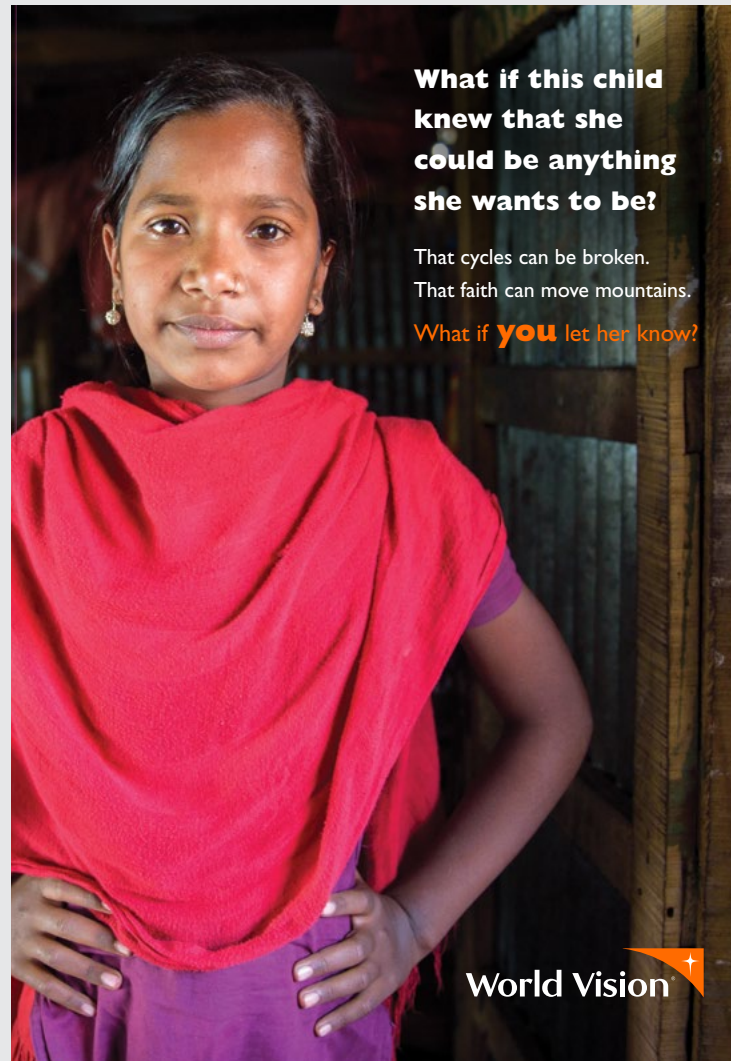
In Christ,



Edgar Sandoval Sr.
President, World Vision U.S.

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CHURCH/MASS audience
event display



Gold-star executions

DIRECT MAIL audience

DM package | emergency food (detail)

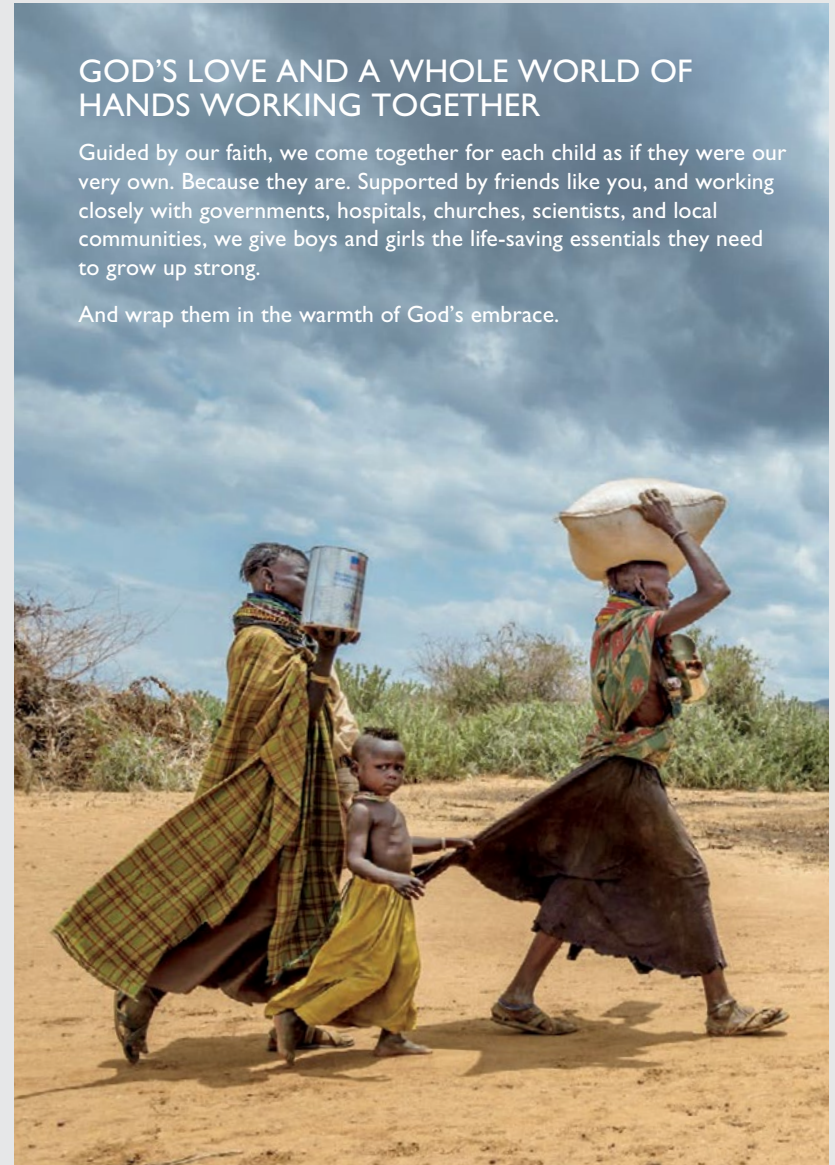


Sometimes hope is a pot of beans so big you could swim in it.

GOD'S LOVE AND A WHOLE WORLD OF HANDS WORKING TOGETHER

Guided by our faith, we come together for each child as if they were our very own. Because they are. Supported by friends like you, and working closely with governments, hospitals, churches, scientists, and local communities, we give boys and girls the life-saving essentials they need to grow up strong.

And wrap them in the warmth of God's embrace.



Questions are welcome!

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