Aflatoun International Tone of Voice Guide

Introduction

Our tone of voice reflects Aflatoun International's unique position as a trusted partner in global education – **professional yet accessible, authoritative yet warm**. We communicate with confidence from over two decades of impact while maintaining the approachability that makes complex financial and social concepts understandable to diverse audiences worldwide.

This guide will help all stakeholders – internal team members, partners, implementers, and communicators – maintain consistency across the Aflatoun brand globally.

Our Voice Characteristics

1. Empowering and Optimistic

What this means:

- We believe in the potential of every child and young person
- Our language reflects optimism while acknowledging real-world challenges
- We focus on possibilities, growth, and positive change rather than limitations or problems

In practice:

- Highlight what children and youth **can do** and **are doing**, not what they lack
- Celebrate progress and potential
- Acknowledge challenges without dwelling on deficits
- Frame difficulties as opportunities for growth

Example:

✓ "Young entrepreneurs are building social enterprises that benefit their neighborhoods."
✗ "Poor children need help to escape their circumstances."

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2. Clear and Accessible

What this means:

- Complex educational concepts are made simple without being simplified
- We use plain language that translates well across cultures and languages
- We avoid jargon that might exclude or confuse our global audience

In practice:

- Use short sentences and everyday words
- Explain specialized terms when necessary
- Test whether the content would be understood in translation
- Avoid acronyms or define them on first use
- Break down complex ideas into digestible pieces

Example:
✓ "A budget is a plan that shows how much money you have and how you will use it."
✗ "Budgeting requires strategic resource allocation optimisation across expenditure categories."

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3. Respectful and Inclusive

What this means:

- We honour the diverse cultures, contexts, and capabilities within our network
- Our communication acknowledges different perspectives and experiences
- We maintain universal principles of respect and dignity

In practice:

- Use inclusive language that represents all identities
- Avoid cultural assumptions or references that may not resonate globally

- Recognise diverse family structures, economic contexts, and cultural practices
- Ensure representation across gender, ability, ethnicity, and geography
- Never patronise or talk down to any audience

Example:

✓ "Our partners across 116 countries are creating lasting change in their communities."

✗ "We are helping developing countries improve their education systems."

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4. Action-Oriented

What this means:

- Our language motivates and inspires concrete steps toward positive change
- We use active voice and specific examples to demonstrate impact
- We encourage engagement and participation

In practice:

- Use active voice ("Children explore" not "Children are taught")
- Include concrete calls to action
- Provide specific examples rather than abstract concepts
- Show tangible outcomes and real-world applications
- Use strong, dynamic verbs

Example:

✓ "Aflatoun empowers children to discover their potential through social and financial education."

✗ "Children's potential is developed through the Aflatoun methodology."

Communication Style Guidelines

Words and Phrases to USE

Use This	Instead of This	Why
Empower	Help, assist, aid	Recognises agency and potential

Partners	Beneficiaries, recipients	Emphasises collaboration and equality
Young people / Children and youth	Kids, minors, disadvantaged youth	Respectful and inclusive
Discover / Explore	Teach / Instruct	Learner-centered approach
Foster / Cultivate	Provide / Give	Active participation
Create change	Fix problems	Solution-oriented
Build / Develop	Intervene	Constructive approach

Language Patterns to EMBRACE

Positive Framing:

- "Together, we're fostering financial literacy that opens doors to opportunity."
- "Children gain confidence through exploring their own identity and talents."
- "Our methodology inspires young people to discover and use their talents."

Concrete Examples:

- "In Bangladesh, 15-year-old Shafiqul used his savings to buy tools and now repairs bicycles."
- "Educators in 100+ countries implement Aflatoun programmes reaching 18 million children annually."

Collaborative Language:

- "Our partners across [region] are creating..."
- "Together with educators, we've developed..."
- "Working alongside communities, we foster..."

Language to AVOID

Problematic Patterns

✕ Patronising or Paternalistic Language:

- "We save children from poverty" → Positions us as saviours

- "These children need our help" → Deficit-focused
- "We're giving them a chance" → Removes agency

✖ Overly Academic Jargon:

- "Pedagogical interventions"
- "Capacity building initiatives"
- "Stakeholder engagement mechanisms"

✖ Negative Framing:

- "Children suffering from poverty"
- "Disadvantaged communities lack resources"
- "At-risk youth need intervention"

✖ Generic Development Clichés:

- "Breaking the cycle of poverty"
- "Giving voice to the voiceless"
- "Saving children's futures"
- "Hand up, not a handout"

Why These Don't Work

Examples of Inappropriate Language:

Don't Say	Why It's Wrong	Say This Instead
"We save children from poverty."	Positions us as saviours; removes children's agency	"We empower children with skills to create economic opportunities"
"Disadvantaged youth need our intervention."	Deficit-focused and patronising	"Young people are building financial capability and entrepreneurial skills"
"Poor communities lack resources."	Negative framing; deficit focus	"Communities are developing sustainable solutions through social enterprises."
"We help vulnerable children."	Paternalistic; emphasises weakness	"Children develop resilience and financial confidence"

Audience-Specific Adaptations

For Educators and Partners

Tone: Professional yet collaborative

Approach:

- Emphasise shared expertise and mutual learning
- Use education-specific terminology when appropriate
- Maintain accessibility even with technical content
- Acknowledge their professional experience

Example: "The Money Box Project curriculum promotes learner-centered methodologies you'll recognise from our core content. Through interactive activities, children explore financial concepts using tangible tools that reinforce experiential learning."

For Funders and Stakeholders

Tone: Confident and results-focused

Approach:

- Provide clear evidence of impact
- Balance optimism with a realistic assessment of challenges
- Show sustainable solutions and long-term thinking
- Use data and specific outcomes
- Maintain professionalism

Example: "Aflatoun's social franchise model reaches 45 million children across 116 countries, with partners demonstrating measurable improvements in financial literacy, savings behaviour, and entrepreneurial initiative. Our scalable approach ensures sustainable impact while adapting to local contexts."

For Public Communications

Tone: Warm and inspiring

Approach:

- Emphasise human stories behind our work
- Maintain professionalism and credibility
- Make content shareable and engaging
- Connect emotionally while staying grounded in facts
- Celebrate achievements and milestones

Example: "Meet Shafiqul from Dhaka, whose entrepreneurial spirit and savings skills helped him start a bicycle repair business. Through Aflatoun's social and financial education, millions of young people like Shafiqul are transforming dreams into reality."

Global Considerations

Cross-Cultural Communication

Remember:

- Our communications reach audiences in **100+ countries**
- Different cultural contexts require thoughtful adaptation
- Languages and communication styles vary widely
- What works in one context may not resonate globally

Best Practices:

- Use language that translates well literally and culturally
- Avoid idioms, colloquialisms, or culturally-specific references
- Test content with diverse audiences before wide distribution
- Consider religious, cultural, and social sensitivities
- Use universal examples or provide multiple context-specific examples

Examples:

✓ **Global-friendly:** "Children learn to save money for future goals."
✗ **Culturally-specific:** "Kids learn to put away money for a rainy day."

✓ **Universal:** "Young people develop entrepreneurial skills."
✗ **Context-limited:** "Youth learn the American dream through business."

Practical Application

Before You Write, Ask:

1. **Is it empowering?** Does it recognise agency and potential?
2. **Is it clear?** Will diverse audiences understand it?
3. **Is it respectful?** Does it honour dignity and diversity?
4. **Is it action-oriented?** Does it inspire engagement and show concrete impact?

Writing Checklist

- ☐ Used active voice
- ☐ Choose "empower" over "help"
- ☐ Referred to "partners", not "beneficiaries"
- ☐ Used "young people" or "children and youth"
- ☐ Included concrete examples and specific outcomes
- ☐ Avoided jargon and overly complex language
- ☐ Framed positively while acknowledging challenges
- ☐ Tested for cross-cultural understanding
- ☐ Removed patronizing or paternalistic language
- ☐ Eliminated development clichés

Consistency Principle

Whether writing a formal report or social media post, our voice remains recognisably Aflatoun:

- Empowering
- Clear
- Respectful
- Action-oriented

This consistency builds trust and strengthens our brand identity across all communications and touchpoints worldwide.

Quick Reference Examples

✅ Good Examples

Programme Descriptions:

- "Aflatoun empowers children to discover their potential through social and financial education."
- "Our partners across 100+ countries are creating lasting change in their communities."
- "Young entrepreneurs are building social enterprises that benefit their neighbourhoods."
- "Together, we're fostering financial literacy that opens doors to opportunity."

Impact Stories:

- "Through savings and planning, Maria opened a small shop that supports her family and employs three neighbors."
- "Children in our programmes demonstrate increased confidence in managing money and making financial decisions."

Calls to Action:

- "Join our global network of educators empowering the next generation."
- "Explore our curricula and adapt them to your local context."

✕ Poor Examples

Programme Descriptions:

- "We save children from poverty through financial education."
- "Our beneficiaries receive training to improve their lives."
- "Disadvantaged youth need our intervention to succeed."
- "We give poor children the tools they lack."

Impact Stories:

- "We helped Maria escape poverty by giving her skills."
- "Vulnerable children benefit from our programs."

Additional Resources

For more detailed guidance, visit:

- **Brand Manual:** brandmanual.aflatoun.org
- **Tone of Voice:** brandmanual.aflatoun.org/tone-of-voice
- **Imagery Guidelines:** brandmanual.aflatoun.org/our-imagery-and-graphics

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Contact

For questions about tone of voice or brand communications:

- Email: communications@aflatoun.org
- Website: aflatoun.org

Remember: Every word we write represents Aflatoun's mission to empower children and youth worldwide. Let's communicate with the clarity, respect, and optimism our global community deserves.