



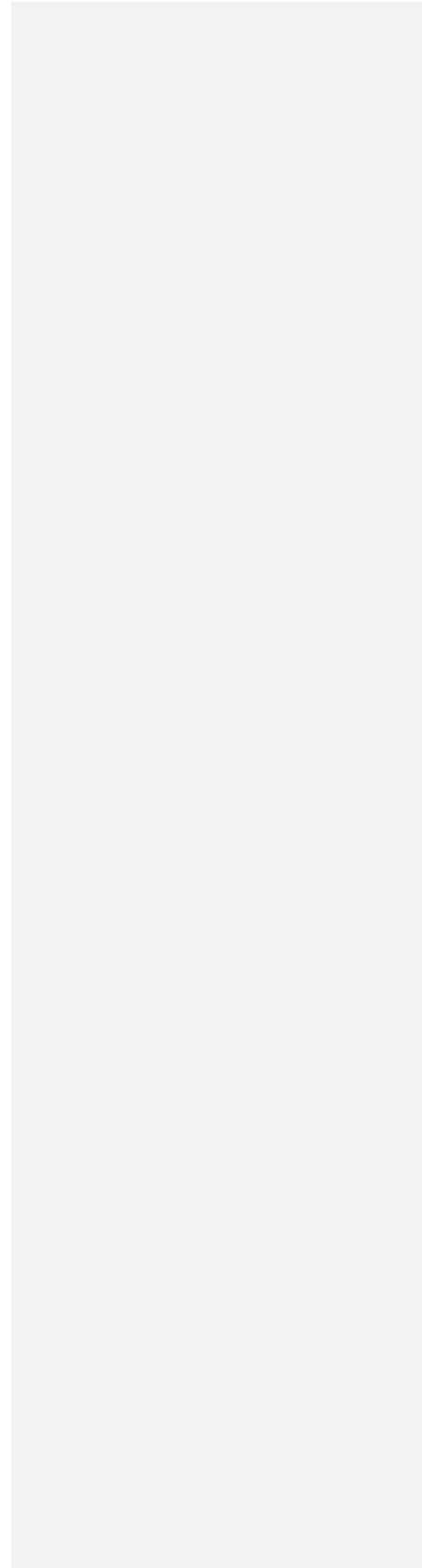
**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S HEALTH COALITION**

PRESENTS

# Doing Media Advocacy

Prepared by the International Women's Health Coalition

Communications Program



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### Tips For Pitching A Story:

- **Get to the Point:** If you don't know the reporter, you will have about 30 seconds to get her/his attention. Get to the point quickly. Know the answer to the question "why should this reporter be interested" and tailor your pitch accordingly.
- **You're on the record:** Remember that anything can be quoted in isolation, so think through everything you say and consider how it might be used.
- **Be Ready:** have your talking points and your facts in front of you, including contact information for spokespeople so you don't sound disorganized.
- **Be Specific:** don't say "we are doing interesting things." Instead, say "we have a new report that found higher levels of air pollution in Peru in 1999 than in the previous decade."
- **Be honest:** if you don't know the answer to a question, don't lie. Tell them you will try and find out the answer and call them back. Anything you say is on the record so choose your words carefully—"I have to double-check that—is it ok if I call you back?"
- **Respect deadlines:** much of media outreach is best made in the morning or early afternoon when reporters are not on deadline—always ask if they are on deadline before you begin. If they are, ask when a better time would be to talk to them.
- **Make it newsworthy:** Tie the story to something timely or newsworthy: "As you know, world leaders are gathered at the UN this week for the Commission on the Status of Women. One of the things they're considering is XXX which would mean XXX..."
- **Be helpful:** Provide them with all of your contact information and always offer additional information or background info. If the questions they are asking are out of your area of expertise, offer to link them with a colleague who can answer their questions.
- **Practice:** Write out what you're going to say or practice it on a colleague.
- **No:** If a reporter says no, respect that. It doesn't mean you can't try to get them to cover something else in the future, but do not keep pitching them with the same story or angle.



### Who to Pitch: Developing a Press List

- Press lists are available for purchase – depending on the reach you want, and the budget you have, this may be an option.
- Look at bylines in articles you read about sexual rights and reproductive health and HIV, add these journalists to your press list, with notes about their angle.
- Keep track of all journalists from whom you get media inquiries, record their contact info and make brief notes about their approach, the beat they cover, etc
- When adding a journalist or editor to your list, include: full name, title, beat, email, fax, phone, time zone, best time and best way to contact
- When you send press releases, send to staff/freelance journalists as well as editors
- Familiarity with your local media landscape is your best asset in learning about who is out there and may be receptive to your message

### When do I...

- *Send a fax?* Many newspapers prefer faxes. If you do not have a personal contact, fax is a good way to go. Editors at papers still look through faxes every morning when prepping a day's assignments. If you have a personal contact you probably won't fax unless that form of contact is a stated preference. If you don't have a fax machine, try an online fax service, which sends and receives faxes from your computer desktop (right from Word, no scanning required). <http://www.myfax.com> is good and reasonably priced
- *Send an email?* Most of the time. Paste your press release into the body of the email instead of just as an attachment. You may attach the release as well, but never just send an attachment. Don't send photos or graphics in your pitch email.
- *Make a phone call?* When your story is very urgent, breaking news. Cold calls are kind of scary – if you don't feel like you're up to the challenge of making a call to a busy newsroom, that's ok. Most of the time email is preferred by editors and journalists. Only call if you have a 15 second pitch all planned and ready to go. Phone calls to the newsroom are good for making contact with television news show that air on a daily basis.
- *Send materials by postal mail?* Almost never, only upon request.





## What Should I Put In My Press Release?

- Be "**newsworthy?**" The purpose of a press release is to inform the world of your news item. A good press release answers all of the "W" questions (who, what, where, when and why), providing the media with useful information about your organization, issue or event.
- **Start strong.** Your headline and first paragraph should tell the story. The rest of your press release should provide the detail. You have a matter of seconds to grab your readers' attention. Do not blow it with a weak opening.
- **Write for the Media.** On occasion, media outlets, especially online media, will pick up your press release and run it in their publications with little or no modification. More commonly, journalists will use your press release as a springboard for a larger feature story. Develop a story as you would like to have it told.
- **Not everything is news.**
- **Stick to the facts.** Tell the truth. Avoid fluff, embellishments and exaggerations.
- **Pick an angle.** Try to make your press release timely. Tie your news to current events or social issues if possible. Make sure that your story has a good news hook.
- **Use active, not passive, voice.**
- **Economics of words.** Use only enough words to tell your story. Avoid using unnecessary adjectives, flowery language, or redundant expressions such as "added bonus" or "first time ever"
- **Beware of jargon.**
- **Avoid the hype.** The exclamation point (!) is your enemy!!!!!!
- **Get Permission** to use quotations from other people or materials from other organizations.
- **Tell the reporter about who you are.** Include information about your organization (boilerplate). Your press release should end with a short paragraph that describes you.
- **Target reporters and editors to whom the release will be relevant.** If your release is about international news, make sure it ends up in the right person's hands, not the hands of the editor of the arts and entertainment section.



## A Press Release: What Not to Do

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 10

Contact: Jane Doe, xxx@email.com

### THE WORLD DISCRIMINATES AGAINST WOMEN

New York, NY – Leaders from all over the world, from Argentina to Pakistan to Brazil, will discuss the state of the world’s children at the United Nations, which is located on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 32<sup>nd</sup> Street in New York City. Delegates will meet to review progress on reaching the goals set out in A World Fit for Children, an outcome document following a UN special session on children, which was convened in 2002. A review of the draft declaration, which is scheduled to be released following the meeting, shows that they must step up their commitment to young people if they are to meet the goals set out in A World Fit for Children, according to advocates from the International Women’s Health Coalition’s Advocacy in Practice session. Too many young people today face threats to their health and well-being, including HIV/AIDS, and we must protect their future. The meeting will take place from December 10 to 13, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. A schedule can be found here: <http://www.unicef.org/worldfitforchildren/index.html>.

The mission of the International Women’s Health Coalition is to promote and protect the health and rights of women and young people throughout the world. As part of this mission, IWHC convenes Advocacy in Practice trainings that bring together advocates from throughout the world to gain practical advocacy training around key international meetings.

This meeting, which was held at IWHC’s offices, brought together fifteen advocates prior to the UN High Level Plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the Special Session on Children. Advocates agreed that the language in the draft document was too weak, and doesn’t strongly emphasize the role of governments in ensuring the health and rights of young people, especially young women!!!!

“The delegates will meet to discuss progress made since A World Fit for Children,” exclaimed Jane Doe, who is enjoying the Advocacy in Practice Training. “SRRH is important given the rise of HIV, and the draft declaration of the high level plenary meeting is missing a lot!!”

“They sure are right,” said President George W. Bush. “We must bring justice to those who pollute our youth.”

**Comment [KC1]:** Include any and all contact information—email, cellphone and workphone.

**Comment [KC2]:** The headline should be catchy and larger than the other text. Make it newsworthy and relevant; not an opinion, a “so what?” or a weak news hook

**Comment [KC3]:** Always check your spelling. A reporter will often stop reading when she/he finds an error

**Comment [KC4]:** Don’t bury the lead. Make it short and sweet and relevant

**Comment [KC5]:** The date is less important than what the session actually did. Either way, these details belong further down.

**Comment [KC6]:** Stick to the facts; don’t editorialize

**Comment [KC7]:** No reporter will read through a paragraph that is this long... omit the unnecessary details and make it newsworthy!!

**Comment [KC8]:** Don’t make it too PR-ish by talking about your organization. That belongs at the very end of the release. This description of the AIP hides the aspect of the AIP that might have the most appeal to reporters—that these are young leaders coming to the UN to advocate for youth rights

**Comment [KC9]:** Delete non-essential details

**Comment [KC10]:** No one is going to know what this means- get to the heart of the matter, ie “an agreement on the rights of young people affirmed by XXX.

**Comment [KC11]:** Use “said” and be specific about the person—who is Jane Doe?

**Comment [KC12]:** Don’t waste quotes on summarizing what you’ve already said. And no jargon or exclamation points!!!

**Comment [KC13]:** Don’t randomly quote people—the way this is written implies that you got the quote directly from Bush



About 1.2 billion people in the world today are between the ages of 10 and 19—the largest generation of adolescents ever. Addressing the health and rights of young people requires governments to take effective actions and make firm commitments.

**Comment [KC14]:** Don't bury the lead. Make sure your stats are right and that you can cite them if asked by a reporter

**Comment [KC15]:** This is the type of thought you want to include in the quote

###

### Letters to the Editor

- *When:* Letters to the editor respond to articles that the paper recently published. They are time sensitive, and you should draft and send as quickly as possible.
- Keep it short. Most letters to the editor are 200 words or less. If you keep it within the paper's word count there is less of a risk of your piece being drastically edited to mean something other than what you intended.
- Make a single point. A letter to the editor is not the time for nuance or complex, multilayered arguments.
- Directly reference article you're responding to. The subject of the email should be formatted: "Re: Article Title, date."
- Don't title it. This is the editor's job. You're wasting your time thinking of something clever that will just be replaced.

Example of a good letter to the editor:

Letters to the Editor  
The New York Times  
229 West 43rd Street  
New York, NY 10036  
VIA E-MAIL: [letters@nytimes.com](mailto:letters@nytimes.com)

**Comment [KC16]:** Include a heading on your submission even if its sent by email.

Re: "Hope in South Africa" (August 31, 2009)

**Comment [KC17]:** Always include the title of the article you are responding to and the date of its original publication

To the Editor:

Your suggestions for HIV prevention, and those of some of the scientists you reference, show remarkably persistent neglect of the most likely to be infected—girls and women.

In South Africa, women, especially very young women, are three to five times more likely to be infected than men because of rampant sexual coercion and violence. They cannot control the number of partners their men have—and may have more than one themselves just to survive. Babies are infected because women lack access to the necessary health services and, more important, HIV prevention in the first place. Your editorial fails to mention that the little evidence available on adult male circumcision indicates no protective effect for men's partners, and may in fact affect women negatively.



A sustainable approach to ending South Africa's epidemic requires putting women at the center of HIV prevention efforts by ensuring access to female condoms, comprehensive sexuality education for all young people, and full protection of girls' and women's human rights.

Signatory name

Title

Organization

### **Writing an Op-Ed**

- *Where:* Most daily and weekly newspapers accept outside submissions for publication on their opinion pages.
- *When:* Op eds are written by experts to offer their perspective in response to a topic that is being actively debated. Doesn't need to respond to a particular article, but should have a current news hook. Often newspapers publish op eds on multiple sides of an issue.
- Writer should be an academic, executive director of non-profit, politician, or person with a leadership affiliation with an organization of significance.
- Although an op ed typically has only one person's name on it, they are usually written and edited by a number of people. Collaborative op eds can be a good way to build coalitions.
- Op eds are usually between 500-750 words, and should be pitched to the editor before submitted in whole.
- A few more tips:
  - Use short sentences and avoid jargon.
  - Make your position strong and clear: explicitly oppose or support something. Feel free to use anecdotes or personal stories in the op-ed.
  - Link an op-ed to something that's currently in the news
  - Follow the submission guidelines provided by the publication.

For more tips on writing op-eds and examples, visit  
[http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/duke\\_community/oped.html](http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/duke_community/oped.html)



## Interview Tips

### *Before the interview:*

- Media calls and requests need immediate responses.
- Check on what the reporter has previously written before talking with them.
- Questions to Ask the Reporter:
  - What is your name, outlet, when are you writing for, and what is your *deadline*?
  - What were you thinking I would contribute to your story?
  - What is the *angle* of your story?
  - Are you looking for *background* for your story or a direct quote?

### *During the Interview:*

- Once you agree to an interview, anticipate a reporter's questions and formulate effective answers.
- Narrow your message to three or four key points and stick to them.
- The interview is "on" as soon and as long as you're talking to a journalist.
- EVERYTHING you say is on the record. If you do not want it in the story, do not say it.
- Mention your organization at least twice.
- Be confident. Take charge in the beginning. You definitely know more than the reporter.
- Always advance YOUR story or point of view.
- Enhance the chance that you'll be quoted by offering arresting facts and colorful, descriptive anecdotes.
- Use statistics but do not get mired in them.
- Use active verbs, complete sentences and positive phrases.
- Clear, simple sentences are the most effective.
- Be pointed and concise. Move quickly through each point and don't ramble.
- Avoid jargon and explain all abbreviations if you have to use them.



- Do not make your story too complex or overloaded.
- Do not assume that a complex story will be reported accurately. In fact, assume the opposite.
- If you fluff an answer, re-state it correctly.
- Do not speculate, joke or be sarcastic.
- Give positive messages to any negative questions.
- Immediately and politely refute any untrue statements.
- Do not guess at an answer. Say you don't know and will call them back.
- If a reporter should interrupt you in mid-sentence, do not acquiesce. When he finishes, continue with "As I was saying..."
- If a reporter asks a series of rapid-fire questions, answer the one question that will strengthen your point. Do not attempt to respond to them all.
- If a reporter should use hostile or negative language, defuse the situation by a positive statement and say something like, "Let's not get off the important message here..."
- Do not lose your temper, become angry or try to debate a journalist. You won't win.



## MAKING YOUR OWN MEDIA

With the decrease in news outlets' budgets for in-depth coverage of international issues, many advocates are beginning to see the value of producing their own coverage on the internet, via blogs and short videos. Online media advocacy can be a great way to connect directly with other advocates and is the best way to control the message – you can't be misquoted if you're the one making the statement and doing the editing.

### Blogging on Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Health

#### ***What is a blog?***

A blog, or a "weblog," is a short article or commentary published on the Web in the author's own site or that of others. The power of weblogs is that they allow everyone to have a voice. They allow millions of people to easily publish and promote their ideas, and millions more to comment on them. Many blogs are highly influential and have enormous readerships, while others are intended for people to write for a small audience on a specific issue or interest.

#### ***Characteristics of blogs:***

- Blog posts (or entries) are published on a regular and often frequent basis (sometimes even several times a day). Posts have a headline—just as newspaper articles do.
- The body of the blog post is short (200-500 words) often conversational in tone.
- Instead of footnotes or references, blogs almost always include links to other relevant information on the Web.
- They most usually provide the opportunity for readers to post comments—a way that readers can respond to what has been said. This is an important part of blogging, which is much more conversational than print media. As soon as you write something, your readers have a chance to respond to it
- Each post has a time and date so that readers know how recent the post is.
- When possible, it's good to have a picture at the top of the blog post – images attract attention even if they aren't a perfect illustration of what the post is about.

#### **Writing Blog Posts**

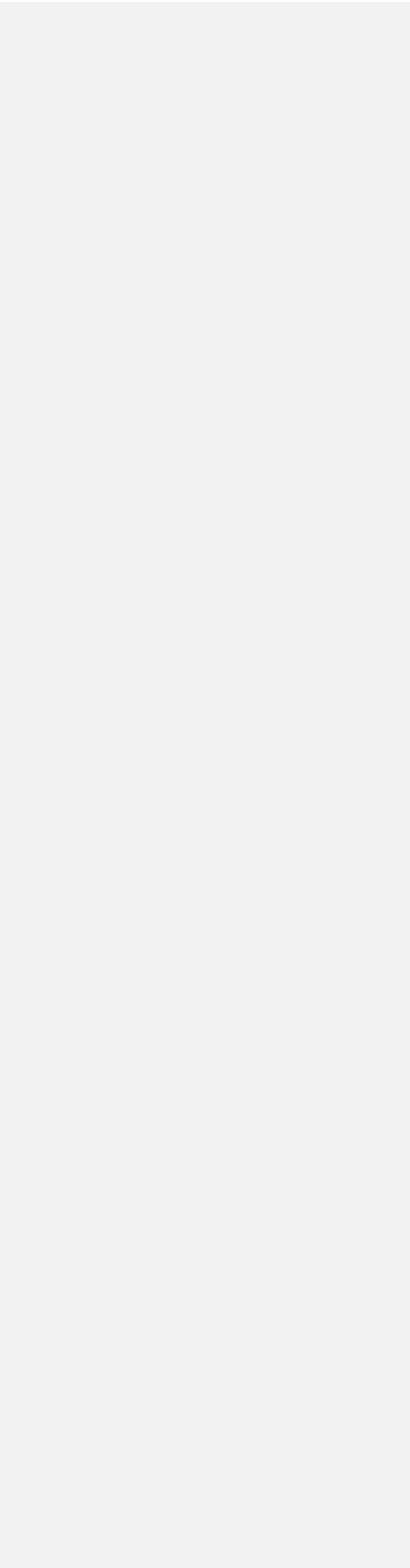
- ***Make it current.*** Blogging is very much an "of the moment" phenomenon, and people typically are not as interested in reading older posts.
- ***Make it conversational.*** While your post may include straight reporting, commentary and analysis, think of your blog as a conversation between you and the reader. A story or anecdote can connect the reader to a tough or complicated issue.
- ***Make it personable.*** Give your opinion on the subject you're writing about. Unlike journalistic pieces, blog posts are very much about the author's personal perspective and personal opinion.
- ***Add links and photographs.*** These give readers additional resources and another way of thinking about your subject.



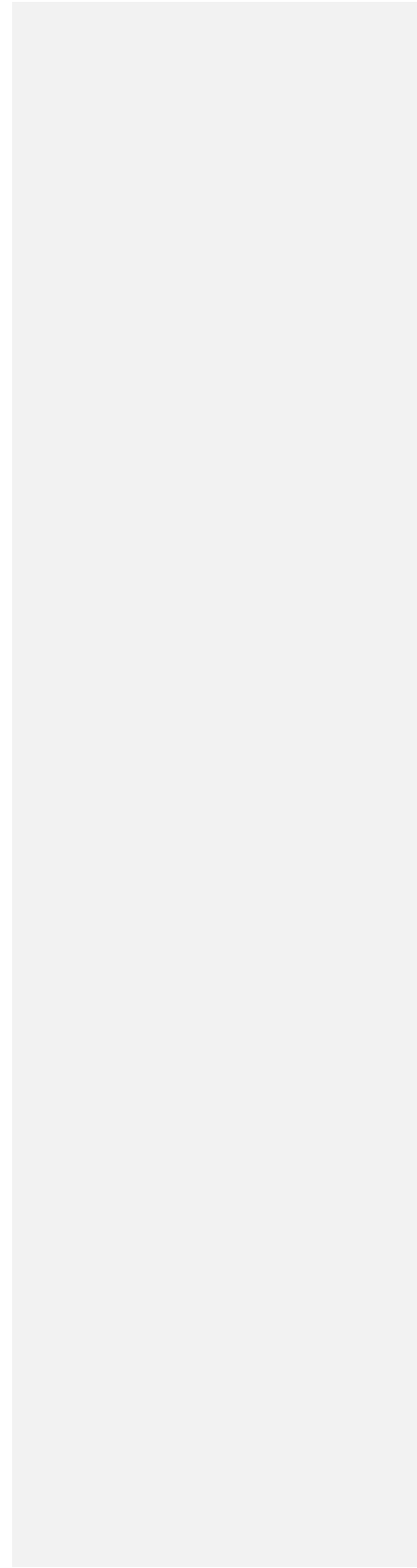
- **Spell out acronyms and avoid jargon.** For example, use “World Health Organization (WHO)” the first time you mention it in your piece, then “WHO” afterwards. Do not assume the reader will understand technical terms, such as “microbicide.”
- **Make it short.** Posts are generally 500-700 words long. Readers have a short attention span online and will not read posts over 1,000 words.
- **Make it clear and clean.** Write it in simple language, proofread and factcheck your own work. Avoid personal attacks, which are generally not acceptable in blogs.
- **Go viral.** Once your article is published, forward it to your network in order to increase its visibility and promote your work. Post it on your Facebook or MySpace page.

#### Some blogs we recommend pitching to:

- [Akimbo](#), the International Women’s Health Coalition blog
- [Advocates for Youth Blogs](#)
- [Amplify Your Voice](#)
- [Association for Women’s Rights in Development](#)
- [Bitch Magazine Blog](#)
- [Blogging Censorship](#)
- [Blood and Milk](#)
- [Causecast](#)
- [Center for Global Development](#)
- [Colorlines](#)
- [Culture Kitchen](#)
- [Feminist Peace Network](#)
- [Feministe](#)
- [Feministing](#)
- [Gender Across Borders](#)
- [Girl With Pen](#)
- [glaadBlog](#)
- [Global Health](#)
- [Global Health at Change.org](#)
- [Global Health TV](#)
- [Health Rights Advocate](#)
- [Indymedia](#)
- [Kaiser Health News](#)
- [Nuestra Vida, Nuestra Voz](#)
- [Our Bodies, Our Blog](#)
- [Pandagon](#)
- [Racewire](#)
- [RH Reality Check](#)
- [Salon: Broadsheet](#)
- [Scarleteen](#)



- [Sex, Etc](#)
- [Shakesville](#)
- [Student Activism](#)
- [The Bilerico Project](#)
- [The Hub Blog](#)
- [The Real Deal](#)
- [Together We Are the Solution](#)
- [Viva La Feminista](#)
- [Waking Vixen](#)
- [wego health](#)
- [Women's eNews](#)
- [Women's News Network](#)
- [Women's Refugee Commission](#)
- [Women's Rights at Change.org](#)
- [World Pulse Media](#)



## Video Shooting Tips – Flip Camera

### *General Stuff*

- Make sure the camera is charged. If you have a Flip Mino, it gets charged by being plugged into a computer's USB drive. Just plug it in and it charges automatically. Older Flips take two double A batteries. When the camera is on it will tell you how much more time you have to shoot as well as the battery level

### *Shot composition*

- Stay close to your subject (about 3 feet away is perfect) and position the camera so that he or she is slightly off center and in the shot from the top of their chest up. Try to get a good shot without zooming – zooming on the Flip degrades the quality of the image
- Avoiding zooming while you're shooting – adjust the shot in between takes. The zoom on the Flip is pretty jerky and hard to control
- Your hand will always shake a tiny bit when you're holding a camera. Steady your arm by propping up your camera-holding arm on a table or other furniture, or use your other hand to hold your elbow steady
- Try to shoot at eye level – stand or sit with your interviewee in a position that is comfortable for normal conversation. This helps to make interviews more relaxed. If you must, shooting from above is more flattering than shooting from below
- Be aware of the “headroom” – the space between the top of the interviewee's head and the top of the frame – and try to keep it minimal. This can be a problem if you are standing while your interviewee is sitting
- Avoid background clutter when possible and pay attention to where objects are in relationship to the interviewee's head – video flattens perspective a bit so later when you watch the footage it might appear that there's a telephone pole coming out of the interviewee's ear. Landscapes or skylines make great backgrounds, a living room or other sitting area is good too (just beware of the position of lamps) . Crowds of people can be problematic because some may look or wave at the camera and this will be distracting
- Stand still – walking with a camera will make your viewer dizzy. If you want to film your subject moving, let them move while you stand still



- Move the camera around to get different angles – this will keep interviews a bit more lively for the viewer . This also makes editing easier and takes off the pressure for the interviewee to speak flawlessly, helps you break at natural points and keep the story a bit more focused

### *Light*

- Whenever possible, natural light is best. Keep the sun behind you but make sure it doesn't cast your shadow/the camera's shadow onto your interviewee
- Have your interviewee turn his or her face toward a light source
- Never seat someone with his or her back to light, you'll get a silhouette. Lamps directly to the side (as in a living room) can also create weird shadows
- Avoid florescent lighting, standing your interviewee near a wall, and overhead lights that shine straight down – these can all make skin look bad and create face shadows, especially under the eyes and nose

### *Sound*

- Shoot in the quietest environment you can find, without distractions like other conversations, phones ringing, and traffic sounds
- If your subject is sitting, beware of squeaky chairs and other fidgety noises
- Your interviewee will be concentrating on answering your questions, so it's your job to listen for background noise (trucks, planes, other conversation) and ask to wait a minute while the sound passes

### *Interviewing*

- Ask your interviewee to pronounce and then spell his or her name
- Have your interviewee introduce themselves to the camera: "I'm ----, program coordinator at ---- in ----."
- Ask your interviewee to look at the camera when he or she is speaking
- Ask your interviewee to repeat the question in their answer. Example: "How do you define a just and healthy life?" Good response: "I define a just and healthy life as..." Bad response: "It's when..." Possible interview questions
  - What does a just and healthy life for women and girls mean to you?
  - How did you start working on sexual rights and reproductive health issues?
  - What do you do during an average day?
  - What are the biggest challenges faced by women and girls in your area?
  - What should the next us president do for women and girls on day one?



### *B Roll and Other Action*

- “B roll” is extra footage that is edited into a video to give context and keep it visually interesting. It can spice up an interview a lot
- Shoot more B roll than you think you’ll need
- Close ups are valuable B roll. As your interviewee is talking, make a mental note of things they talk about. If they talk about their house, get a shot of the house later, if they talk about a newspaper, get a shot of the newspaper. These shots can be a few seconds long but help a lot
- In addition to close ups, try to get long shots (town, skyline, mountains) and medium shots (two people talking, someone on the phone)
- Shots of signage and other contextual stuff is really helpful
- Action shots are also great B roll. When possible, stand still and shoot other people in motion

