



Refugee Week 2019

Engaging local media

Interviews

As part of your press release, you may offer an interview with an individual connected to your story so that a journalist can secure extra information. Similarly, a journalist may approach you to set up an interview.

Interviews – particularly those on radio and TV – can be daunting experiences. However, they can also provide a fantastic opportunity to get your message across – they are also easier to do than you may think!

- **Know what you're getting in for** – If it's a broadcast interview, you should always quiz the producer and get some details of the kind of interview it'll be. The producer is just the person who is setting the interview up on behalf of their presenter, and they'll be very happy to answer any questions you have. Think about the information you want so that you won't get any nasty surprises: how long will the interview be? Will anyone else be interviewed at the same time? What's the angle? What's the line of questioning going to be? Don't be afraid to ask these questions!
- **Format** – You'll have the option of doing it 'down the line' (remotely over the phone or in a remote TV studio), in the studio with the presenter, or they might want to do it at a certain location in the field. It might also be 'pre-rec' (pre-recorded, they will edit it and piece it together into a package which they'll air later) or it might be live. Some morning TV programmes have interviews on the sofa – these (generally) tend to be more relaxed.
- **Where to look** – The general rule is that if you're being interviewed by a person, you should look at and maintain eye contact with them. If it's just a camera – for example if you're doing it 'down the line' from a remote studio with a presenter who is based elsewhere – you should look directly down the camera. Maintain eye contact constantly (without staring too open-eyed) because looking around the camera or avoiding the presenter's gaze will look shifty and distract your audience.
- **Producers can be your friends** – Be friendly and conversational with the producer and technicians who are setting you up and they're more likely to help you out and give you helpful information that will help with your interview. While you're being mic-ed up for a TV interview, for example, chat with the producer and ask them what kind of thing they'll ask first – often they'll be happy to tell you.
- **TV camera exaggerate distractions** – Don't wear big dangly earrings or a loud shirt. Avoid tight contrasting patterns because they strobe. These distractions are exaggerated by a TV camera and they end up being all viewers will notice – and your message will be lost. Wear something smart but comfortable.
- **TV cameras sap energy** – So use your hands to gesture and facial expressions more than you usually would (without going over the top!). But keep your feet still!
- **Posture** – If you're sitting down, keep your bum in the back of the chair, straighten your back, cross your legs at the ankles and place your hands in your lap. TV cameras exaggerate visuals so if you're slouching just a bit, it will look like you're being too casual and viewers will be distracted from your message. It can feel odd but it's a good idea to practice how you'll sit and what you'll do with your hands!
- **Never use jargon!** – Avoid jargon, acronyms and technical terms. Remember that most people have a very basic understanding of refugee issues. You should think about how to communicate your messages using plain untechnical English that anyone could understand.



- **Show your personality** – people respond to people. So be natural and talk as if you were being interviewed by a friend. Be authentic – this means not reading from your notes.
- **Be confident** – You are being interviewed because you are an expert, and most people at home will be completely new to what you are speaking about. They want to hear what you have to say.
- **Slow down!** – Unless you try not to, you will talk too fast. Speak more slowly than you usually would. It helps the audience follow what you're saying, and it gives you time to think. Take a moment after the presenter finishes their question before you answer. And slow down any words or phrases you say a lot – for example, the name of your organisation – that viewers will be unfamiliar with.
- **Boundaries** – If there are topics you or your expert by experience doesn't want to talk about for safeguarding reasons, tell the producer in advance and explain why. Most journalists don't deal with these issues day to day so a friendly reminder and explanation is usually all that's needed. Explain to the person being interviewed what they are going to speak about and where it will be used.
- **Prepare your key points and use them** – Identify two or three key points you want your audience to take away from the interview and reduce them to simple sentences. Don't aim for more than two or three because people simply won't remember it all. Lean your key messages so you can reel them off without thinking. Once you're in the interview, your job is to use them. Don't wait for the interviewer to ask – you must create an opportunity for yourself in your answers. Practice with your colleagues giving answers to questions that feel natural and which give you the chance to deliver your key messages.
- **There is no such thing as off-record** – If you say something that a journalist finds interesting they will use it. After you've finished the interview, stay where you are until you are moved by a producer. Don't say anything unguarded until you are out the building.

Additional information

If you have any questions or require any additional support with your media efforts, please contact the Refugee Week press officers:

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