

Media relations

This part of the module provides an introduction to dealing with the news media and dealing with media interviews. As such, this part can serve as a guide, or springboard, for agencies interested in formulating or updating their media relations policies and guidelines. You are encouraged to read this part critically, recalling that the news media is not a monolithic actor, and understanding that each agency's needs are different and require different approaches. For those readers desiring a more sophisticated and comprehensive treatment of this topic, you are referred to the list of selected readings at the end of this part.

Chapter 8, "Dealing with the Media", provides general guidelines for establishing a credible and pro-active media relations strategy and for developing agency policy. Chapter 9, "Guidelines for Media Interviews", provides the reader general and specific interviewing tips and reminders which will help them prepare successfully for an actual interview with the news media.

This part draws directly and in part from ideas and information found in one of the following five sources.

1. *The News Media, Civil War & Humanitarian Action* by Larry Minear, Colin Scott, and Thomas G. Weiss. Lynne Rienner Publishers. Boulder, London. 1996.
2. *CARE Media Relations Handbook: Getting CARE's Message Across*. CARE USA Public Relations Staff, October 1994.
3. "Public Information", training module of the UNHCR Training Service, Geneva. 1989.
4. "General Media Relations Guidelines", UNHCR/EMTP Training Module, April 10, 1995.
5. "Dealing with the Media", WFP Emergency Operations Training Notes.

In synthesizing these sources, Part 3 does not necessarily express the viewpoint of any single resource, individual, or organization.

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PART **3** Chapter 8

Dealing with the media

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to:



- Understand the importance of establishing credibility with the news media.
- Identify essential strategies for establishing your credibility.
- Understand the importance of developing pro-active media relations.
- Identify five pro-active media
- Distinguish between the nature and purpose of a press conference, press release, and editorial.
- Understand the importance of establishing internal agency policies and guidelines.
- Describe policy checklist items which should appear on internal media policies.

Establishing credibility with the news media

Good media relations are rooted in trust. Journalists need immediate and unimpeded access to sources of information and must be able to rely on the veracity of their sources. Like reputation, credibility is a fragile object. Once credibility is lost, it is not easily regained. Those who try to manipulate the media, for example, by exaggerating refugee numbers and suffering, overstating agency accomplishments, or suppressing important facts, may gain positive coverage in the short-term but will lose out in the long-term. An individual's credibility can be enhanced or undermined by their agency's credibility, and vice versa thus, the importance of clear and consistent agency procedures.

Q. *How might you establish credibility with the news media? Compare your responses with those that follow.*

A. _____



Be honest

Respond honestly and accurately. Tension can arise in trying to accommodate the media when you are not in a position to supply credible information, or you need more time to prepare it. Inadvertent provisional, inaccurate or misleading information can undermine credibility. If you are in one of these situations, find the appropriate person with whom the reporter should speak, or request that the reporter give you more time to prepare an accurate response. Also, remember that honesty does not mean that you have to tell everything that you know. There are many times when you must be discreet about what you say to the media.

Be prompt, available and helpful

Provide reporters with prompt answers to their queries. If they call and you are not in, try to return their call as soon as possible. Whenever feasible, facilitate the media's access to useful and accurate information. At a practical level, this may mean helping them gain privileged access to conflict zones and interviews with major players in the emergency or conflict. Make yourself or a designated representative available at all times for media follow-up questions, additional information, or to provide photographs, interviews, or other materials.

Provide factual and concrete information

Provide accurate facts and figures about the emergency and your operations. Journalists want factual information on the number of refugees/returnees, methods of transport, dates of displacement and return, country and place of origin, names of other agencies in the operation, major humanitarian assistance needs, sources of funding, appeal figures, as well as human interest stories for domestic audiences. In a general sense, talk about your work in concrete terms.

Understand media priorities and interests

Effective media relations depend on understanding the priorities, interests and needs of the various news media sources. (To review this information, refer back to Part 1, Chapter 4.)

Your story, or your side of it, will appear in the media in direct proportion to the interest that it holds for viewers and readers, as judged by the editors and news directors who make such decisions. Avoid complaining about the way your story was handled and getting into fruitless disputes with individual journalists. Responses to unfavorable or inaccurate media coverage should only be made by agency directors, or their spokesperson.

Be open and transparent

Journalists also want to know about the problems you face and what you are doing to overcome these difficulties. never ask for a story to be suppressed —attempts at censorship always backfire. Agencies should not try to hide problems or mistakes. In fact, it is almost always best to talk about problems before the media find out about them on their own —they usually do.



Developing pro-active media relations

One aspect of media relations involves knowing what to say to journalists and reporters who take the initiative to seek you out. But media relations should not stop here. Knowing how to interview, conduct press conferences, or write press releases does not guarantee that the news media will give you a forum. To increase the chances that your messages will be heard requires that your agency become pro-active. To achieve maximum effect with the media will require that your agency nurture media contacts, diversify its media contacts, understand various news mediums for getting your message across and join with other agencies when there are common interests.

Nurture constructive media contacts

Humanitarian agencies should spend considerable resources nurturing constructive working relationships with the news media. Nurtured over time, these contacts give greater confidence to media professionals, encouraging them to proceed with important stories for which full collaboration is time-consuming or impossible. Personal contacts are equally important with gatekeepers in the system, such as editors and owners. Having trusted contacts in the media world is essential for agencies intent on alerting the public and policymakers to impending humanitarian crises, exposing human rights abuses or advocating serious policy changes. When you have nurtured your media contacts, they are much more likely to listen when you have a story to tell. There are many ways of telling your story. Provided you tell it in a lively and interesting way, it will have a good chance of getting into the news.



Diversify media contacts

By virtue of their personal motivations, some journalists may be easier to engage in the humanitarian sphere than others. There should be no presumption, however, that the news media are involved for any reason other than to produce objective reporting. Since headline news necessarily remains an ever-changing forum, agencies should make greater use of documentary and commentary news to stimulate more thoughtful policy debate about complex emergencies in which humanitarian organizations have a strong interest.

There is fierce competition for headline news; agencies should not overlook opinion page columnists, feature writers, and documentary filmmakers who often have the luxury to consider subjects beyond the main news. A good concerted media strategy, whether of an individual organization or a coalition of aid groups, will allow for differentiated approaches depending on the objectives being advanced.

Use various news mediums

There are many ways of relaying your message to the news media. In addition to interviews, your agency may issue a press release, hold a press conference, develop a documentary film, or write and submit an editorial. Understanding the distinctions and uses of each will help you identify when to use each medium.

Press conference

Agencies hold press conferences to publicly announce significant and newsworthy initiatives, changes in policy or official statements regarding controversial issues to a variety of news media outlets. The basic rule for press conferences is to have something significant to announce and somebody significant to announce it. Nothing else works. If overused, or inappropriately used, people will stop attending them and your credibility with the news media will be damaged. Little irks reporters more than a badly timed, ill-considered press conference of limited news value. When in doubt issue a press release (see next section).



The ideal press conference lasts no more than 30 minutes and consists of a brief (five-minute) introduction and prepared opening statement, followed by questions and answers from the audience (usually journalists and television reporters). Many of the general guidelines for interviewing discussed in Chapter 9 should be followed by those holding the press conference. A press release should be distributed to all at the beginning of the meeting.

Press releases

A press release is a brief written statement, under a page long, which announces a significant agency policy, initiative or real-life story. Press releases should be written in a newspaper format and convey the basic who, what, when, where, how and why of your story. A carefully crafted, well-written and well-timed press release gives reporters a ready-made story, or something they can quickly edit, cut or rewrite, according to their needs and time constraints. Like the press conference, you should only issue press releases when you have something newsworthy to say, either something so immediate that you cannot wait for a press conference to be called or organized or, as in the majority of cases, the matter is not of major importance and does not warrant a formal announcement with questions from print, radio and television reporters. Do not bombard journalists with press releases: the more you send, the less impact they will have. Call the journalists after you have sent it to ensure that they received it.

May 1997

Press Release 97/15

Zaire: Ten volunteers of the Zairian Red Cross Killed in Kenge
Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was deeply shocked to learn of the death of 10 first-aid workers of the Red Cross Society of the Republic of Zaire, killed some hours ago in Kenge, a town 200 km east of Kinshasa. According to information received by the ICRC delegation in the Zairian capital, the tragedy occurred as the volunteers were assisting people wounded in the fighting which had been raging in Kenge. Some 200 civilians were reportedly killed in the clashes, and 126 wounded have been admitted to hospital, 25 of them in critical condition.

The ICRC calls on the belligerents to respect all persons not taking part in the fighting, in particular civilians, prisoners and the wounded, and also the staff and buildings placed under the protection of the Red Cross emblem. ICRC delegates and Zairian Red Cross personnel will attempt to reach Kenge in the coming hours to provide medical assistance to the hospital.

—ICRC Internet Announcement.

Editorials

Editorial writers differ from news reporters in that their writing reflects more idealism, advocacy and personal opinion. Every day they must find an issue or topic to announce, denounce, expose, praise, analyze and comment on. Their purpose is to further the debate, influence public opinion and shape public policy on issues of concern to them. Good editorial writers, however, will want to learn all sides of an issue prior to establishing their own opinion. For these reasons, you may be able to assist them while they help publicize your cause or perspective.

You can help them by suggesting coverage and offering information on an issue, story or cause which is timely, controversial, and in the public interest. You can pique their interest by first sending them a brief description and agency perspective on the issue, followed by a phone call to answer questions. You may also suggest a visit with them at their office. Keep this visit brief and informal. In this meeting, quickly describe your organization, why this issue warrants an editorial, and what measures or changes your agency is proposing. During this meeting, you should provide them with a press release, information packet, fact sheet or newsletter related to the issue. This will facilitate their task by providing them with ready references for their story. If the editorial is printed, you should follow-up with a note or call of appreciation.

News documentaries

Documentary news, which enjoys a longer shelf life than headline news, may offer more detailed background and analysis of an issue, demonstrating the investigative or analytical skills of a particular news outlet or reporter. This kind of coverage is typically found in specialist broadcast features and on inside pages of newspapers and journals. Some newspapers have little space for documentary news and, in their allocation of what they have, give preference to local or national over international topics. Documentary news can stimulate more thoughtful policy debate about complex emergencies, and provide a more complete image of a developing country and the challenges it faces.

Larger humanitarian agencies already have begun to pay for the independent production of news or documentary footage to provide broadcasters with a news package. Television networks, although rightly wary of their loss of control over reporting and editing functions, may still utilize prepackaged material if news holes appear and their own products are not available on time. Partnerships with reliable independent production companies decrease the potential bias and increase the quality of the product and the chances of broadcast or telecast. Given the substantial cost of documentary coverage, however, these undertakings are more feasible for coalitions of organizations than for individual agencies.



A. Holman

Coordinating with other agencies

At the operational level, interagency coordination is essential and difficult. In Part 1 Chapter 3, we learned that humanitarian organizations are heterogeneous and largely independent actors. These factors make it difficult for them to collectively engage the media and public opinion or influence government policy in any significant or concentrated way. Nevertheless, more sustained and effective influence on government policy will require that humanitarian organizations wrestle more energetically with complex policy issues and work harder to identify issues on which consensus may emerge. Agencies should devote more time and resources to forging a shared message in various emergencies. The message should go beyond “something must be done”, but stop short of getting entangled in complex, divisive political and operational issues.

Q. *What common media interests might a coalition of humanitarian agencies have? Compare your responses with those that follow.*

A. _____



CHECKLIST FOR COORDINATION

A checklist to help determine opportunities for coordinating interagency media relations:

- ✓ Increase public awareness about the plight of a certain group of refugees or the human rights abuses against a certain ethnic group.
- ✓ Monitor and evaluate the media content for accuracy, quality, completeness, timeliness and professionalism.
- ✓ Educate the public to gain support and funding for relief and development activities.
- ✓ Jointly produce and facilitate costly alternative programming such as documentaries.
- ✓ Select a clearly identified point of contact for the media seeking information about rapidly changing complex emergencies, like what occurred in Rwanda or Somalia.



Internal guidelines and policies

Media relations are an integral component of your organization's work: what you do or say to the media will affect other people in your organization. At the same time, staff members who are designated to deal with the media cannot be effective without the assistance and support of everyone else. The importance of cooperation, coordination and communication within the organization cannot be overstated. Your agency's staff can more professionally, effectively and consistently relate to the media when your agency has established clear internal guidelines and policies for this purpose.

Q. *What might you want to include in your agency's manual on media relations guidelines and/or policies? Compare your response with the list that follows:*

A. _____



Agencies differ in their groundrules for media contacts. Some will delegate media contact to their front lines. Others will limit this contact to headquarters, or only to capital-based aid staffs in operational theaters. An agency may also develop media relations guidelines which distinguish between crisis and non-crisis situations. Crisis situations, where lives or agency reputation are threatened, may require a more disciplined, coordinated and centralized media relations strategy, than non-crisis situations. To prepare for crisis events, many agencies, such as the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), have developed a "Crisis communications plan", which includes the formation of a crisis management team. Examples of what MCC might consider a crisis event includes: criminal activity or sexual misconduct by someone on staff, a hostage taking, an accident involving MCC staff, and/or the perception of gross incompetence or poor stewardship of resources.



CHECKLIST OF MEDIA RELATIONS POLICIES

In developing agency-wide media relations policies or guidelines, a checklist of considerations might include:

- ✓ Routing procedures for when the media calls. Either refer them to the public relations department or to a staff member charged with these responsibilities.
- ✓ Guidelines concerning fundraising opportunities and limitations.
- ✓ Coordination of media relations with other humanitarian agencies.
- ✓ Facilitation of news media access and transport in conflict zones.

- ✓ How to handle and manage a public relations crisis.
- ✓ How to respond to unfavorable or inaccurate media coverage.
- ✓ Whether to accept or decline news media interviews.
- ✓ Interviewing do's and don'ts.
- ✓ Whether/when to challenge and voice opposition to government policies or human rights abuses.

SELF-STUDY EXERCISES

Indicate whether each of the following statements is true or false.

- ___ 1. During an interview it is better to make something up or speculate on an issue than to admit that you do not know the answer.
- ___ 2. Press releases should be released as often as possible in order to keep your agency's name fresh on the mind of the journalists you are courting.
- ___ 3. Agencies should develop media relations guidelines and policies to assist their staff in dealing consistently and effectively with the media.

Match the description with the news medium which it best describes:

- A. Tabloid journalism B. Headline news C. Editorials
D. Press release E. press conference

- ___ 4. These are held to physically meet with a number of news media sources at one time
- ___ 5. A brief written statement which announces a significant agency policy, initiative or event.
- ___ 6. These are written by news reporters whose writing often reflects their idealism, advocacy and personal opinion.

7. Describe three strategies for developing more pro-active media relations.

8. Why is it critical for your agency to establish its credibility with the news media?

- 1.F 2.F 3.T
4.E 5.D 6.C
7. Nurture your media contacts; diversify your media contacts; coordinate common messages with other agencies.
8. According to George C. Cullip of the Wood Communications Group, "The universal rule for long-term satisfactory relationships with the media is credibility. Good media relations are rooted in credibility and trust."

ANSWER KEY

PART **3** Chapter 9

LEARNING
OBJECTIVES

Guidelines for interviews

After reading this chapter, you will:



L. Barco

- *Understand the importance of assuming you are always “on the record”.*
- *Know different ways to attribute information.*
- *Understand the importance of being brief, preparing objectives, speaking memorably, and staying positive.*
- *Recognize prototype interview situations and questions.*
- *Learn effective ways to deal with these prototype situations and questions.*

General interviewing tips

Journalists and reporters are interested in stories. At their worst, they ask tricky and leading questions, misquote sources, and can seem arrogant and abrasive in pursuit of a story. At their best, they educate and inform the public about important issues and trends, expose instances of corruption, inefficiency and incompetence, and use the power of information for the public good.

To get your message or story across, you must provide information that is useful to the journalist in a way that will capture the intended audience’s attention. You must also be careful about what you say and how you say it, otherwise you may severely damage or erode your agency’s image.

Remember that a 10-minute interview may wind up being 20 seconds on the air, or three lines in the newspaper. It is essential to crystallize your thoughts in a few hard-hitting sentences. The following guidelines are meant to help you interview successfully.

Assume you are “on the record”

While it is important for your agency to develop good and friendly relations with the media, a word of caution is necessary. Although you may develop a friendship with a reporter, remember that reporters are reporters 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you do not want to be quoted on a particular item, choose to remain quiet. The best policy is to assume that everything you say is “on the record”. When the news is important, there is no such thing as “off the record”.

Use common language

Keep language non-inflammatory, simple and candid. Attempts at humor may alienate many people. Use a layman's terms (not jargon) that the reporters and their audience will understand. In everyday conversation, ordinary people do not use terms like “modalities”, “durable solutions”, “NGOs”, “humanitarian mandates”, “implementing partners”, and “internally displaced persons”.

Be brief

When you finish answering the question, or presenting your perspective, stop. There is no law that compels you to say more than you want or intend to say. Avoid suggesting follow-up questions, unless you need to do so in order to share valuable or important information of which the reporter is unaware or has overlooked.

Prepare objectives and rehearse

Have one or two key ideas you want to get across and make sure to get them in early; add the detail later, the print media generally edits in a “pyramidal fashion”. Prepare objectives, rehearse and develop a focused story. Do some role-playing and rehearse on your own, with colleagues or, even better, with someone who is not involved in your concerns. You can probably anticipate the journalist's questions. Keep your thoughts simple and clear.

Develop your own focused story

Sometimes reporters may not have the time to properly prepare for a productive interview. This often presents an opportunity for you to raise the issues you want. Present yourself as a good story subject. The press is always looking for interesting news stories, and no one knows what's going on in your field better than you do. Take the initiative. Be prepared to take the lead and direct the interview into areas of information you can present with a focus and a positive slant. Avoid wandering into new topics or issues for which you have thought little about, or are ill-prepared to discuss, much less defend.

Speak memorably

Once you have identified what your primary message is going to be, you will need to think about how to say it concisely and memorably. The use of “soundbites”, “personal anecdotes”, “messages with a domestic link”, and “statistics” can help you accomplish this.

Soundbites. For headline news coverage, you will have to think and speak in “sound-bites”—powerful, but brief statements which sum up your point in just a few words. A sound-bite can be a metaphor, a memorable quote, or a startling fact or figure which will illustrate the situation for the listening or reading audience. Keep in mind that sound-bites are like humor – they can be misunderstood—so use them with care.





Use personal anecdotes. Journalists and their audiences are often interested in the human angle of a story. You can bring a story to life by inserting personal anecdotes or by establishing a personal stake in what you are doing. For example, "This is the worst flood I have seen in my fifteen years of disaster relief work." You can also personalize the message by sharing a story about a refugee family or person that your program has helped. In certain hostile situations, however, you will need to use careful judgment, as an interview may jeopardize a victim's safety. If you want to arrange interviews involving refugees, explain to the refugee the purpose of the interview, and make it clear that he or she can refuse.



Localize the message. In Part 2, we learned that reporters are often interested in an event's impact on their local reading or viewing audiences. Find ways to relate what you are doing and what is happening to the "home town" of the media conducting the interview. For example, in describing the number of refugees and displaced persons affected by civil war to a reporter from Zurich, you might say something like, "Imagine that over half of the city of Zurich's population was forced to abandon their homes and evacuate the city with only the clothes on their back."

Present statistics effectively. When presenting statistics, present them in a colorful way that will help one visualize their impact. For example, "We are delivering two tons of grain every week to the country of Yurgistan," can be converted to, "We're delivering enough food every week to fill a soccer stadium."

Know your interviewer

Use the interviewer's name once or twice in the course of the interview and maintain eye contact. If possible get to know your interviewer ahead of time, either in person, or by previewing programs on which you will appear or reading some articles by the reporter who will interview you.

Prepare a press packet

Provide your interviewer with a press or information packet which includes organization brochures, brief biographies of those interviewed, feature articles, photographs, graphs, charts, and factual background information on the history and magnitude of the emergency. You may also want to provide journalists with a condensed, easy-to-read, one-page fact sheet containing basic data and key points – either in the press packet or as a substitute for it.

Be positive

Avoid criticizing colleagues or other humanitarian agencies or their personnel. Rather, emphasize where possible the positive aspects of inter-agency cooperation and the successes of other agencies. Similarly, avoid arguing with reporters or interviewers. Remember, they always have the last word.



Maintain control and composure

Maintain your calm and composure in the face of what may seem to be hostile, irrelevant or accusatory questioning. Do not let reporters put words into your mouth. If they ask a leading question such as, "Don't you think that...?" or "So you are saying that...", correct their error, or redirect the interview, in a courteous, non-threatening manner.

Use bridging statements

According to CARE, your responses should be message-driven, not question-driven. When faced with a contentious question, use a “bridging” statement to introduce your message or points. Examples of bridging statements are:

“I understand your concern, but the real issue here is...”

“Your concern is important, but let us not overlook the fact that...”

“I’m sorry you feel that way, but let me ask you to consider this...”

Be honest and accurate

If you do not know the answer to a question, say so and offer to get back to the journalist with a reply. Erroneous information, as we have already discussed, will ruin not only your credibility, but that of your organization. Similarly, be willing to defer to a senior officer when you are asked policy questions which are too sensitive or controversial for you to answer.



Answer the question, but send the message that you want to send.

Common situations and suggested responses

In this section you will get a chance to practice your interviewing skills in specific situations. Imagine that you work for the fictitious Lifeline Aid International. You are doing an interview with a reporter about your agency’s current relief effort in the complex emergency evolving in Yurgistan (an imaginary country). The intent is to help you anticipate and prepare for interviewing situations which will be very similar to the eight common interviewing scenarios listed below. These give you an idea of the types of questions you need to anticipate and prepare for. Read the scenario and then note how you might respond or manage the situation. Where specific questions are asked, provide specific responses.

A. *Question is preceded with a hostile, negative or inaccurate remark.*

How would you deal with this situation? _____

B. *You are asked a question that has no bearing on your agenda, or on the stated focus of the interview.*

How would you deal with this situation? _____

C. *The reporter attempts to ask you a question in such a way that will draw out your criticism of another agency.*

How would you deal with this situation? _____

SCENARIO RESPONSES

A – Gently counter the remark or assumption. Otherwise you will be tacitly agreeing with it. State your correction in a positive way, but avoid repeating the initial remark

B – Try to “bridge” to a relevant point, or to your intended message.

C – Never criticize other agencies. Stay focused on your agency’s mission and message.

D. *You are asked to comment on a hypothetical or highly speculative situation.*

How would you deal with this situation? _____

E. *You get a series of critical or hostile questions from one individual who is dominating the question and answer period.*

How would you deal with this situation? _____

F. *You are interrupted by a heckler's hostile remark or question during your comments.*

How would you deal with this situation? _____

G. *There are no questions.*

How would you deal with this situation? _____

H. *You are asked to choose between two or more options or scenarios.*

How would you deal with this situation? _____

*D – Do not speculate unless there is a positive message to share about your agency.
E – Acknowledge the disagreement, ask them to summarize their statement. For example, "You seem to be in fundamental disagreement with what I am saying. It might be useful if you would summarize your views in a few words". An acceptance quickly exposes his or her bias or ignorance; or he or she may make a vulnerable statement that you can readily refute.
F – Look at the person asking the question or making the remark, acknowledge the remark or question, and say that you will address the issue after you have finished your comments.
G – Suggest the issues to talk about. For example, "You may be interested in one or two questions I've received from other groups". Then ask a question that will enable you to emphasize one of your major points or objectives.
H – Don't choose unless there is a clear and positive message you can deliver.*

SCENARIO RESPONSES

Interviewing: beyond words

Communication consists of more than spoken words. The tone of your voice, your appearance, your dress and your body language also communicate messages.

SCENARIO: You are about to be interviewed on TV. You have already prepared the messages and stories on which you will focus. Now imagine what non-verbal communication elements are important during the interview. List these below. Compare your responses with the checklist that follows.



TELEVISION INTERVIEW PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- ✓ Maintain eye contact with the reporter.
- ✓ Smile when appropriate and use natural facial expressions.
- ✓ If given a choice, stand for the interview, as your voice will project more authority.
- ✓ If standing, maintain an open body position by keeping your arms at your side, not crossed.
- ✓ Gesture freely yet avoid exaggerated movements or covering your face with your hands.
- ✓ Speak in your natural tone of voice.
- ✓ Speak clearly, concisely and confidently.
- ✓ Remain calm, comfortable and relaxed.
- ✓ If sitting, sit upright, with your hands in your lap, just above your knees. Cross your legs at your ankles; it looks better.
- ✓ Wear subdued, colored clothes – medium-tone grays, blues, and tans are best.
- ✓ Avoid clothes with stripes, checks or small patterns.
- ✓ Check your appearance before appearing in the studio – tie, hair, button, zipper?
- ✓ Do not smoke on the air.
- ✓ Request a stationary chair. Do not sit on a revolving or moveable chair.
- ✓ Keep your hands still. Do not fidget with pens or pencils.



SELF-STUDY EXERCISES

The following examples are questions that reporters may ask you. They are asked in a way that touches on some of the scenarios discussed earlier. After reading each question, write the linking phrases or words that you would use to actually respond to these questions.

Sample question: Lifeline Aid has closed all of its food distribution sites in the northeast region even though there are thousands of starving refugees in Bola. Why is Lifeline Aid turning its back on the refugees at such a critical time?

Your response: "While two of the sites have been temporarily closed down, we have not closed all of them. Our sites in the cities X, Y and Z are still open. Regarding those that were closed, let me explain what we did, why we did it, and under what conditions we can recommence distribution at these closed sites." (Situation A.)

1. **Reporter:** Given Lifeline Aid International's complete failure in the Somalia relief effort, what makes you think that you can be successful in Yurgistan?

Your response: _____

2. **Reporter:** There have been reports of fighting occurring near the site where you are distributing food. The rebels seem to have made incredible advances in recent days. Which side does Lifeline Aid support?

Your response: _____

1 - "Many relief agencies were challenged by the Somalia emergency. Lifeline Aid has made great strides since this emergency, and has incorporated the lessons learned into our current effort. For example, we are now..."
2 - "The conditions we are working under are indeed intense. However, Lifeline Aid is a humanitarian agency dedicated to providing for the needs of the suffering - wherever it occurs regard- less of politics. Lifeline Aid is one of only two organizations to have reached agreements with both sides to this conflict. These agreements have allowed us to set up food, health and water distribution centers on both sides."
SUGGESTED RESPONSES

3. *Reporter:* The European relief agency, Refugee Support, has said that Lifeline Aid International is opportunistic and cares more about “high-profile relief operations” where television coverage is certain than it does about providing for the most needy refugees who may be difficult to reach. Why would they say this?

Your response: _____

4. *Reporter:* There have been reports that the rebels have been blocking aid convoys in the northeastern region of Yurgistan. What if this happens to your convoys?

Your response: _____

5. *Reporter:* “That’s a bunch of garbage”, or “That’s a lot of bull...”

Your response: _____

6. *Reporter:* Is Lifeline Aid opening an office in rebel-held territory because the United States supports the rebels and has made funding available, or because Lifeline Aid believes that the rebels are on the brink of victory?

Your response: _____

3 – “If this is what was said, you will have to ask them why they said it. If you look at our record you will quickly see that Lifeline Aid International has always conducted its operations in an impeccable and professional manner. Our 15 years of experience have earned us a world-wide reputation of delivering relief to where it is needed most.”

4 – “We have no reason to believe that this will happen given our record of negotiating and maintaining continual open communication with both sides.”

“At this point, John, I would rather not speculate on something that has not yet happened. However, you may be interested in knowing that in other areas, Lifeline Aid has received unconditional access guarantees from both the government and rebel forces.”

5 – “We’ll take up your special interest in a moment, sir.”

6 – “Lifeline Aid is an independent, private charity dedicated to impartiality and neutrality. We do not make political or military predictions, nor do we serve as the pawns of any political entity. Our primary aim is to provide assistance to needy populations wherever they may be and to help them regain self-sufficiency as rapidly as possible.”

SUGGESTED RESPONSES



SELECTED READINGS: MEDIA RELATIONS

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NOTES

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2. As quoted by his spokesperson Sylvana Foa.
3. For a recent summary see David Hesmondhalgh, "Media Coverage of Humanitarian Emergencies: A Literature Survey", unpublished paper (Department of Media and Communications, Goldsmiths College, London, October 1993). See also Jonathon Benthall, *Disasters, Relief and the Media* (London: Tauris, 1993); Robert I. Rotberg and Thomas G. Weiss (eds.), *From Massacres to Genocide: The Media, Public Policy, and Humanitarian Crises* (Washington: The Brookings Institution and World Peace Foundation, 1996); Edward Girardet (ed.), *Somalia, Rwanda, and Beyond: The Role of International Media in Wars and Humanitarian Crises* (Geneva: Crosslines Global Report, 1995); and Steven Livingston (ed.), *Humanitarian Crises: Meeting the Challenges* (Chicago: Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, 1995).
4. See Benthall, *Disasters*, in particular his description of the "Band Aid phenomenon" in 1984, 84–85.
5. Michael Binyon, "Media Tunnel Vision Is Attacked by Hurd", *London Times*, September 10, 1993, 13.
6. Comment by U.S. President Bill Clinton on "A Global Forum", a CNN special broadcast, May 3, 1994.
7. As quoted by his spokesperson Sylvana Foa.
8. Taken from John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (New York: Harper/Collins, 1984), 4–5, and Martin Lipsky, *Impact: How the Press Affects Federal Policymaking* (New York: Norton, 1986), 137.
9. Kingdon, *Agendas*, 4
10. For an elaboration of this typology, see Larry Minear and Thoms G. Weiss, *Humanitarian Politics* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1995), 32–37.
11. See, for example, Mark Duffield, "Political Action or Humanitarian Action?" in *Rwanda's Disaster Dilemmas Explored* (Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, December 1994). See also, Rakiya Omaar ad Alex de Waal, *Humanitarianism Unbound? Discussion Paper No. 5* (London: Africa Rights, 1994).
12. For the most current report, James H. Michel, *Development Co-operation: Efforts and Policies of the Members of the Development Assistance Committee* (Paris: OECD, 1994).
13. See J. Brian Atwood, "Suddenly Chaos", *Washington Post*, July 31, 1994, C9.
14. Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 31.
15. See Michel, *Development Co-operation.*, 2.
16. Remarks by Secretary of Defense William J. Perry to the Fortune 500 Forum, Philadelphia, PA, November 3, 1994.
17. Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience* (Copenhagen: Steering Committee, 1996), 5, Synthesis Report, 70.
18. Michel, *Development Co-operation*, 2.
19. Judith Randel and Tony German (eds.), *The Reality of Aid 1995* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1995), 73. In *The Reality of Aid* series, published each year by a consortium of NGOs with country reports and an analysis of overall aid trends, tends to treat humanitarian issues in ways more tough-minded, critical, and hard-hitting than its DAC counterpart.
20. See Thomas G. Weiss and leon Gordenher (eds.), *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996).
21. For an elaboration of these issues, see Larry Minear and Philippe Guillot, *Soldiers to the Rescue: Humanitarian Lessons from Rwanda* (Paris: OECD, 1996). The volume reviews the activities of international military forces in Rwanda in the context of the growing role of the military around the world in the humanitarian sphere.

22. For a more extended treatment, see Minear and Thomas G. Weiss, *Mercy Under Fire: War and the Global Humanitarian Community* (Boulder: Westview, 1995), 179–195.
23. See “The Future of Aid”, *Relief and Rehabilitation Network Newsletter* No. 3 (London: Overseas Development Institute, April 1995), 4–6.
24. For a working definition of coordination, see Larry Minear, et al., *United Nations Coordination of the International Humanitarian Response to the Gulf Crisis 1990–1992* Occasional Paper No. 13 (Providence: Watson Institute, 1992), 3.
25. See *Under the Volcanoes: A World Disasters Report Special Focus on the Rwandan Refugee Crisis* (Geneva: IFRC, 1994).
26. For a review of various coordination arrangements and their results, see Antonio Donini, *The Policies of Mercy: Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique, and Rwanda* Occasional Paper No. 2 (Providence: Watson Institute, 1996).
27. Randel and German, *The Reality*, 9.
28. This point is made in an essay by Edward Girardet, “Public Opinion, the Media, and Humanitarianism,” in Thomas G. Weiss and Larry Minear (eds.), *Humanitarianism Across Borders: Sustaining Civilians in Times of War* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1993), 39–55.
29. For example, “Impact of Television on U.S. Foreign Policy”, Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, April 26, 1994 (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 1994). See also Nik Gowing, *Real-time Television Coverage of Armed Conflicts and Diplomatic Crises: Does It Pressure or Distort Foreign Policy Decisions?* Press, Politics, and Public Policy Working Papers 94-1 (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1994).
30. Carole Zimmerman, “Shifting Focus: The Role of the Media”, in *Hunger 1996: Countries in Crisis*, Sixth Annual Report on the State of World Hunger (Silver Spring, MD: Bread for the World Institute, 1995), 54. This chapter (pp. 53-58) is a thoughtful review of the constraints on the media as an agent of education and change in the humanitarian sphere.
31. For a useful account of the diverse forces operating in a broadcast news operation, see R. Wallis and S. Baran, *The Known World of Broadcast News: International News and the Electronic Media* (London: Routledge, 1990). The “gatekeeper” notion is used by Steven Livingston, “Suffering in Silence: Media Coverage of War and Famine in the Sudan”, in Rotberg and Weiss (eds.), *From Massacres*, 68–89.
32. Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What’s News* (New York: Vintage, 1979).
33. Gans, *Deciding What’s News*, 149, 37.
34. Summarized by Hesmondhalgh, *Media Coverage*.
35. On one occasion following the Ethiopian famine in the mid-1980s, a delegation of Ethiopians during a visit to Washington to evaluate international response sharply criticized the media, humanitarian organizations, and congressional and administration officials who, they felt, had deprived them of their humanity in their effort to hasten a U.S. response to the crisis.
36. Interview with a U.S. TV network news reporter, December 1, 1994.
37. For more detail, see Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 336–338.
38. For an exposition of both models see Steve Livingston and Todd Eachus, “Humanitarian Crises and U.S. Foreign Policy: Somalia and the CNN Effect Reconsidered”, *Political Communication* 12, no. 4 (1995): 413–429.
39. Gowing, *Real-time Television*, 3-5.
40. Summarizing a wide-ranging discussion, the formulation of these phases was made by Staffan de Mistura, Director of UNICEF’s Division of Public Affairs.
41. Lipsky, *Impact*, 224.
42. Ted Koppel, in “Impact of Television on U.S. Foreign Policy”, Congressional hearing, 5. This same line of argument is developed by Natsios, “Illusions of Influence”, in Rotberg and Weiss (eds.), *From Massacres*, 149–168. For an account of the degree to which the Clinton administration generally accommodates the media in policymaking, see Bob Woodward, *The Agenda* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), and Lexington, “The Vote Processor”, *Economist* 332, no. 7876 (August 13, 1994): 30.
43. See John E. Rielly (ed.), *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy 1995* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1995), 31.
44. Mark Duffield, “Complex Emergencies and the Crisis of Developmentalism”, *IDS Bulletin: Linking Relief and Development* 25, no. 4 (October 1994): 37–45.

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47. Raymond Bonner, "Trying to Document Rights Abuses", *New York Times*, July 26, 1995, A10.
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50. For an example, see Jeffrey Goldberg, "A War without a Purpose in a Country without Identity", *New York Times Magazine*, January 22, 1995, 36–39.
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52. Sir Anthony Parsons, "Conclusions and Recommendations", in Nigel Rodley (ed.), *To Loose the Bands of Wickedness* (London: Brasey's, 1992), 219.
53. See Steven Livingston, "Suffering in Silence: Media Coverage of War and Suffering in the Sudan", in Robert I. Rotberg and Thomas G. Weiss (eds.), *The Media*.
54. John Prendergast, Center of Concern, interview March 9, 1995.
55. For example, see Karen Hooper with Don Redding, *Children of Forgotten Emergencies*, a campaign booklet for Save the Children-UK (London, 1995).
56. François Jean (ed.), *Populations in Danger* (London: Libbey, 1992), 65–66.
57. Quoted in Michael R. Beschloss, prepared statement in "Impact of Television on U.S. Foreign Policy", hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, April 26, 1994, 50. See also Gowing, *Real-time Television Coverage*, 38.
58. Gannett Foundation Media Center, *The Media at War: The Press and the Persian Gulf Conflict* (New York: Gannett Center, 1991), xi.
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60. Remarks by General Shalikhovich, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, in Livingston (ed.), *Humanitarian Crises*, 57.
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63. John Prendergast, Center of Concern, interview March 9, 1995.
64. See Jean (ed.), *Populations in Danger*, 45–49.
65. Mort Rosenblum, "Lack of Information or Lack of Will?" in Edward R. Girardet (ed.), *Somalia, Rwanda and Beyond: The Role of the International Media in Wars and Humanitarian Crises* (Geneva: Crosslines Global Report, 1995), 79.
66. Interview with former USAID official, December 1994.
67. Rosenblum, "Lack of Information", 79.
68. See Debarati G. Sapir and Hedwig Deconinck, "The Paradox of Humanitarian Assistance and Military Intervention in Somalia", in Thomas G. Weiss (ed.), *The United Nations and Civil Wars* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 151–172.
69. Thomas Keenan, *Back to the Front: Tourism of War* (Paris: Basse-Normandie, 1994), 143.
70. See Andrew Natsios, "Illusions of Influence: The CNN Effect in Complex Emergencies?" in Rotberg and Weiss (eds.), *From Massacres*, 149–168.
71. Lawrence Eagleburger on "Reliable Sources, How Television Shapes Diplomacy", CNN, October 16, 1994.
72. See Warren A. Strobel, *Push Me, Pull You: The News Media, Peace Operations, and US Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, forthcoming), chapter 4.
73. Donatella Lorch, "Lights, Camera,... Land Em", *International Herald-Tribune*, December 10, 1992, 2.

74. Mark Huband, "War Games", *Guardian*, January 9, 1993, 15 (Supplement Section).
75. Rick Lyman, "Occupational Hazards", in Girardet (ed.), *Somalia, Rwanda and Beyond*, 115–128.
76. Quoted in Gowing, *Real-Time Television*, 67. Gowing concludes, the "pictures struck a raw nerve at a time when the administration was uncertain as to whether U.S. troops were still making a valuable contribution to the UN aid mission".
77. *Ibid.*, 27.
78. Frank J. Stech, "Winning CNN Wars", *Parameters* (Autumn 1994): 43.
79. Rosenblum, "Lack of Information", 82.
80. See Thomas G. Weiss, "Collective Spinelessness: U.N. Actions in the Former Yugoslavia", in Richard E. Ullman (ed.), *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, forthcoming).
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82. Michael Binyon, "Media Tunnel Vision Is Attacked by Hurd", *London Times*, September 10, 1993, 13.
83. For example, *The Independent* newspaper (UK) throughout 1993.
84. Quoted in Gowing, *Real-time Television*, 72.
85. Quoted in *New York Times*, July 28, 1995, A4.
86. Major General Lewis MacKenzie, "Military Realities of UN Peacekeeping Operations", *RUSI Journal* 138, no. 1 (February 1993): 23.
87. For a discussion of indigenous media roles, see Article 19, International Centre Against Censorship, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Avon: Bath Press, 1994).
88. The observation was made in an interview with the authors by Iain Guest, Fellow at the Refugee Policy Group, Washington D.C. This and other insights on the Haiti crisis were drawn from discussions with Guest and with William G. O'Neill, a consultant to the National Coalition for Haitian Rights.
89. For a summary of the cases for and against U.S. invasion of Haiti, see Robert I. Rotberg, "Give Haiti's Cedras a Deadline for Leaving, Then Act on It", *Christian Science Monitor*, September 12, 1994, 18.
90. Steven Kull and Clay Ramsay, "U.S. Public Attitudes on U.S. Involvement in Haiti", Program on International Policy Attitudes, University of Maryland, August 22, 1994.
91. Lawrence A. Pezzullo, "Our Haiti Fiasco", *Washington Post*, May 5, 1994, A23.
92. Remarks by General Shalikhshvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, in Livingston (ed.), *Humanitarian Crises*, 5.
93. For a more extended review, see Robert Maguire (team leader), et al., *Haiti Held Hostage: The Quest for Nationhood, 1986–1996* Occasional Paper No. 23 (Providence: Watson Institute, 1996).
94. For an account of media coverage of Burundi-Rwanda 1993–1994, see James MacGuire, "Rwanda before the Massacre", *Forbes Media Critic* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 39.
95. Steering Committee, *International Response*, 2, "Early Warning and Conflict Management", 46.
96. *Ibid.*, "Study 3: Humanitarian Aid and Effects", 150.
97. Thanks to Michael Lally, RTE for this and other insights on the Rwanda crisis.
98. Thomas W. Lippman, "U.S. Troops Withdrawal Ends Frustrating Mission to Save Rwandan Lives", *Washington Post*, October 3, 1994, A11.
99. For a more extended discussion of the positive and negative aspects of *Opération Turquoise* and its putative humanitarian aspects, see Larry Minear and Philippe Guillot, *Soldiers to the Rescue: Humanitarian Lessons from Rwanda* (Paris: OECD, 1996), especially chapter five. The observation about the power of the French presidency was made by Philippe Guillot in an interview with the authors of this book in October 1995.
100. See Steering Committee, *International Response*, 3, 72.
101. For an account of how an experienced regional journalist struggled to understand the ethnic power politics, see Lindsey Hilsum, "Where is Kigali?" *Granta* no. 51 (Autumn 1995): 145–179. Hilsum was reportedly only one of two international journalists in Kigali in early April.

102. The term “media circs” is used in one of the early and more hard-hitting reviews of NGO activities in the crisis, “Rwanda’s Disaster Dilemmas Explored”, *World Disasters Report* (Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 1995), 13–17.
103. Catherine Toups, “Mitchell Heads New Unit for Averting World Crises”, *Washington Times*, November 17, 1995, 16.
104. John Shattuck, “Human Rights and Humanitarian Crises: Policy-Making and the Media”, in Rotberg and Weiss (eds.), *From Massacres*, 175.
105. Lipsky, *Impact*, 217.
106. A number of NGOs, including the Mennonite Central Committee, already have development strategies and train their headquarters and overseas staff accordingly.
107. John C. Hammock and Joel R. Charny, “Emergency Responses as Morality Play: The Media, the Relief Agencies, and the Need for Capacity Building”, in Rotberg and Weiss (eds.), *From Massacres*, 115–135.
108. See Winter, “Communication”, 18–19.
109. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *World Disasters Report 1994*, (Geneva: IFRC, 1994), 26–32.
110. Minear et al., *United Nations Coordination*, 35.
111. On “A Global Forum with President Clinton”, CNN, May 3, 1994.
112. For a discussion, see “Part One: Capitalizing on Technology and Sustaining Media Attention”, in Rotberg and Weiss (eds.), *From Massacres*, 14–89.
113. For a comprehensive assessment of future trends, see W. Russell Neuman, *The Future of the Mass Audience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
114. Nicholas Negropone, *Being Digital* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 57.
115. Paul Fahri, “Disney Co. and CapCities/ABC Agree to a \$19 Billion Merger”, *Washington Post*, August 1, 1995, A16.
116. Edward Girardet (ed.), “Record Number of Journalists Killed in 1994”, *Crosslines Global Report*, March 1995, 43–46.
117. Taken from workshop discussions in preparation of the original book.
118. Scott, Colin, 1997. “The Humanitarian Response to War: Who are the Drivers – Policymakers, Aid Agencies or the Media?” *Intermedia* volume 25, number 1, pp. 8–10.

GLOSSARY

Civil war	An intrastate armed conflict
Complex emergencies	Internal political crises and/or armed conflicts complicated by an array of political, social, and economic factors
Donors	External actors committing resources to humanitarian action, normally governments or groups of governments acting through governmental, intergovernmental, or nongovernmental channels
Emergency aid	Life-saving humanitarian relief – normally food, shelter, and medical care
Humanitarian action	The provision of emergency aid and the protection of basic human rights
Humanitarian intervention	Nonconsensual humanitarian activities mounted from outside an area in crisis, sometimes involving the threat or the use of military force
Impartiality	The relief of suffering according to need without regard to such factors as nationality, race, religion, politics, or ideology
Media	The broad range of Western news media, except where otherwise defined
Neutrality	The avoidance of taking sides in hostilities or political conflict
Peacekeeping	The interposition of neutral troops between or among warring factors with their consent to observe and monitor a cease-fire or other peace agreement
Peace enforcement	The imposition of external military force to achieve peace or to advance other objectives against the wishes or without the consent of the warring factions