



Handout – what to do when the media gets in touch and media interviews

When the media gets in touch - key questions to ask

1. What is the journalist's name?
2. Which media outlet they are from? Name of newspaper, magazine, online, radio or broadcast / TV programme.
3. What is the topic or angle of story?
4. How can you help? E.g do they want background information about the issue / a quote on a particular area / to interview someone?

If they want an interview ask:

1. Suggested date, time and likely length of the interview?
2. Who would be the interviewer?
3. Interview type – live on air, pre-recorded, feature length or short news piece?
4. Location – studio, your offices, somewhere else, over the phone?
5. Can you see the questions they want to ask in advance?
6. If it's a radio / TV programme, are there any other guests on it, and if so, whom?
7. Timing – when the story/piece scheduled to run?

Media interviews

Dos – the keys to a successful media interview

1. Be prepared before being interviewed – have your key messages ready along with back up stats and examples. Think of the types of questions the media may ask especially the most difficult questions ones? Make a list of difficult question and draft your answers to them. Practice these answers with a colleague, and refine them.
2. Listen carefully to the questions you are being asked.
3. Be confident, and speak with authority, you are the expert, that's why they have asked to interview you.
4. Think about your body language – poor posture will make you look as though you don't really care; avoid waving your hands around as it is distracting, particularly on TV; don't put your head to one side, it will make you look childish; make good eye contact.
5. Keep your answers short but long enough to get the key messages across and for the interviewer to get quotes. When answering difficult questions: give a short answer, use a Bridge and then go onto one of your key messages.
6. Use everyday language, avoid technical jargon as much as possible.

7. Be honest. Don't try to conceal negative information; rather, let your interviewer know what you are doing to solve a problem.
8. Wear appropriate, smart clothes; you are representing the NP and need to look professional. If you are going on TV, avoid anything with stripes on it, jewellery, if you are wearing a jacket, pull the bottom of it down and sit on it (that will avoid the jacket bunching up which will make you look less professional).
9. Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question.
10. Speak in complete thoughts, this is especially important in TV interviews where the interviewer's question may be edited out so your response has to stand on its own so repeat the question as you answer it e.g.

Q: Why is ending child marriage important?

Rather than say: Because it limits girls potential etc.

Say: A: Child marriage is important because.....

11. Do correct the interviewer if they basis a question on something you believe incorrect or on a fact that is wrong. Don't hesitate to 'set the record straight'.
12. Make your final comment clear and concise, reemphasizing your main point. If you feel that you failed to get the message out, force it in at the end. ("I think we've missed the real, critical issue here, which is....")
13. Last and by no means least, do breathe!

Don't – how to avoid having a bad media interview

1. Don't speculate – stick to the facts.
2. Don't say 'No comment' – that sounds like you are defensive and have something to hide. If you can't or don't want to answer a question, say something like: It's difficult for me to answer that as I haven't seen the research paper you are referring to or, Until we know all the facts it's best not to speculate.
3. Don't answer hypothetical questions or speculate. If a reporter asks a hypothetical question or asks you to speculate say: I don't want to speculate, but what we know from the facts.....
4. Avoid saying 'Off the record.' Journalists sometimes don't respect that plus always work on the basis that whatever you say to a journalist is on the record so never say anything you don't want to read in print or hear repeated on the radio or TV.
5. Don't joke. Be friendly, but not complacent. Assume everything you say, even in a social situation, may appear in print or on the air.
6. Don't be tempted to fill in silences. Reporters can use silence to make you feel uncomfortable and talk or say things you may not want to say. It is best to stay quiet between questions. Don't fill in with chatter or "nervous talk".
7. Don't get angry, keep your temper.
8. Don't answer questions that aren't asked.
9. Don't question the questions. Even if a question may seem irrelevant or stupid, they may not be to the interviewer. Keep your answers short (as always), use a bridge and then go back to your key messages