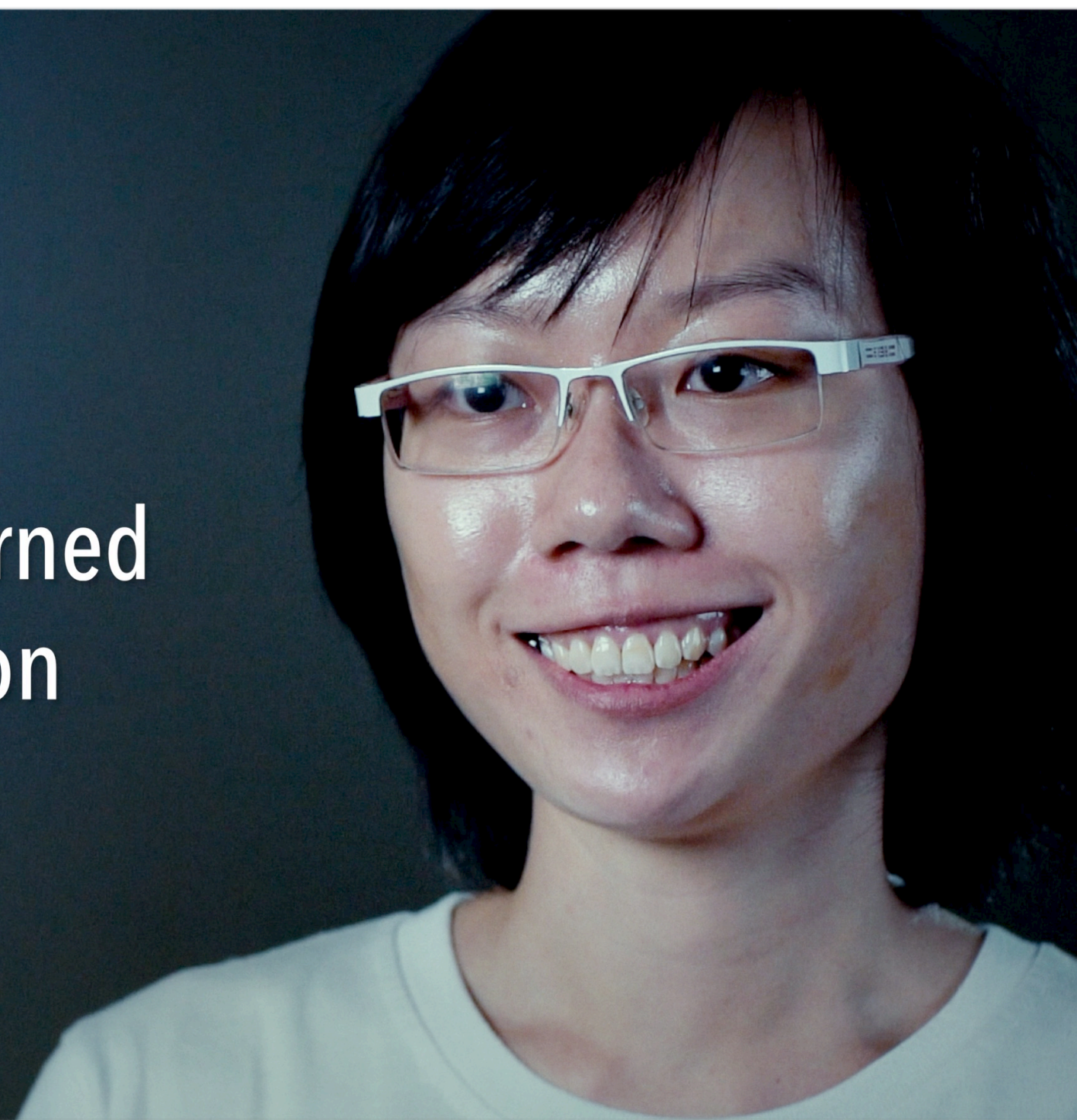


FOLLOW A HERO

MAKING FILMS ON AND WITH
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

I don't consider myself
a human rights defender,
just a citizen who is concerned
about the future generation

Han Hui Hui, Singapore



TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTORS MANUAL

accompanying the "FOLLOW A HERO" toolkit for students


True Heroes Films digital toolkit developed with financial support of City of Geneva

INTRODUCTION	3
TELLING A STORY	7
GETTING TO KNOW YOUR INTERVIEWEE	8
INTERVIEW ENVIRONMENT	10
QUESTIONS	12
THE FILMED INTERVIEW	15
IMAGE	18
INTERVIEW ATMOSPHERE	19
INTERVIEW LOCATION & SETTING	20
EXPOSURE	23
INTERVIEW FRAME	24
ADDITIONAL FOOTAGE	25
SOUND	26
PHOTOGRAPHS	27
BACK UP	28

With this manual we support the work of teachers and instructors for creation of films by youth on human rights and with human rights defenders (HRD). This toolkit is meant for teachers and complements “Follow a Hero”, a digital handout for the youth to film HRDs and work on human rights.

We believe in the power of film to increase engagement with human rights. True Heroes Films (THF) does this by producing films, guiding workshops, developing online tools, manuals and give communication advise.

The aim is to encourage youth to engage with human rights defenders. They will discuss their experiences, motivation for their work and aspirations. Film helps in a dynamic way to introduce and deepen discussion and commitment to human rights. The defenders are the entry point to a more personal and direct engagement. Together the youth can discuss their experiences, their vision and motivations, how they deal with the risks and obstacles they face.

THF has created these guidelines to help you understand filmmaking better on both conceptual and technical levels. Our main focus is to share our experience on how to make humanising, personal and respectful films with HRDs without threatening the safety of anyone involved. We are proud to share this “THF approach”. THF's experience was acquired over years and some of the advice was tested out in a two-day trial session with NGO staff in Geneva in October 2018. We will give links to more technical instruction (videos) already available from 3rd parties. You find them with the icon 

We also have footage available to be used in these lessons. Links to the material are provided upon request, send an email to: info@trueheroesfilms.org

You can capture additional film images, add photos and audio to our material to portray the HRDs.

Please note: most images and sounds on the web are copy right protected. We advice you not to use anything unless it's clearly available free of any rights claims. Even if rights are cleared, always mention the source in your video when its published.

THF can't be held responsible for any infringement of rights.

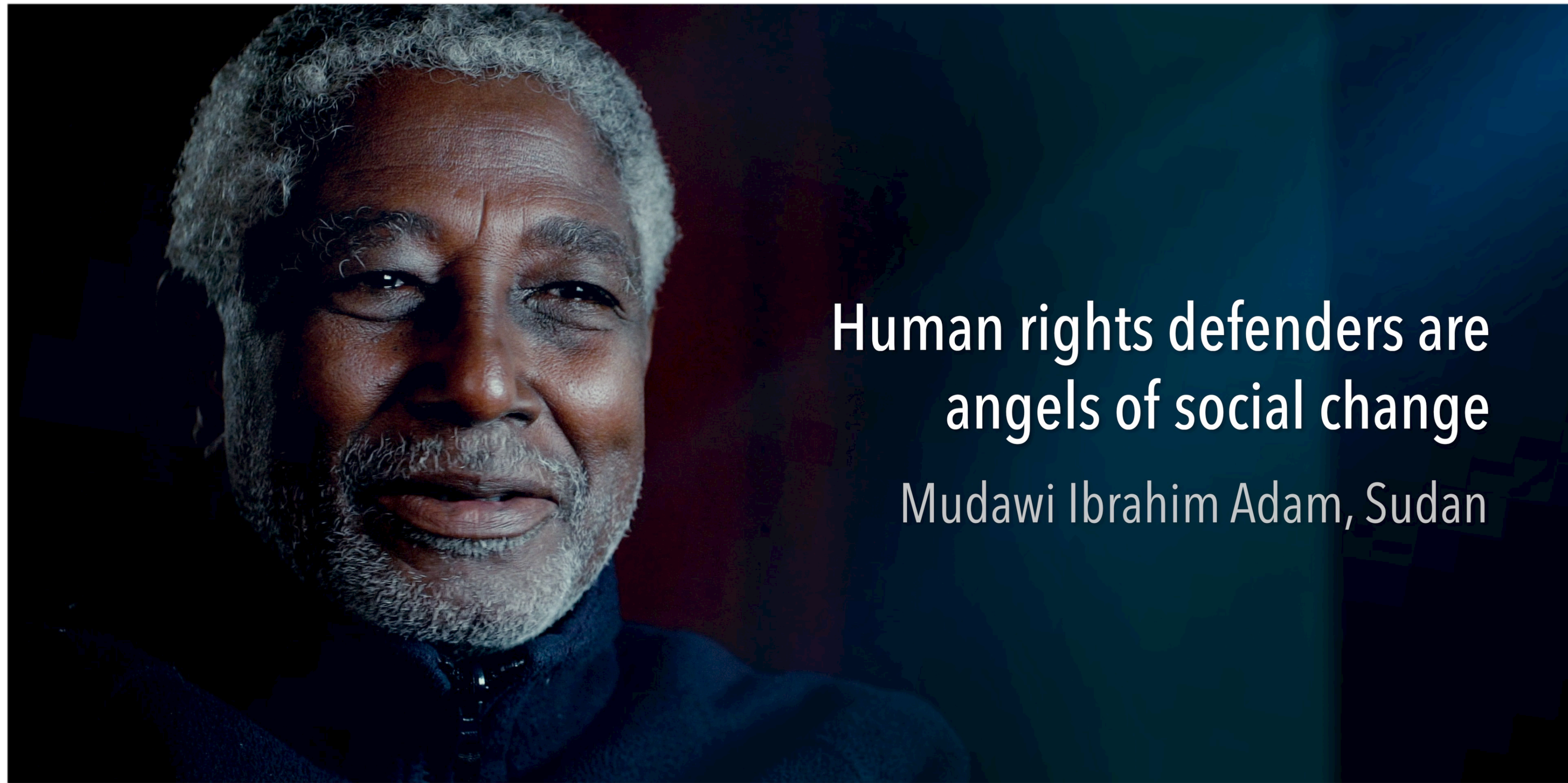
We provide here both conceptual and basic technical guidance. Both levels are important and work hand in hand to help capturing strong and meaningful content. On the conceptual level we outline storytelling tools, how to choose settings, interviewing techniques, types of questions, and how/where/when to film.

We understand how difficult it is sometimes to simply follow guidelines, go out there and capture strong content -especially considering that you have perhaps never interviewed before. Some of the guidelines, of course, will not be possible to follow due to your particular circumstances. In that case, they can be used as a guide, and you should do what is achievable under the circumstances.

Nonetheless, we encourage you to refer to this document when needed as it contains the basics you will need to start filmmaking. You can contact True Heroes Films, ask questions and receive support.

We are grateful to the City of Geneva who supported us financially to make this project possible.

We recommend that you take the time to experiment with the ideas presented in these guidelines — you will eventually learn what you are most comfortable with and adapt to what works best for you.



Human rights defenders are
angels of social change

Mudawi Ibrahim Adam, Sudan

Films that THF supports, aim to show the importance of human rights defenders and their work.

The filming and interviewing which you carry out and the rest of the content you collect should therefore aim to gather interesting ideas, recommendations, experiences and criticisms from the activists (or “characters”) you have chosen. These should ideally lead an audience to think differently about the HRDs themes, with more nuance and or stronger engagement.

Key element is the way a story is told. Compared to fiction film you build on a catching sentence or idea: “I never thought I would tell anybody...”, “In this week I will face the hardest struggle I ever had...” which makes a viewer curious of what is to come. Then when establishing the atmosphere, some details, the characters, the dilemma through out the film you reveal and try to show step by step the struggle the person has with an uncertain outcome which will be revealed towards the end of the film.



LEARN MORE ABOUT
STORYTELLING

The most important principle during your filming is approaching your characters in a genuine way. When someone feels you are truly listening to them, taking them seriously, wanting to get to know them, they will take time to tell and give you insight into their views and lives. It is therefore crucial to let them feel comfortable so that they can speak and act freely.

Telling the story of any person requires really getting to know them. This takes more than just simply filming or recording an interview with them. The more time you can spend getting to know the characters you will interview, the higher is the chance that the interview will be strong.

In general, in order to make a strong film, we also need a few extra shots beyond the interview. These extras allow you to combine and transition between different characters more seamlessly. For this type of film, the audience needs to get to know the characters and their context.

In this case, it is important to think as visually as possible. We capture the characters living and breathing in their environment. Thereafter, we can intersperse this with quotes from the interviews to build the character and themes.

For example, imagine a scene of a former child soldier in a small room. The opening shot is a wide shot of him sitting in the room. We move in closer as he looks silently out the window and in the background you hear the sound of playing children in the courtyard.

You hear him say “If I would have known what I know now, my life would be so different. I would have had children and they would be playing now”.

When using settings and statements like these, the audience engages more closely with the characters and yearns to hear more. This is the trigger to their story, their lives and their beliefs.

When conducting an interview the focus should be on creating an environment that most suits the aims of your interview. In this case, the aim is to allow the characters to tell us about their views, beliefs and lives.

For this purpose, it is important to create a quiet and comfortable ambiance. Let your interviewee know that there is no rush. Having this peace and calm is crucial to getting the most out of them. If there are silences - they do not need to be filled up immediately. Very often, when someone answers something and you wait for just a moment without asking the next question, they will continue telling a bit more.

What they continue with, will generally be more contemplative and thoughtful. Here, in these moments, the added value will often be the moments where you really get closer to their thoughts and lives.

No one can say: 'I'm not afraid'
But every time you feel a bit
stronger as well

Nedhal Al Salman, Bahrain



The interviews should aim to find new and innovative angles of how to think about these themes, how to address the issues that fall under these themes, what lessons have been learned through the interviewees experience in these fields. The suggested questions in the following section will guide you through this process.

TYPES OF QUESTION

- Ask open questions
- As you begin to hear what type of answer they give, try to probe for more details
- Try to ask questions which do not have an obvious answer or which surprise the interviewee

Because the interviewers questions will not appear in the final film, it is necessary to explain to your interviewee that when you ask them a question, it's best if they incorporate the question in their answer:

Example :

Question : How old are you? Wrong/Short Answer : 17

Good/Long Answer : I'm 17 years old

The interviewee's answer needs to mention the context of the questions.

The following questions are in a logical order that can help you create a sense of direction (i.e. beginning, middle and end) in your interview.

1. Can you introduce yourself (get their name, age, where and with whom they live)
2. What is your occupation
3. What do you see as the mayor problems / issues in the world around you?
4. Do you think you can influence/ change these issues?
5. How do/did you learn about human rights?
6. How is peace achieved / promoted in your area?
7. How should this be taught?
8. Why are you interested in this kind/ type of subjects, topics?
9. Do you feel you are being heard?
10. What does it take to be taken seriously?
11. What are tomorrow's issues / opportunities / challenges according to you?
12. What are your dreams for the future?
13. Can you imagine leaving to another country to live in?
14. If you were President, what would you do to improve human rights? to bring about peace? to deal with the past?
15. What measures have the best potential for change, to evolve positively in the future?
16. About Geneva and the International Community: What can Geneva and/or the International Community do in order to support youth in realizing their wishes/ endeavors?

The following items can be asked during the previous questions when they are relevant. For example if someone talks about the lack of healing the wounds of past conflicts in their country you can ask:

“What does “justice” represent for you?”

If there hasn't been an opportunity to integrate them in the previous question than its still good to ask these in the end of the interview.

What do the following notions mean to you:

- Justice
- Injustice
- Conflict
- Peace
- Power
- Human Rights
- Stability

Filming an interview is mostly psychology and only requires a little technical knowledge. The major focus, of a successful interview, is on creating and maintaining an environment that closest to what you want to achieve in the interview. The method or style of an of interview can vary greatly, but for the purposes of this project, interviews are an access point into the thoughts, feelings, beliefs and aspirations of your interviewee.

In this case, your role as the interviewer is simultaneously that of a foreigner and a guide — you are entering uncharted territories of an individual's life, but at the same time you are required to guide them with your questions and responses.

The following sub-sections are an explanation of the technique, psychology and technical aspects of filming an interview.

In the days building up to your interview, you will have already got to know your interviewee through previous conversations and interactions. This prior interaction is important as it allows you and your interviewee to get to know each other on a personal level.

Before you even setup your equipment, take the time to sit with your interviewee and talk through the interview process. Try to guide them through the general concept of the interview and what you hope to achieve together.

Also take the time to discuss the questions you will ask them, preparing them on what they might say or not. You can also use this time to ask them about certain things they might be interested in showing you, such as :

- Personal photos
- Prized possessions
- Favourite places they go
- A favourite friend or person they know
- Where they work

Following the interview you can film them talking about these items, meeting these people, or visiting these places.

For clarity and comfort, it is important that you explain to your interviewee that what they share during the interview will be used for a film and can appear in different places.

You should continue by explaining that we will always make sure that they are happy with what they say and that if they regret saying anything, that it will certainly not be used.

I attack corruption and impunity.
It's what my mother did before
she was assassinated last year.

Matthew Caruana Galizia, Malta



The main aim of this section is to cover all technical aspects of how to film.

Acquiring a detailed knowledge of the technical side of your equipment will allow you to feel more comfortable (i.e. less stressed) when filming and working.

Once the knowledge has sunk in, you will better understand the techniques required to adapt how you film under different circumstances.

This includes : filming indoors in low light; filming outdoors in bright daylight; filming interviews; focussing the camera on important objects; making your image darker; making your image brighter, and so on.

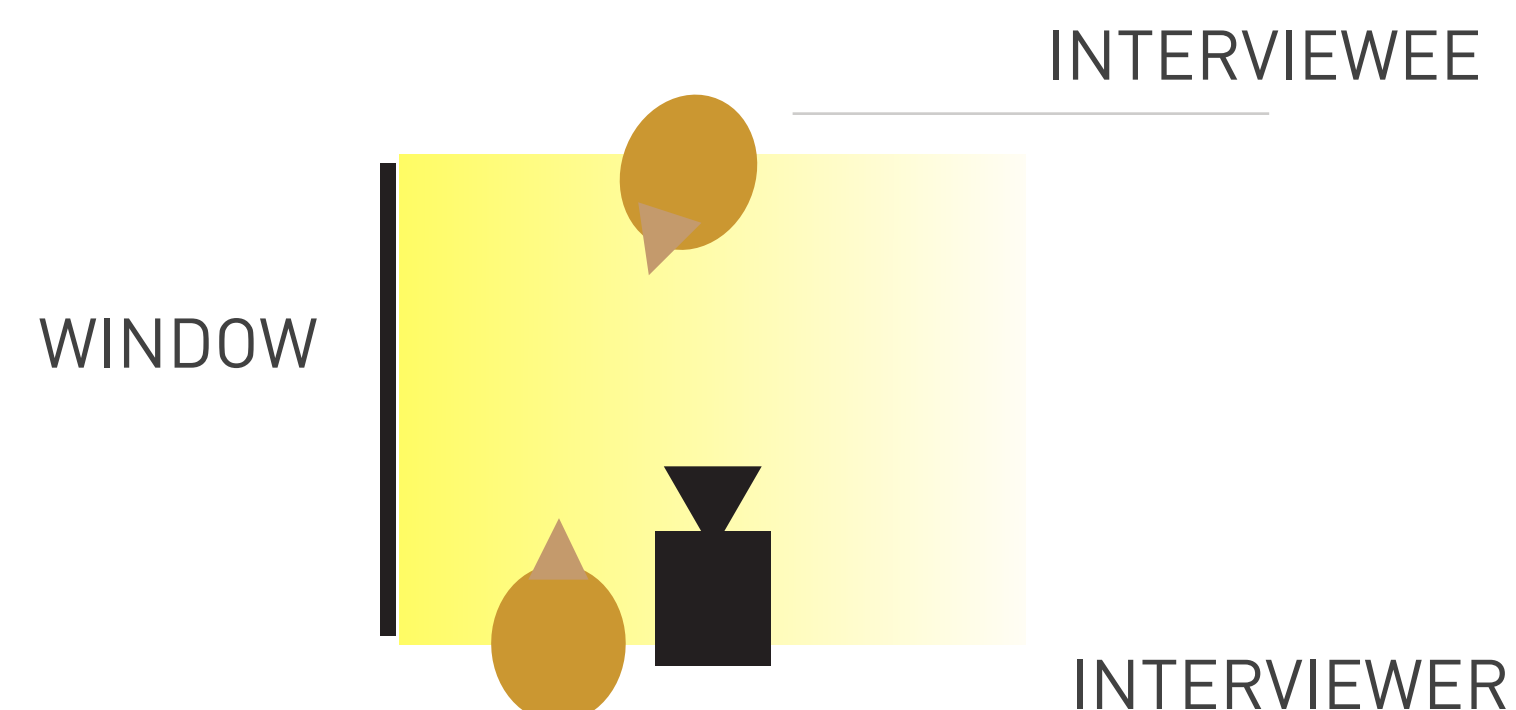
The following is a step by step guide to understanding how to to best film video and record sound.

- Choose a quiet location
- Take your time, there is no need to rush. This is your chance to show your interviewee you are calm and comfortable - thus creating the correct atmosphere required for a comfortable interview
- Try to create an environment where there are no other people around. You are alone with the interviewee or perhaps with one other person they trust. The presence of others can be unsettling for the interviewee, distracting and can cause the interviewee to speak less freely than they normally would one on one.
- Be prepared, know your questions before the interview. You should have already discussed with the interviewee what you will be discussing.
- Try to focus your energy on maintaining a calm setting and giving confidence to your interviewee.
- Avoid holding paper, moving around a lot or fidgeting.
- Any humming or other audible ways of acknowledging that you understand or heard the answer will be recorded also so you will want to avoid that. Maintain eye contact with your interviewee and nod periodically to make sure they understand you are listening to them -- perhaps sometimes their answers can be long -- it is important to keep their attention.

- The interviewee should be sitting on a chair.
- Place yourself between 1m and 1.5m from the interviewer in order to properly film he/she in a medium shot (see also the “learn more about”) .
- The background behind the interviewee should be neutral and clean — with not too many items and preferably with the background at a distance. Try not to film someone directly against a wall unless there is no other option.
- As you are behind the camera the interviewee will look towards it in the film. This creates the feeling in the final film as if they talk straight to the audience. Make sure if there are other people as translators or similar that they are not in the same line as you or close to it. Otherwise your character will start moving his or her view around to eye contact everyone during answering a question. This makes the atmosphere feel not very concentrated and close to you.

INTERVIEW LOCATION & SETTING

- Plan to film the interview during the day time
- Your location should preferably be indoors
- Your location should be well-lit - preferably lit by natural light coming from a window (see diagram below)
- Do not film with a window or strong light source in the background - this will create an awful contrast between the interviewee and his surroundings and can ruin the setting.
- The interviewee should be well lit on one side of their face, with a shadow on the other side of their face.
- The location should be quiet - as far away from entrances, noisy locations or rooms, traffic or any other loud places
- Talk with your interviewee to see if it is possible to carry out the interview without interruption. This means : Being alone with your interviewee, or with someone who they trust and turning off all telecommunications.



LEARN MORE ABOUT TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF INTERVIEW
INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE AND SETUP
INSIDE INTERVIEW LIGHT

We need to go to war with all
the weapons we have:
a pen, a voice, a piece of paper
Mariana Katzarova, Bulgaria



Exposure is the way the camera captures light. The iPhone camera for example adapts its exposure automatically. This means that when it is darker, the camera increases the exposure — equally when it is brighter, the camera lowers the exposure. This is in order to prevent the camera from capturing images that are either too dark (under exposed) or too bright (over exposed).

Learning to control the light exposure is important for many reasons: capturing the best image, working in difficult light situations, image continuity and even storytelling purposes. Being able to control your exposure can make a huge difference in the way you capture your film.

INTERVIEW FRAME

- You should frame your interview in what is referred to as a 'medium shot'. This means from their head down to - see the screenshot on the right here.



- The interviewee should be looking slightly off-angle from the camera lens and into the light - notice in the shot above how the main film light is on the right side of her face and she is looking to her right)
- Make sure your tripod is stable, your focus and exposure are set, and your image is well framed.
- Keep the camera and your eyes at the same level as the interviewee's eyes - this makes it feel natural to the audience that the person is equal and communicating with us.
- Once you are technically set, you can move to one side of the camera and begin asking questions.



LEARN MORE ABOUT CAMERA & LIGHT
ON CAMERA ANGLES
SHALLOW DEPTH OF FIELD
LENSES AND MOVEMENT
LIGHT SETTING

It is good to take more shots of the interview setting, but from different angles, such as:

- A very wide shot of the interviewee in the room where you conducted the interview - try to see as much as possible from the place by standing nearly outside / or on a chair (the character can keep sitting in the chair and look at the camera or stare out of the window)
- Let him/her tell something about an object / photograph to explain why this is important - the setting can differ from the interview setup
- A posing portrait shot of the interviewee with the people he or she is living with (take this at least for a 20 seconds)
- See the people in their daily life - keep the camera as stable as possible and don't try to follow in motion the person too much - just keep it like a wider shot to discover about their environment



LEARN MORE ABOUT
EDITING WORKFLOW

An aspect of the filming which is often underestimated is sound. If you have a good image but bad sound of the interview you can't use it. If you have a bad image though, but good sound you can still very well use it - sometimes combined with other images.

- Make sure all disturbing sounds are prevented when you perform the interview (like refrigerator, clocks loudly ticking, schools next doors going out, construction site etc)
- Use a separate microphone and if possible recorder. Your headset with microphone can also be used.
- Wear a headset to check the sound quality
- Record the total silence of the room for about 20 seconds (this can be used in the edit)
- Give at least five seconds of silence after the person finishes their answer - this not only allows them to continue speaking if they want - it also prevents you from interrupting them, talking over their answer, asking another questions too quickly. This allows easier editing of your interview during the post-production phase.



LEARN MORE ABOUT
SOUND RECORDING
SOUND AMBIENCE

On top of that fact that you'll be busy filming (!) - it is also good to take photographs. Below are ideas of the things you can photograph :

- A portrait of your interviewee
- An object or possession they have shown you
- Where your interviewee lives
- Where your interviewee works
- Photographs your interviewee might have
- Your interviewee doing their favourite activity
- The interviewee's best friend or favourite person
- Anything you find interesting and unique

At the end of each day of filming it is important to backup your files. Do the necessary and download the files from your iPhone, Smartphone or Camera and back them up on your computer and on an external drive.

You can then remove them from your device in order to free up space for further filming. However, before deleting any files, make sure that you have securely backed up the files and that they are completely functional and safe in their new locations.

SENDING THE FILES TO THF

Depending on how much you filmed, you will have several gigabytes of files (photos, video, audio). We suggest that you put this on a small flash drive(s), cloud or external harddrive.

You have to find the strength
not to buckle down to
intimidation and repression

Joanna Cariño, Philippines

