

PHOTOGRAPHY FIELD GUIDE

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AVOIDING COMMON MISTAKES Before you start

! It is essential that you check your settings before you begin, or your photographs will be unusable.

Before you start

Know your camera: every camera is different.

DO take time to get to know your camera's settings.

Wrong settings and mistakes are often only obvious when viewed large on your computer screen.

DO take time to view test images on a computer screen before you go to the field.

DO set your camera to maximum quality (large file) setting. You can't make a small file larger!

DO follow local security advice regarding the safety of using a camera in specific situations.



DO make sure you have charged your camera's batteries.

DO make sure you have space on your memory card.



DO make sure your date setting is switched off.

Read your camera's manual to find out about settings and menus.

AVOIDING COMMON MISTAKES

Your subject

What is your subject?

Think about your subject: what are you trying to take a photograph of?

Ask yourself:

Is my subject interesting?

Is my subject relevant?



This photograph of a mother and child is confusing. Who is the lady with her eyes closed?

The crowd in the background is also distracting.



This photograph is more engaging because the subject is more obvious.



Think interesting:

DO remember to include people in your photographs.

DON'T photograph meetings!

Holding the camera



DON'T use the camera's zoom.



DO move your body closer to the subject.



DON'T move closer than one metre to your subject.

Doing so can result in out-of-focus photographs.

Holding the camera



To avoid blurred photos, put yourself and the camera in a stable position, especially in low light.

DON'T take photographs from moving vehicles.



DO keep the camera still. Hold the camera in a relaxed, steady grip in both hands, with your elbows pressed into your chest.

DON'T hold the camera with your arms outstretched or with your elbows wide.

DO rest your elbows on a wall or chair if it is at a useful height; this helps to keep your camera steady.



On most cameras there is a delay between pressing the button and the photograph being taken. To avoid this, keep your finger on the button until the photo has taken.

Release the button gently to avoid camera shake, which will blur photographs.



PHOTOGRAPHY BASICS Lighting

! It is usually too dark to take photos indoors, and the flash can cause problems.



Switch your flash off

The flash on most cameras is very harsh and often over-exposes faces, making them look washed out. It can also create strong shadows around the subject.



It is often too dark to take photographs indoors.

DO ask your subjects to move to a place with more light.

DON'T photograph people against a window with the light behind them.



If you must photograph indoors, **DO** keep any window light behind you or to one side.

PHOTOGRAPHY BASICS

Lighting

! Daylight will usually provide the best light for your photograph.



Avoid strong sunlight in one area of the frame and shadow in another.

In this photo the people inside the home are in shadow – we can't see them. It is improved by moving closer to them.



Lighting

! Improve your portraits by making the best use of natural light.

DON'T photograph into the light, or your subject will be dark.

DON'T ask your subject to face the light if it is very bright as it will cause them to squint.

DO ask your subject to move so that the light is on one side of their face.

AVOID photographing by windows and mirrors – you might photograph your own reflection!

If you must photograph by a window, use it to reflect light onto your subject's face.



PHOTOGRAPHY BASICS

Composition



DO look at what is in front of you and also what else is in the frame.



DO keep your composition simple.



DO look for obstacles in the background – such as poles sticking out of people's heads.



Imagine that there are lines dividing your picture into three, vertically and horizontally. Frame your subject along one of the lines.

This can create an interesting composition that draws the viewer's attention to your subject.

Variety

! Take lots of photographs of your subject from different angles, in different sizes, indoors and outdoors.



Portrait



Landscape

DO take photographs of the same subject in both portrait and landscape orientation.



DO keep your photograph simple!

ETHICS Do no harm

Check consent

ALWAYS explain why you are taking the photograph to the child, and their parents or guardians.

If photographing a crowd, you do not need a consent form for people in the crowd, but it is usually best to explain why you are there.

If someone does not want to be photographed or wishes to remain anonymous, you must respect this.

Legally, we need a consent form signed for every person photographed. You, the photographer, must sign a consent form to state that you have obtained spoken consent from the person being photographed.

Taking the photograph

DO ask people how they would like to be photographed. Do they want to change their clothes, or would they like you to protect their identity in some way?

DO respect your subject's modesty. Ask people to cover children's genitals and women to cover their breasts.

DO take photographs in context, which can make the difference between a child appearing to be abandoned or being cared for.

DON'T reinforce stereotypes or prejudices about any people or countries you're photographing.

DO take accurate notes for each subject you photograph.



Concealing identity

Steps should be taken to conceal the identity and location of particularly vulnerable children. These may include children formerly associated with armed groups, survivors of physical violence and torture, survivors of sexual violence, and children affected by HIV.

Children and families should always be informed of how information about them is being used and the impact it may have on them, and they must give consent.

You can conceal a person's identity by taking photographs of the person in silhouette, showing details of their body without showing their face, or photographing them from behind. Don't forget that you are telling a story when taking the photograph.



A child shown in silhouette to conceal his identity.

TELLING A STORY

! Approach taking photographs as if you are telling a story. Take several different photographs of the same situation so they can be combined to tell a story about a particular situation.



In this example about an Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre, we learn the story from a few photographs.



TELLING A STORY

The establishing shot

! The establishing shot is a wide picture of the scene which explains where the story takes place.



An indoor establishing shot in an ECD Centre in Kwa-Zulu Natal Province, South Africa.



An outdoor establishing shot of young children playing outside their Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa.

The action shot

- ! The action shot could show what an organisation is doing to help, and the action should be obvious. Show a sense of urgency if appropriate.



The relationship shot

- ! Relationship shots show people interacting with each other and often capture the emotion between them.



Emotions

- ! Emotion in a photograph prompts emotion and empathy in the viewer. Match the mood of the photograph to the mood of the story.



Portraits

- ! Portraits show the key people in the story and are essential to accompany case studies.



Close: Focus on just the eyes of a subject, or their whole body.

Wide: Place the subject in their environment.

DO keep it simple!



Details

! Details of people's lives can make powerful photographs and also show what we are doing to help.



DON'T get too close or your camera may not focus.

DO take time to work out how close your camera can get to your subject and stay in focus.

CAPTIONS

! Take notes!

For a photograph to be used, it must be shared with the following information:

- filename
- **WHO** is in the photo
- **WHERE** it was taken – be specific
- **WHAT** is happening in the photo
- **WHEN** it was taken
- **WHY** this picture is relevant for (organisation/funder name)
- a quote from the subject, if they are old enough

Without this information, we can't use the photograph.

Ask your subject how they feel about the situation: good captions include a quote from the person in the photograph.

An interesting or shocking fact about the situation can also be useful.

Type up your notes and captions into a Word or text document and save them with your photographs.

At the beginning of the document, write a brief paragraph explaining what the collection of photographs shows.

Include your name with this information so you can be credited.

Caption format

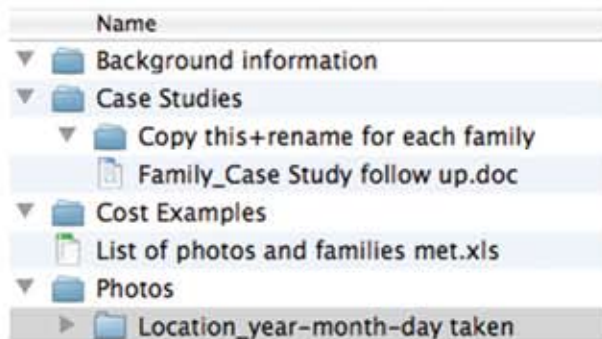
filename + subject + what the subject is doing + where they are + the project [where appropriate] + the issue(s) + what (your organisation) is doing + interesting fact or quote.

Example: IMG_654765 [filename] Mustafa, 12, [subject] reads to his class [what the subject is doing] at Nahre Balla School in the Shomali Plains, Afghanistan [where they are]. Roughly 580 boys and 190 girls attend the school, which is funded by (organisation/funders) [Project (place) and (organisation/project's) role]. Some girls have left because there are no separate classes and no female teachers at the school [the issue]. Three out of five girls in Afghanistan do not go to primary school [interesting fact or quote]. "I feel very happy when I am at school," says Mustafa. "I enjoy reading the most. If I study hard I hope one day I will become a teacher." [quote]

SHARING PHOTOGRAPHS What happens next

Download the photographs to your computer.

Make sure you file them logically in folders in a way that you and others can easily retrieve them.



Digital photos take up a lot of hard-drive space, so you may need an external hard drive. You could also burn them to a CD or DVD.

DO keep the photographs in their original format.

DON'T make them smaller or paste them into a Word document.

DO keep caption information in the same folder as the photographs.

IN THE FIELD Preparing

! Your trip could be wasted if you don't prepare your equipment before you start photographing.

Before you start

Check your kit:

- Charged batteries
- Space on memory cards
- A notebook and pen
- Is the camera clean? Clean dust and grease from the lens carefully

In the field

Before you press the button on your camera or camera phone check the camera's settings:

- Flash off
- Date setting off
- Maximum file size
- Remember to ask for consent from the person you are photographing, or from their parent
- Take lots of different photographs for a photo story
- Keep good notes: names, ages, location, situation, quotes