

Digital Media and Video Training for Refugee Groups

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A new project: Climate Change, Migration and Asylum

by Virtual Migrants, RICC and MRSN in association with Exodus by CAN

HANDOUT for Session 1.

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Introduction.

With the internet, many people do not worry about how sophisticated a video is, or how expensive it looks. Effective video can be technically very simple, but it needs to be short, speak to us clearly and get to the point in a way which informs our knowledge and touches our experience and feelings. It also needs to look and sound reasonably well done, but this can be achieved simply with a little thought and practice.

Cameras.

The two best quality cheap automatic cameras at the moment are the **Flip** and the **Kodak Zi8**. To use them, you basically press the red button to film, then press it again to stop. Its almost as easy to play back the video you have filmed. The Flip is VERY easy to use. The Zi8 is a little more advanced, and so is a little less easy to use but is still very simple. Always make sure these are charged up or you have spare batteries with you.

SD and HD: SD means Standard Definition. HD means High Definition.

This is to do with *Resolution*, which is the number of pixels (little colour dots) which make up the picture.

For what we will do, SD is fine. HD looks great but it uses a lot of computer power and disk space, which can cause problems when you are editing. SD can be between 480 and 576 pixels high (the width depends on whether it is widescreen or not). Resolutions lower than this (like on some mobile phones and very cheap cameras) are not good.

USING AUTOMATIC VIDEO CAMERAS

To understand what is automatic about these cameras, we need to understand what they do that is automatic, which is that they adjust the light, focus, and sound all automatically. Because we can't adjust the camera to control these things as we want them, we simply have to think about how, where and what we film to be able to get good results.

To shoot good video, the first rule is DON'T RUSH. Take your time – those extra minutes will be worth it when you look at it afterwards.

We need to understand how to achieve the following four things:

- **good lighting and brightness (exposure)**
Place the person or subject in good light, ideally coming from the front of their face, but at an angle so we get some shadows across the face.
DON'T put the person in front of a bright window, or against a bright background.
- **good sharp pictures, not blurred (focus)**
Automatic cameras will usually choose whatever is around the middle of the picture to focus on, so make sure the person or subject is close to the centre.

- **good placing of people, objects and the background (composition and framing)**
Think of wide shots, mid shots, close-ups and mid-close-ups (see www.mediacollege.com/video/shots). Mid-close-ups are the most common for interviews.
Keep out any clutter from the background.

Use the “RULE OF THIRDS”:



Think of the foreground and background together, rather than things always being side-by-side:



- **good and clear sound without noise (audio recording)**
A good picture with bad sound is very hard to watch. A bad picture with good sound can be ok to watch. Sound is VERY VERY important, but you can't see what it is doing or how it is being recorded so this is not easy.
 - **Cameras without external microphones** (eg. the Flip camera)
Find somewhere quiet to interview the person. The camera **MUST** be kept close as possible to the person, as long as the person and the picture still looks good.
 - **Cameras with an external microphone option** (eg. the Kodak Zi8)
If you have this option, **USE IT** for interviews or other speech but be careful. If you use a microphone like a tie-clip mic, it means the sound is being recorded very close to the speaker, so that any background noise will not be heard much at all. This is great because it means you can interview someone even in a noisy place and it will still work.
The Zi8 also has a recording level control which you can use, it only works when and external mic is plugged in.

WARNING: You **MUST** be careful that the **battery** in the microphone is not running low or is finished, otherwise you will get very bad or **NO** sound! Always do a test first to make sure, and keep a spare battery with you.