

# Speak Up, Speak Out

Media and Public  
Speaking Essentials for CS  
FfD Mechanism Advocates

#FfD4People

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# Introduction

This briefing note aims to prepare Civil Society advocates participating in the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) to develop confidence for engaging with the media, learn how to craft clear messages, and communicate in various media-related settings.

# Core messaging and talking points

The most crucial step in preparing for a media interview is the **who**, **what** and **why**.

- Develop a clear idea of the organization you represent
- Map out details about what you want to say and why

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Spend time writing down the messages your organization wants to communicate to its audience. Staying on this message will be the most important part of the interview. It is imperative to develop a clear vision, solutions, and a call to action that the audience will resonate with.

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Make a list of **keywords** (for example, climate finance, debt justice, systematic reform, etc.) and craft **3–4 sentences** using those words that deliver the key points to the audience.

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After gaining clarity on the message topics, the next focus should be framing the talking points. Ensure the message **framing** is consistent with the organization's communication guidelines. Try to use positive framing with strong action verbs, avoid using negative words like "challenge", "problem," "can't," etc.

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It is easy to lose track, but don't go off-topic. In case of slip-offs, subtly steer the message back to avoid rambling. When addressing an audience, **use clear and simple language** to connect with them.

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Remember, even the reporter might not be an expert on the topic. Avoid using jargon and industry terminology. Use anecdotes, case studies, and relatable stories to illustrate key points and create a lasting impression.

# Media interview techniques

## How to rehearse as a team

- If multiple people speak on behalf of the same organization, discuss the key talking points among
- team members. Ensure the objectives are aligned and a unified message is delivered. Even if the topics differ for different speakers, it is important to maintain the organizational tone and keep a consistent call to action.

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## How to rehearse as an individual

- Write down your key talking points
- Craft 3-4 short sentences
- Cheat sheet for facts and figures
- Practice out loud
- Ask for feedback from peers
- Record yourself – take note of your voice, gestures, expressions, and posture

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## Physical, mental and emotional composure

- **Maintain composure:** Take a deep breath and count to 10, pause briefly, and offer thoughtful, honest responses
- **Avoid defensiveness:** Refrain from reacting violently or getting baited
- **Stick to key messages:** Focus on your talking points and consistently reiterate them, even if the reporter tries to provoke a reaction
- **Employ positive body language:** Make eye contact and smile to project confidence and control. Sit or stand upright with relaxed shoulders
- **Recognize when to disengage:** If the interview turns hostile, it's acceptable to end it

# Media interview techniques

## Verbal and non-verbal communication best practices

Do	Don't
Keep answers short, clear, and concise	Provide long answers, over-explain the topic
Speak loudly, enunciate	Mumble or use filler words
Wear solid colors, formal attire	Wear logos or distracting clothing
Pause, breathe, keep shoulders relaxed	Finish sentences in one breath, tensed shoulders
Focus on the audience, make eye contact with the reporter	Focus on the cameras and the production team
Actively listen to the reporter and make adjustments	Strictly adhere to a script, or sound unnatural/ forced
Maintain a straight, upright posture	Nervous breathing, slouching
Keep movements subtle	Excessive hand gestures or expressions
Stick to approved talking points, you're always on the record	Say anything that is "off the record" or "no comment"
Practice answers, conduct mock interviews, and do your research	Wing it during the interview
Think visually, paint a mental picture	Use jargon or industry terms
Remember you're always representing your organization	Not know your organization's media policies
Stay on the message	Go off track
End on a positive note	Use negative words

# Media interview techniques

## Speak in 'Sound bites'

Sound bites are great for grabbing the media's attention and being a memorable communication tool. Answer the question first, make the point, and move on to the next. The key here is to make the answer 'ear-worthy,' or in the words of Mark Twain, "a minimum of sound to a maximum of sense." You can also use the rule of threes, develop a three-part answer, or use three powerful words to aid memorability. Following these steps creates a concise sound bite for the reporter to use. **call to action.**

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## How to field difficult questions

- **Stay on message:** Don't get sidetracked by tough questions. Politely steer the conversation back to your key points.
- **Correct false information:** If a question is based on a misunderstanding, clarify the facts first and don't leave room for misinformation.
- **Seek clarity:** If a question is confusing, ask for more details before answering.
- **Pause to think:** Take a moment to collect your thoughts before responding.
- **Offer to follow up:** If you do not know the answer to a question, offer to follow up with the correct information later.

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## Effective speaking

Master the three Cs of communication to speak effectively: clear, concise, and consistent. Speak in clear, simple language, avoiding any filler words. Remember the key talking points and questions to craft answers that get straight to the point and are concrete. Organize your messages to ensure a logical flow of words. Use active words and end the answer with strong words or a call to action that leaves a lasting impact.

# Media interview techniques

## Know your journalist

Before the interview, research the journalist. Read 3–5 of their previous stories, and get to know their field of expertise. Here's a list of questions to ask to get to know them.

- Which outlet do you represent? In which media format do you present?
- Who is your target audience?
- Why are you interested in this story? Is there a particular angle you are looking for?
- When and where will the story go live?
- Who else are you interviewing?

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## Combining persuasion, emotion, metaphors and evidence

Another aspect of effective speaking is humanizing your messages. First, know your target audience and what stories they can connect with. Speaking in metaphors and real-life examples will help the audience remember the message. To persuade audiences, use evidence, facts, and figures to build credibility. Let your passion for advocacy and authenticity shine.

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## The Point – Evidence – Point (PEP) method

The Point–Evidence–Point method, or PEP, is a good way to support key messages. In this method, introduce a new point, support it with evidence, and reiterate the importance of the point.



# Media interview techniques

## Common tactics

If the interviewer attempts to provoke a mistake or ask inappropriate questions, remain calm. Focus on your main objective and use a bridge to pivot back. Avoid making assumptions, opinions, exaggerations, or misquoting that might be published out of context.

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## Bridge statements

Bridging is a technique that allows you to steer the conversation. Return to your key points using the **ABCD method**:

- **A**cknowledge the question: "I'm glad that you asked that."
- **B**ridge to your key message: "That's a great question that I hear often, but what's important to people is..." or, "let me put that into perspective."
- **C**onclude with proof points: "... based on our research that shows 55% of the population..."
- **D**angle the next topic: "... there's another point worth mentioning."

# Panel discussions, Q&A, and speeches

A typical panel discussion has 3–5 speakers and a host and should last 45 minutes to an hour. Panel discussions can be held in many formats: structured, presentation, open, Q&A, and initial remark styles. It can also be held in in-person, virtual, or hybrid settings.

A comprehensive list of guidelines is below:

- Reach out to the moderator to know the format, theme, questions, other panelists, and any other information
- Research the other panelists and know their field of expertise
- Open with a strong statement
- Brainstorm questions and craft short answers
- Identify topics to avoid
- Remember to stick to key messages
- Engage with other panelists, “what are your thoughts?” or “would you like to add something?”
- Engage the audience through live polls and questions



# Panel discussions, Q&A, and speeches

## Panel discussion Q&A best practices

### Do

Listen carefully to questions

Keep answers concise

Address questions directly

Be respectful and professional

Share insights and examples

Acknowledge the audience

Engage fellow panelists

Be respectful of time

Prepare cut-off phrases or a bridge

Handle tough questions by emphasizing the key message

### Don't

Ramble or go off topic

Interrupt other panelists

Make elaborate answers

Get defensive or argumentative

Promote the organization or boast about achievements

Speak in a one-sided conversation

Don't monopolize the conversation

Ignore time or other participants

End abruptly

Let inappropriate messaging or misinformation go unchecked

# Panel discussions, Q&A, and speeches

## Delivering effective speeches/remarks

The audience does not know what you have prepared. Therefore, ensure your delivery is strong. Use a top-down approach like news reporters; say the most important points first, support with relevant information, followed by other points. Another useful method in advocacy messaging is storytelling; jump in with a relevant story and explain how it relates to the advocacy action. Even if delivering short remarks, the following techniques can be useful.

- **Keep an opening and closing line:** Start with a strong core message and end with a call to action aligned with the starting statement.
- **Conversational speaking style:** Avoid formal language, speak as you would in everyday conversation
- **Clear and consistent messages:** Keep messages consistent with core messages and avoid using technical jargon
- **Rule of threes:** Break your answer into threes, three-part sentences, three powerful words or themes
- **An anecdote or metaphor to drive the message home:** Provide examples or relevant stories to humanize your message for ease of comprehension

# Final Word: Speak Boldly, Speak United

As a Civil Society advocate, you are part of a powerful, global community demanding justice, equity, and systemic transformation in global economic governance. This briefing is here to support you in amplifying our shared messages with clarity, confidence, and conviction. Whether you're speaking to the press, engaging in public panels, or briefing decision-makers. Remember: you are not alone. You carry the voices of movements, communities, and organizations across regions and constituencies. Speak truth to power, stay grounded in our collective principles, and let's ensure the call for a just and democratic global financial system is impossible to ignore!



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