



**10 THINGS**

# *Journalists*

**SHOULD KNOW**

**IN COVERING AN OUTBREAK**



**UNESCO Jakarta Office**  
Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific



# 10 THINGS JOURNALISTS SHOULD KNOW IN COVERING AN OUTBREAK

## 1 REPORT ACCURATELY AND PROFESSIONALLY

- In times of crisis, people look for accurate and potentially life-saving information.
- Be accurate and report facts; **avoid rumours and speculations.**
- **Use verified sources.** The WHO has a “Myth Busters” page that debunks rumours about COVID-19 which includes shareable images for everyone.

## 2 BE ACCURATE WITH THE VISUALS

- The use of inaccurate images can mislead audience and images are easily shared online nowadays.
- **Visual reporting on the crisis is valuable,** but it needs to be carried out responsibly. Reporters should make sure their images accurately portray what’s going on.





# 10 THINGS JOURNALISTS SHOULD KNOW IN COVERING AN OUTBREAK

## 3 DON'T USE SENSATIONAL OR MISLEADING HEADLINES

- Words such as “death, unstoppable, hopeless” may carry unnecessary connotations and cause panic. Use them only when they absolutely reflect the story you are covering.
- Although you want it to be catchy, don't sacrifice facts for clicks, especially in the midst of a crisis.

## 4 AVOID GENERALISATIONS OR STEREOTYPES

- Be careful not to (unconsciously) spread racism or xenophobic sentiments through your report.





# 10 THINGS JOURNALISTS SHOULD KNOW IN COVERING AN OUTBREAK

## 5 RESEARCH EXPERTS' CREDENTIALS

- When covering a new outbreak such as COVID-19, experts are difficult to find. **Be sure they are true experts in the area you are looking for in your story.**

## 6 SHARE IDEAS, CROSS-CHECK WITH OTHER JOURNALISTS

- This is the time to develop your network and resources especially when travelling to location is not possible. **Get in touch with the many online groups** making headway to cover the outbreak around the world.





# 10 THINGS JOURNALISTS SHOULD KNOW IN COVERING AN OUTBREAK

7

## TAKE CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Familiarize yourself with the standard recommendations to reduce chances of infection available on the WHO website <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>
- The potential of getting infection and infecting others must be considered when reporting from a location such as hospitals or densely packed places. **Be sure to know in advance the places you are going and what kind of protection you would need.**
- **When in doubt, do not visit (see Committee to Protect Journalists).**

8

## TAKE CARE OF YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

- Reporting on an outbreak can be emotionally draining. Journalists should also be aware of their own mental health. **Do not hesitate to seek support.**





# 10 THINGS JOURNALISTS SHOULD KNOW IN COVERING AN OUTBREAK

## 9 TALK DIRECTLY TO THE PEOPLE

- As an outbreak continues to spread, people are yearning to be heard. Journalists can help tell their side of the story.

## 10 THINK BEYOND THE OUTBREAK

- There will be an end eventually to any outbreak story. Write the type of stories that will help society do better next time. How you report now has an impact for the future of journalism.

### THE ABOVE INFORMATION WAS ADAPTED FROM:

- World Health Organization
- Global Investigative Journalism Network
- Committee to Protect Journalists
- International Center for Journalists
- The Poynter Institute

