

# VISUAL STORYTELLING

By Karen Lau and Andrew Philip

Photographs and videos can be used to tell stories about why your work is important and the impact it is having.

A good story has:

- **CONTEXT** – where and why something is happening
- **SUBJECTS** – people, animals or other things involved in the story
- **ACTION** – what is happening

Here is a visual story featuring the Fero coffee cooperative in the Sidamo region of Ethiopia. The cooperative – made up of small-scale farmers – owns a coffee bean washing station. This allows the farmers to earn more money than they would if they sold unprocessed beans.

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Photos: Andrew Philip/Bean There

## TOP TIP

So you can find the right information when you need it, for each video and set of photos record the location, date, people's names, permissions to use the photos and any other important details.



☑ Coffee bean drying racks are clearly visible in this Sidamo village where many people grow coffee in the shade of forest trees.

1

For context, get far enough away from the scene so you can see where the story is taking place. For example, if you are driving into a village, stop before you get there and take a photo or video of the village from outside. If the action is happening in a building, show what the building looks like both inside and out.



☑ The local farmers have formed a cooperative and together they pulp, ferment and wash the coffee beans.

2

For each photo or video, think carefully about what you are trying to show. Imagine your photo in a picture frame. What do you want to see in the picture? Then move around and try to fill the frame accordingly. Anything in the frame that does not help to tell your story is likely to cause confusion.



☑ The washing process removes the sticky residue left on the beans after the fruit skins have been removed.

3

Are you showing people involved in an activity? Wait until they have become used to you being there and are not trying to pose for the camera. Try to show their emotions: perhaps laughing or looking worried. You may need to wait for this emotion to appear on a person's face, so first decide where you will hold the camera and then wait for the moment when you see the emotion.

## VIDEO EXTRA

**Check your sound quality.** Sound is just as important as the image. If you are planning to film people talking, hold the microphone in your phone or video recorder close to the person who is speaking. Alternatively, use an external microphone.

**Do not record videos holding your smartphone the wrong way round!**

Videos should be taken horizontally, the same way as a television screen.

Otherwise, when the video is viewed, it will not fit the screen.



**Try not to move too much.** Allow the people or objects you are filming to create movement, eg people walking or birds flying. The more you shake or move your camera, the harder it is for people to watch the video without becoming disorientated. Find a tripod or sturdy structure to rest your camera on to keep it steady.



☑ Any remaining pulp is removed from the beans by hand.

4

If you want to show detail, get in close and try to exclude anything that is not important to the story. You can do this by changing the height or angle of the camera.



☑ The beans are laid out on racks to dry and workers pick out any damaged or misshapen beans.

5

Make good use of light, colour and contrast (light and dark areas) so the subjects can clearly be seen.



☑ The workers regularly turn the beans to make sure they dry evenly. Once the coffee is dry it is ready for sale.

6

Add interest by including features like rows or patterns.