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# INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL CAMERA

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**Disclaimer:** All digital cameras are somewhat different. Upon arriving in a team setting, each member should familiarize themselves with the particulars of the equipment on site. This handout is not meant to replace the operating manual that comes with each camera. It does identify the **basic functions** common to most cameras, using a Fuji FinePix 2800 Zoom (digital still camera) as a specific example.

## Basic Functions You Need to Know:

### 1. POWER:

- a. **TURNING IT ON:** Press the green button on the top right of the camera; the lens will automatically extend and the camera will power up. This camera will shut off automatically if left idle for several minutes. To shut it off manually, press the green button again.
- b. **BATTERY:** to remove the four NI-MH AA batteries for charging, turn the camera upside down. On the right is a panel that says "open"; slide this to the right and remove the batteries. The battery symbol in the top view screen tells you how much juice you have left. ***Please recharge the battery each evening so it is ready for the next day's work.***

2. **RECORDING MEDIUM:** this digital camera records images on a "smart media" mini card. A 16 MB smart card will hold approximately 70 images at high resolution. The number of photos remaining – those still able to be stored on the smart card – appears on the right side of the top screen.

### 3. TAKING PICTURES:

- a. **OPEN THE LENS:** press the green power button to turn the camera on and the lens will extend; remove the lens cap.
- b. **USING THE VIEWFINDER:** the easiest way to take pictures is to look through the upper viewfinder. To take a picture, depress the large silver button on the top of the camera towards the front.
- c. **USING THE SCREEN:** to use the screen to frame a picture, press the "EVF/LCD" button on the back of the camera (below the viewfinder, above the LCD screen.) The camera screen will show what the picture will look like. Pressing the "Display" button on the upper right side of the LCD screen will change the display from 1) information to 2) information plus grid lines to 3) nothing. To take the picture, depress the large silver button on top. Using the screen requires more power and will exhaust the batteries sooner.

4. **ZOOM:** use your finger to adjust the zoom lever located on the back of the camera at the top right. Push the lever down for a wider angle, or push it up to zoom in close.

5. **RESOLUTION:** most cameras have at least two resolution settings which affect the quality of your picture. We recommend always using "High" or "Fine" for field work, although you may want to experiment with the lower settings during training to see the comparison. To change the setting, push the menu button; press the right arrow until you get to "Option" and select "Quality". Use the zoom button to select the resolution you wish, then press the OK button.

6. **FLASH:** to activate the flash, press "Menu" and then use the arrows to get to the "Flash" options. Select options such as "red eye" reduction and settings for slow-moving subjects. Generally the flash won't help if your subject is more than 15 feet / 5 meters away.

7. **VIEWING AND DELETING PHOTOS:** switch the indicator dial on the top of the camera from the red camera symbol to the green arrow symbol. You can view your photos one at a time by pushing the arrow buttons next to the zoom button on the back of the camera, upper right. You can delete unwanted photos from the disk by pushing the "Menu" button, and select "Frame."

8. **USING THE MENU:** More advanced settings are selected by pressing the menu button and then using the directional arrow keys to select different settings. Options include: changing the lighting, exposure rate, and others. Refer to the manual for a full explanation.

## From Camera to Computer:

1. Remove the smart media card from the camera's left side. Plug the smart card "reader" into the computer's USB port and insert the smart card into the reader.
2. Open Windows Explorer to view the files on the smart card. Copy the pictures to the "Training Photos" folder and then into a sub-folder with your name on it. Delete the pictures from the smart card, then replace the smart card into the camera.
3. Open the software program needed to view the pictures (most commonly used program in CPT is Paint Shop Pro or Picasa).
4. Open photos from your folder one at a time or by selecting "Browse" which lets you view thumbnails of all the photos in the folder at once.
5. Make any changes to the picture – crop it, adjust color and contrast, play with different effects. Save changes.
6. Assign names to each photo.
7. Print out a few to share with the training group for feedback.
8. e-mail two or three of your best photos as attachments to kryss@cpt.org

## Tips on Composition:

Photography can be a very effective way to gather human rights information. However some pictures are more useful than others in telling stories about injustice. A good photograph makes the viewer **feel** something; it makes the viewer **think**; it urges the viewer to **act**.

To increase the chances that your photograph will effectively communicate your idea, ask yourself three questions: 1) What is the main subject of the photo? 2) How can I emphasize the subject? 3) How can I simplify the picture?

1. **Avoid Panorama Shots:** They are usually not very interesting. Your eye collects many items in your brain and puts them into one mental image. Your camera only captures one picture at a time. The most common mistake of beginning photographers is to get too much in the picture.
2. **Zoom in on Detail:** Choose one face rather than a crowd. Focus on hand, a hammer, a loaf of bread...
3. **Vary the Angle:** Try a vertical shot instead of the traditional horizontal shot. Shoot down from a window or up from the floor. Use a low angle (photographer lower than subject) to emphasize size and power. Use a high angle to emphasize subjects vulnerability.
4. **Vary the Placement:** Placing the subject of your picture in the center usually shows little movement or action. Use the rule of thirds – draw imaginary lines dividing your frame into thirds both horizontally and vertically; the four intersections that are formed make good locations for your subject.
5. **Frame the Subject:** Within a photo, a frame formed by some object at the side or top of the picture can help strengthen the image. It will add life and action to the photo and this can create a stronger feeling for the viewer.
6. **Moving Objects:** Shoot moving objects from in front or behind, not from the side.
7. **Look at the World Through a Lens:** The only way a photographer can learn the secrets of taking good pictures is through practice and critical self-evaluation. Spend time looking at the world through your camera or cut a rectangle out of a piece of cardboard and look through it. Look at photos which have successfully communicated feelings and thoughts to you and urged you to take action. Analyze how the subjects of these photographs were selected and what about them makes you react. Think about how you can take similar pictures.

"Tips on Composition" adapted from *Human Rights Information Manual* published by Burma issues and Dale Fast, Chicago, IL.