

She Decides. OPENMICS GUIDE



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WHAT IS A SHEDECIDES OPENMIC?

A SHEDECIDES OPEN MIC IS A FUN, CREATIVE AND ENGAGING CONVERSATION ABOUT BODILY AUTONOMY, INTEGRITY AND THE RIGHT TO DECIDE.

Around the world women, girls and LGBTQI+ people face many challenges that prevent them from deciding and creating the life that they deserve. Despite some of the progress made for gender equality, many rightly feel that they have been forgotten and left behind. A **SheDecides Open Mic** brings this diversity of people together to express themselves freely, and have their voices heard.

A **SheDecides Open Mic** is a way for people to connect and recognise the struggles we each face. To remind ourselves that we are not alone, and that by working together we can right the wrongs and create a **#NewNormal** – a world where **SheDecides**.

WHY SHOULD YOU ORGANISE A **SHEDECIDES** **OPENMIC?**



A SHEDECIDES OPENMIC IS A WAY FOR YOU TO RECORD A DIVERSE RANGE OF PERSPECTIVES, AND ESTABLISH A COLLECTIVE VOICE. AS AN ACTIVIST, CHANGE-MAKER AND LEADER, YOU CAN USE THIS COLLECTIVE VOICE TO CALL ON YOUR GOVERNMENT AND OTHER DECISION MAKERS TO TAKE ACTION, AND HELP ACHIEVE YOUR VISION OF A #NEWNORMAL.

The **SheDecides** movement is comprised of people from all walks of life, who represent different parts of civil and political society. Working together, the Champions, local Movements, 25x25 young leaders and Friends bring people together to inspire and enact positive change.

Hosting a **SheDecides Open Mic** is one way of doing this.

She Decides. OPENMICS

In your SheDecides Open Mic, people should be able to:

- ✓ **Tell their story and share their personal experiences.** What was it like for them growing up in their country and community? What are the challenges that they and particularly women in their community currently face? How is their experience different from their parent's experience when they were young?
- ✓ **Discuss, contribute, and feedback on your vision of a #NewNormal.** How do your focal advocacy issues particularly affect them? What does their own vision of a #NewNormal look like, where they are free of decide without question?
- ✓ **Discuss and give their insights on how to achieve that #NewNormal.** What needs to happen to help those affected by your focal advocacy issues? What must all parts of society do to help achieve your vision of a #NewNormal? (for example - individuals, civil society, policy makers, local and national government, donors, etc.)

Here are three questions to help inspire and guide the Open Mic conversation:

- 1 When it comes to your sexual health and bodily autonomy, what would make your life better if it changed tomorrow?
- 2 What barriers are currently preventing that change from happening?
- 3 What moments in your life have you felt discriminated against or excluded?



WHAT DOES A SHEDECIDES OPENMIC LOOK LIKE?



HOW AN OPEN MIC TAKES SHAPE DEPENDS ON WHAT WILL WORK BEST FOR YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY. AS THE ORGANISER, THAT IS YOUR DECISION.

It can be a big event, or a series of small events. For some, it makes sense to host a big gathering and after party at a regular hang-out in a private or public space. For others, it makes more sense to hold several small gatherings and intimate conversations in safe private spaces, where three or more people can get together over coffee and talk freely, without an audience.



Here are some pointers on how to get started:

- ✓ **Pick a date and start planning as early as you can.**
This is good practice when organising any event.
- ✓ **Discuss your ideas with your SheDecides Friends and partners, and ask for their own thoughts and suggestions.** They can provide valuable feedback, inspiration and potentially find ways that you can collaborate and help one another.
- ✓ **Collaborate and bring other trusted people from your community in to help with the planning.** Having a team to co-design and set up the event will make the whole process easier. It will also make the outcome stronger and ensure there is a sense of ownership from those who help organise and also participate. Reach out to friends, colleagues and young people in your network and community who want to take action and be heard.
- ✓ **Once you have a team to help organise your SheDecides Open Mic, hold an ideation session with them.** It is good practice to come together and share your initial ideas with your team of collaborators. It gives everyone a chance to provide feedback and suggestions on the ways that you can make the plan even better.
- ✓ **You need to find a venue (or venues). Somewhere fun, interesting and safe where people will be comfortable and will like to hang out.** This should not be a conventional meeting room. The space should be unique, comfortable and representative of where you live. Get creative!
- ✓ **If you are gathering in a physical space, there should be some refreshments available for participants.** Depending on how long your event(s) lasts, it's important to make sure there is food and drink so everyone can remain energised and actively engaged. You also need to ensure you can cater to any dietary requirements that your participants will have.
- ✓ **Draft a list of the different people, organisations and networks that you could reach out to with invitations to spread the word.**
Try to engage as many people as possible, so that you are able to connect with a strong mix who come from different social circles. As you do this, think about the best ways to reach young people in your country and community.
- ✓ **Depending on the shape of your event, you should also invite friendly and well established social media personalities or journalists,** so they can share about the experience with their followers. Work with them after the event to see how you can continue to draw attention to the demands that participants raised.
- ✓ **Attendees need to be as diverse and inclusive as possible.**
People of different gender, sexuality, age, religious, cultural, disabled and professional backgrounds should all be present. Most importantly, try to get people in the room who aren't normally able or included in discussions about gender equality. Ensure the space you use is disability friendly, and make arrangements such as sign-language interpretation if needed.
- ✓ **Think of different ways people can express themselves during the Open Mic.** Some people may feel nervous to speak about themselves in front of other people. Offer them the chance to express themselves in a way that helps them feel comfortable. For example, perhaps they can read an extract from a particular poem and explain why that resonates with their experience.
- ✓ **Set out some ground rules for participation.** As a basic rule, when one person speaks everyone else must be respectful and listen to what they have to say. Outside of that, depending on how your Open Mic takes shape it is up to you to determine what other rules might be needed.

GATHERING PERSPECTIVES FOR EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING

A **SheDecides Open Mic** can be a powerful source for authentic and engaging storytelling content.

With the consent of participants, you can use different methods to record the stories and perspectives that they share. You can then incorporate these recordings into powerful creative media and advocacy projects.

Check out this example from SheDecides Lebanon

Check out this example from SheDecides Bhutan

It is important to reflect on how you personally can use different storytelling techniques and mediums to represent what people express and share during your **Open Mics**.

Play to your own creative strengths and think of who you can work with that has strengths in other creative mediums. The best way to ensure you get the most out of the **Open Mics** process is to pick one or two complimentary mediums that you will use to record the session.

Different combinations of media will achieve different results. So, before you decide how you will record things, it's worth identifying what the final product or products of your creative advocacy project will be. As you do this, think about who from your existing network that you can work with, who the audiences are that you trying to engage with, and what forms of digital media content will best resonate with them.

Another thing to consider is how the venue space lends itself to different recording techniques. For example, a big hall with echo will be a more challenging space to record an interview or conversation than it would be to record it in a small room with good soundproofing.

When you are in the **SheDecides Open Mics**, try to gather as much content as possible, without disrupting the conversation and dynamic. Some of what you record will end up being stronger or more useful than other parts. But, by gathering as much content as possible you will ensure you have lots to choose from when compiling the content into the final creative product.



She Decides. OPENMICS

To help inspire your thinking, here's a few quick examples of different combinations other people have used:

- ✓ Have someone taking **photos**, and someone else taking **audio recordings** as people speak.
- ✓ Ask an artist to produce a **live piece of visual artwork** inspired by the conversation that happens around them, and at the same time have a videographer **film the event and the artist's process** as it happens.
- ✓ Collaborate with a **journalist or blogger** and **social media personality** to write about your shared **SheDecides Open Mic** experience so they can share it with their followers, and have a photographer take photos.
- ✓ Ask a poet or lyricist to produce a **poem or song** inspired by the conversation that happens around them, and at the same time have a videographer film the event and process as it happens.

Before you use the recordings of anyone though, you must have their written consent to do so.

Help people feel comfortable to share by ensuring the space is safe, and ensure that you have signed consent from participants who are willing to have their testimony recorded and shared.

Here is a [template release form](#) that you can use for this.



She Decides. OPENMICS

CHECKLIST:

To help you plan, here is a quick checklist to fill in as you go.



DESIGNING YOUR SHEDECIDES OPENMIC:

Will your Open Mic be a public or private gathering?

What will your Open Mic budget be?

What goals and outcomes do you want to achieve from the Open Mic?

What activities or performances will take place in your Open Mic?

What challenges will you need to prepare for?

THE PEOPLE:

Who will the participants be and why?

What are their particular needs that you should be aware of?

What dietary requirements will you need to cater to?

Who will be your collaborators and volunteers?

SPREADING THE WORD:

How will you reach your target audience and invite them to join?

Thinking about the safety of the space and your participants, should you publicly advertise the Open Mic?

THE VENUE:

Where will you host your Open Mic, and why?

How many people can the venue comfortably hold?

What audio/visual facilities are needed?

What **SheDecides materials** might you need to produce?

How can you help make the space feel safe and welcoming?

RECORDING FOR STORYTELLING:

What recording techniques will you use, and why?

What challenges should you think about when using these recording techniques?

What creative project(s) do you plan to use the recordings for?

Who can you partner with to help the recording process?

Who can you partner with to help turn the recordings into the creative project and tell your story?

Don't forget to ask your **SheDecides** Friends for ideas and regularly check out the **SheDecides** social media channels and newsletters for inspiration from around the world.

**Together we will create a #NewNormal.
Where #SheDecides. #WithoutQuestion.**