

Handout: Checklist for interviewing children

1. Assessing the situation

- Is the interview likely to cause the child/family unnecessary harm or risk?
- Is the interview essential?
 - Has another organization interviewed the child? If so, can you use that information instead? (If the child was already interviewed and you are unsure whether the information is sufficient, obtain a copy of the first interview and check with your supervisor before proceeding with a second interview).
- Has the child received the necessary support (e.g., medical, psycho-social, legal)?

2. Preparing the interview

- Have you obtained informed consent for the interview from the child?
 - If necessary, have you obtained the informed consent of the family/caregiver? (Be aware of potential conflicts of interest and protection problems).
 - Have you informed the child/family/caregiver of possible risks and benefits, and that the interview will not necessarily improve the child's individual situation?
 - What security precautions have you and others taken? Are they sufficient?
- Is the selected location safe and comfortable for the child, and does it respect confidentiality?
- Are you the best person to conduct the interview? Would other colleagues/partners be preferable based on gender, cultural background, language skills, interview experience or other considerations?
- Do you need an interpreter?
 - How will that or presence of other people help/disturb the interview?
 - If an interpreter is needed, have you adequately briefed that person, for example, on confidentiality and security matters?

3. Conducting the interview

Introducing yourself and the purpose of the interview

- Have you introduced yourself, explained your mandate and the interview's purpose in plain language that a child can understand? (Avoid raising the child/caregiver's expectations about participating in the interview, such as prospects for criminal prosecutions, DDR benefits, remedies, etc.).
- Have you explained what will happen with the information?
 - Did you explain that the information will remain confidential except if

informed consent is provided to proceed otherwise?

- Have you asked the child/family/caregiver for consent in using the information for reporting purposes and/or sharing the information for advocacy and case management/referral purposes? (Written consent is generally preferable; however, the interviewer may alternatively take note of the consent).
- Are you explaining everything you are doing as you go along (e.g., taking notes)?

Asking about the violation

- Are you asking the child primarily open questions, allowing the child to tell his/her story (e.g., "Tell me about ...")? (Avoid closed questions, which require one-word answers, or leading questions, which prompt answers.)
- Are you allowing the child enough time to answer questions?
- Are you closely watching the child's body language for signs of distress, distraction or tiredness? What actions will you take if the interviewee becomes distressed?

Closing the interview

- Have you given the child an opportunity to ask questions and tell you about something that you have not asked, including protection concerns that the child may have and possible actions to respond to those?
- Have you thanked the child for sharing the information?
- Do you know how to reach the child/family/caregiver in case further information is needed? Do they know how to reach you?
- Have you offered referrals and decided on next steps with the child and caregiver or person the child trusts?
- Have you asked what the child hopes to be the interview outcome and addressed unrealistic expectations?

4. Following up on the interview

- Have you documented the interview, making sure to use relevant forms? Have you safely stored the interview notes, including the informed consent received? (e.g., in the relevant database).
- Have you shared needed information with relevant actors, according to the informed consent received? (Make sure to maintain the confidentiality of the survivor/victim. That means sharing only what is absolutely necessary to those involved in the survivor/victim's care and with his/her permission).
- Have you made all necessary referrals for the child/family/caregiver, according to the informed consent received?
- How are you following up on information?
- Are you periodically giving feedback to child/family/caregiver, as appropriate?