

Module 1



How to Promote Child-friendly Interactions with Children

Learning Activities 1.1 and 1.2

How to adapt your language to children

Situation 1
Let us imagine that the host-State police proceed with the arrest of a man for a criminal offence. A police officer must now explain the situation to the man's daughter, aged 10, who witnessed the arrest.
Situation 2
Let us imagine that the host-State police meet with a boy, aged 12, at a school, a few hours after an attack by an armed group. A police officer must now initiate the first interaction with the boy who most likely witnessed the attack on the school.
Situation 3
Let us imagine that the host-State police arrive at a scene where a boy, aged 15, has apparently been raped. A male police officer must now initiate the first interaction with the boy and explain what will happen next.
Situation 4
Let us imagine that the host-State police have to take responsibility for a 17-year-old boy who has just been demobilized from the armed forces. A police officer must now initiate the first interaction with the boy and explain what will happen next.

Learning Activity 1.3

How to adapt to the individual situation of each child

Case Studies

Case study 1

Yesterday, in Bria, the Central African Republic police arrested Jean, a 10-year-old boy who was carrying a weapon at the market. When he arrived at the marketplace, the child looked lost and nervous, and was walking around in circles; some passers-by noticed him and called the police. The host-State police officer approached the child, who started to cry and said he did not want to hurt anybody, but he was supposed to steal food and bring it back to the armed group's camp before dawn or he would be beaten. The host-State police arrested the child and secured the weapon. They then put the child in a detention centre for the night.

You are located in Bria as a United Nations police officer in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). You receive information about the arrest. Your colleagues in the host-State police ask you for advice on how to interview Jean. They say they want to help the boy, but they also need urgent information on the *modus operandi* of this armed group. You agree to help and go to the detention centre.

Questions:

1. Explain in detail the actions that the host-State police should take before, during and after the interview with the child.
2. Considering what you know about the child's behaviour, how would you recommend that the host-State police adapt its approach? Give concrete examples of what to do and not to do.

Case study 2

Six months ago, Pascaline was intercepted by the military component of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in a village near Wau. It seemed that she was part of the armed forces, although she was not carrying a weapon. Pascaline underwent disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. She is now back in her community in Yambio, at the other end of the country. The Chief of Yambio police station calls you at the United Nations Police (UNPOL) and asks you to assist his officers in preparing an interview with Pascaline.

When you arrive at the Yambio police station, you see Pascaline sitting at the entrance. She is dirty, her clothes are torn, and she is skinny. According to the police records, Pascaline says that she is 13 years old and that she has been harassed by the neighbours, called names, and accused of witchcraft. Since she completed her demobilization and returned to her home village, she has been ostracized. She denies having stolen from the neighbours.

Pascaline's behaviour is very agitated, and she is constantly shifting her position on the chair. The host-State police officer tells you that, earlier on, when he had asked her when she was kidnapped by the armed forces, she said that she did not know. She did not remember the name and location of her village either. When the officers tried to ask her for more details, she got angry and started shouting that they should leave her alone. Then she refused to answer any more questions.

Questions:

1. Explain in detail the actions that the host-State police should take before, during and after the interview with the child.
2. Considering what you know about the child's behaviour, how would you recommend that the host-State police adapt its approach? Give concrete examples of what to do and not to do.

Case study 3

Shaima is 17 years old. She was brought to the health clinic by neighbours who said she had collapsed in front of her house when she was told that her 3-year-old daughter had been abducted by armed men. Doctors provided her with the necessary care and, given how weak she was, asked the host-State police to meet with her at the clinic.

You have recently arrived in Kabul as a United Nations Police (UNPOL) officer in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). A colleague in the host-State police calls you to request guidance on how to proceed with this unusual interview. He says Shaima has never been to school and is known in the village to be a little lightheaded.

Questions:

1. Explain in detail the actions that the host-State police should take before, during and after the interview with the child.
2. Considering what you know about the child's behaviour, how would you recommend that the host-State police to adapt its approach? Give concrete examples of what to do and not to do.

Case study 4

Abdel is 16 years old. He left his hometown, Mirga Sur, a few weeks ago, when fighting intensified. He was supposed to join his mother and his three sisters at his uncle's house in Kirkuk, in the south of the Kurdish part of Iraq. He had joined a group of neighbours who were also heading south to flee the fighting.

On the way, the truck that was carrying the displaced group broke down, and Abdel had to find a place to stay for the night. He found an empty warehouse near Erbil and fell asleep behind some boxes in a corner.

During the night, Abdel sees two armed men entering the warehouse with a young girl. The men sexually assaulted the girl. A few minutes later, the police arrived and arrested the two men as well as Abdel.

You have recently arrived in Erbil as a United Nations Police (UNPOL) officer in the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The morning after the incident, you

receive a call from the host-State police requesting guidance on how to deal with Abdel. The police had found his identity papers, and the police record states that he had been found guilty of robbery on various occasions in Mirga Sur. Apparently, the boy has refused to talk and insults everyone approaching him. The two other men say that Abdel took part in the sexual assault.

Questions:

1. Explain in detail the actions that the host-State police should take before, during and after the interview with the child.
2. Considering what you know about the child's behaviour, how would you recommend that the host-State police adapt its approach? Give concrete examples of what to do and not to do.

Learning Activity 1.4

How to support the host-State police in interviewing children

Case Study¹

Background

Rebecca is 13 years old and lives in Juba, South Sudan. Her parents were killed in late 2020, when the fighting resumed. Now Rebecca lives with her grandparents, who try to take care of her as much as possible, but they are poor and in bad health.

Rebecca goes to school every day. One afternoon, she was going through the market on her way home from school when she was grabbed by an older boy, who dragged her to a nearby alley. He threatened Rebecca with a knife and put his hand on her mouth to prevent her from screaming for help. The boy smelled of alcohol. He told Rebecca that his name was John and that he knew where she lived. He told her that she must bring him money once a week, otherwise he would go to her house and beat her grandparents.

Rebecca started to steal in the market on her way home from school. When she could not steal money, she stole food to bring to John. She became very stressed and sad, and her grandparents were worried about her, but she did not want to tell them about her problems.

One day, Rebecca left school early and passed by a coffee shop in the market. She managed to steal the wallet of a customer sitting in the coffee shop. The customer saw her and screamed.

Rebecca panicked, started running and tripped. The customer caught her and called the police. Two police officers came; one stayed with Rebecca, while the other one took the customer's statement. Then, they took Rebecca to the police station. The two officers were men, so they felt that it would be better for a female officer to interview Rebecca. They briefed a female colleague, who subsequently started to interview Rebecca.

¹ Case study adapted from International Bureau for Children's Rights and UNICEF Libya, "Police training on child rights and intervention techniques, Libyan Police", December 2014.



Provide participants with the materials and instructions for the learning activity.

Interview of Rebecca by the female Police Officer

Police officer: Good afternoon, Rebecca, I am a police officer here. How are you?

Rebecca: (Lowers her head and looks at the floor) Please call my grandmother, she will be worried.

Police officer: Later Rebecca. You and I must talk now because you will soon have to see the judge who will want to know what happened today. The two officers who brought you here told me that you stole a wallet. Why did you do that?

Rebecca: The officers lied.

Police officer: (Raises her voice) Of course not. They wrote in the report that you took the wallet and ran, and that the customer caught you. What were you doing in the market in the middle of the day? Do your parents know you skipped school?

Rebecca: My parents are dead. I live with my grandparents. You have to call them. (She starts to cry because she feels overwhelmed and the reference to the death of her parents triggers an emotional reaction)

Police officer: We will call your grandparents, please don't worry Rebecca. They will soon come, and you will be able to talk to them. Is that alright?

Rebecca: Yes, thank you. (She smiles at the police officer)

Police officer: While we are waiting for your grandparents, can you tell me how long you have been living with them?

Rebecca: For two years now.

Police officer: (Asks Rebecca more questions about school and what she likes to do in her spare time)

Rebecca: (Answers the police officer's questions more and more freely, and seems to be calmer)

Rebecca's grandparents arrive. The police officer talks with them separately, then they join Rebecca in the interview room.

Police officer: Now that we know each other better Rebecca, I will ask you a few questions about what happened today. If you don't understand my questions, it is important that you tell me so, and I will repeat. Is that alright?

Rebecca: (In a low voice) Yes...

Police officer: Rebecca, please tell me why you are here. You can take your time to explain.

Rebecca: It wasn't my fault.

Police officer: No Rebecca, lying is wrong. Please don't lie to me.

Rebecca: (Lowers her eyes and keeps silent)

Police officer: OK, Rebecca, what do you mean? Did your grandparents force you to steal? I don't believe that.

Rebecca: (Keeps silent)

Police officer: I will let you talk now. Please tell me what you mean when you say that it's not your fault. Take your time, I'm listening.

Rebecca: It's because of John... (Starts crying)

Police officer: That's good Rebecca. Who is John?

Rebecca: I don't know.

Police officer: Alright, you don't know. Have you known him for long?

Rebecca: No.

Police officer: Well, it's certainly not John who stole the wallet, but you! Are you ready to admit your crime?

Rebecca: (Starts crying again) No, I am not a thief...

Police officer: (Stands up) But you took the wallet. Why?

Rebecca: His name is John, but if I tell anyone, he will beat my grandparents!

Police officer: Rebecca, we are here to protect you and help you. You say that all this is because of John and that you have not known him for very long. OK. When did you meet him for the first time?

Rebecca: (Keeps silent for a whole minute, looks at her grandparents, then at the floor)

Police officer: (Waits patiently for Rebecca to start talking) Take your time Rebecca, we are not in a rush.

Rebecca: He followed me one day after school, then he attacked me... (Continues telling the story)



After the allotted 15 minutes, distribute/circulate the handout below to allow participants to assess their own answers against the suggested answers. Give them 10 minutes to complete this evaluation.

Interview of Rebecca by the police officer

Good techniques are in green and bad techniques are in red.

Police officer: Good afternoon, Rebecca, **my name is X and** I am a police officer here. How are you?

Rebecca: (Lowers her head and looks at the floor) Please call my grandmother, she will be worried.

Police officer: Later Rebecca. You and I must talk now because you will soon have to see the judge who will want to know what happened today. The two officers who brought you here told me that you stole a wallet. Why did you do that?

Rebecca: The officers lied.

Police officer: (Raises her voice) Of course not. They wrote in the report that you took the wallet and ran, and that the customer caught you. What were you doing in the market in the middle of the day? Do your parents know you skipped school?

Rebecca: My parents are dead. I live with my grandparents. You have to call them. (She starts to cry)

Police officer: We will call your grandparents, please don't worry Rebecca. They will soon come, and you will be able to talk to them. Is that alright?

Rebecca: Yes, thank you. (She smiles at the police officer)

Police officer: While we are waiting for your grandparents, can you tell me how long you have been living with them?

Rebecca: For two years now.

Police officer: What type of music do you like?

Rebecca: I like Beyoncé.

Police officer: Oh, I like her music too. What is your favourite song from her?

Rebecca: Crazy in Love.

Police officer: Yes, that one is nice. I also like “Be alive” from the Lion King movie. Do you like that one?

Rebecca: (Answers the police officer's questions more and more freely, and seems to be calmer)

Rebecca's grandparents arrive. The police officer talks with them separately, then they join Rebecca in the interview room.

Police officer: Now that we know each other better Rebecca, I will ask you a few questions about what happened today. If you don't understand my questions, it is important that you let me know and I will explain. Is that alright?

Rebecca: (In a low voice) Yes...

Police officer: Rebecca, please tell me why you are here. You can take your time to explain.

Rebecca: It wasn't my fault.

Police officer: No Rebecca, lying is wrong. Please don't lie to me.

Rebecca: (Lowers her eyes and keeps silent)

Police officer: OK, Rebecca, what do you mean? Did your grandparents force you to steal? I don't believe that.

Rebecca: (Keeps silent)

Police officer: I will let you talk now. Please tell me what you mean when you say that it's not your fault. Take your time, I'm listening.

Rebecca: It's because of John... (Starts crying)

Police officer: That's good Rebecca. Who is John?

Rebecca: I don't know.

Police officer: Alright, you don't know. Have you known him for long?

Rebecca: No.

Police officer: Well, it's certainly not John who stole the wallet, but you! Are you ready to admit your crime?

Rebecca: (Starts crying again) No, I am not a thief...

Police officer: (Stands up) But you took the wallet. Why?

Rebecca: His name is John, but if I tell anyone, he will beat my grandparents!

Police officer: Rebecca, we are here to protect you and help you. You say that all this is because of John and that you have not known him for very long. OK. When did you meet him for the first time?

Rebecca: (Keeps silent for a whole minute, looks at her grandparents, then at the floor)

Police officer: (Waits patiently for Rebecca to start talking) Take your time Rebecca, we are not in a rush.

Rebecca: He followed me one day after school, then he attacked me... (Continues telling the story).