

RTP CP UNPOL Module 1



How to Promote Child-friendly Interactions with Children

Aim



UNPOL plays a critical role in guiding and training the host-State police in adopting child-friendly techniques in their interactions with children

It is important for UNPOL officers to know United Nations guidance and approach to interacting and communicating with children

Learning Objectives



At the end of the module, learners will be able to demonstrate how to:

- Adapt their language to children
- Adapt their attitude and physical approach to children
- Adapt to the individual situation of each child
- Support the host-State police in interviewing children

Module Overview



How to adapt your language to children

Learning Activity 1.1 – Mini-scenarios

How to adapt your attitude and physical approach to children

Learning Activity 1.2 – Role-play

How to adapt to the individual situation of each child

Learning Activity 1.3 – Case study

How to support the host-State police in interviewing children

Learning Activity 1.4 – Interview exercise



Learning Activity 1.1

Instructions

Four different scenarios of interactions between the host-State police and a child

- Discuss the scenario in your group (5 minutes)
- Write down a word-for-word (verbatim) record of the interaction (10 minutes)
- Present your ideas to the plenary



Situations

- **Situation 1:** Imagine that the host-State police proceed with the arrest of a man for a criminal offense. A police officer must now explain the situation to the man's daughter, aged 10, who witnessed the arrest.
- **Situation 2:** Imagine that the host-State police meet with a boy, aged 12, at a school, a few hours after an attack. A police officer must now initiate the first interaction with the boy who most likely witnessed the attack on the school.



Situations

- **Situation 3:** 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:** 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.

Adapting communication to a child



- A good interaction with a child will be one in which the child feels safe and taken seriously

- In each situation, the police officer should:
 - Explain the situation in simple words

 - Provide information on why the child is in contact with the police

 - Explain the next steps to the child



Vocabulary

Use simple words

- Good examples: crime, police, judge, your description of what happened.
- Bad examples: infraction, attorney, court of appeal, hearing, apprehension, etc.

Use non-confrontational vocabulary

- Good example: “I am here to explain what the next steps will be and to answer your questions.”
- Bad example: “My responsibility is to ensure you don’t do this again and that we learn the truth.”



Adapting communication to a child (cont.)

- Use short and simple sentences (one idea per sentence)
- Use positive language
- Use neutral, non-subjective sentences
- Use non-suggestive / non-leading sentences
- Use open questions as much as possible
- Respect the right of the child to remain silent

Elements for interacting with a child



1. Who am I?
2. Who are you?
3. Are you ok?
4. What is happening?
5. What will happen now?
6. Do you have questions?



Key messages for Learning Activity 1.1

- All interactions between a police officer and a child should address the following six elements: Who am I? Who are you? Are you ok? What is happening? What will happen now? Do you have questions?
- Vocabulary should consist of simple, non-confrontational words
- Your sentences should be short, positive, open, neutral, non-subjective and non-suggestive
- The child has the right to remain silent and should be presumed innocent



Physical presence

- Awareness of the differential of power
- Awareness of the intimidating circumstances
- Presumption of innocence
- All children's rights and principles must be respected and upheld, at all times



Physical presence (cont.)

Good practices regarding attitude and body language:

- Avoid dominating behaviour
- Be mindful of your body language
 - Stand or sit at the same level as the child
 - Avoid being too close to the child
- Be sensitive about suggestive behaviour
 - Avoid touching the child
- Establish visual contact



Non-verbal communication

- Create a contact with the child that is engaging, not intimidating
- Remain calm
- Avoid showing judgment, annoyance or impatience
- Pay full attention to the interaction with the child



Active listening

- Introduce yourself
- Create an environment in which the child feels free to talk about what happened
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication
- Never raise your voice
- Avoid taking notes during the interview

Gender sensitivity



- Let the child choose between two police officers, ideally of different genders
- Avoid asking personal questions that are unrelated to the situation

Coordination



- UNPOL should guide the approach used by the host-State police
- Child Protection Advisers (CPAs) are the most suitable actors to provide expert advice
- UNPOL should refrain from interacting directly with children



Interpreters

- Explain to the child why interpreters are there and how they will work
- Explain to the child that he/she can ask questions/seek clarifications anytime
- Ensure that the interpreter interprets accurately and uses child-friendly language (quality control)
- Using interpreters takes longer, therefore allow for sufficient time
- Cultural differences come into play in interpretation



Learning Activity 1.2

Instructions

- Each group designates two volunteers to simulate the interaction between the police officer and the child (7 minutes)
- The participant playing the part of the police officer should focus on how he/she interacts with the child
- The participant playing the part of the child should focus on how the police officer approaches him/her
- Observers will comment focusing on language used, attitude and approach



Key messages for Learning Activity 1.2

- Coordinate capacity-building and development activities with Child Protection Advisers
- Police officers and interpreters should always avoid physical contact in interactions with children
- Police officers and interpreters should be active listeners: pay full attention to the child, and avoid distraction
- Police officers and interpreters should adjust their attitude and posture to the child; be at the same level as the child



Learning Activity 1.3

Instructions

- Read the case study assigned to your group
- Discuss the following two questions (15 minutes)
 - 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?
- Present your findings to the plenary



Case Study 1: Debrief

- Seeking medical attention is the priority
- The detention is not justified
- The child cannot be criminally responsible
- Protection against possible retaliations are needed
- Joint preparation between social workforce and police is needed
- Water, food and quiet place



Case Study 1: Debrief (cont.)

- Inform the parent(s) or guardian(s) about the case
- Ensure the presence of a lawyer for the child
- The child should choose between a male and a female host-State police officer
- Inform the child about his rights; the child should consent to be interviewed



Case Study 1: Debrief (cont.)

- Avoid overcrowding in the room
- Allow for breaks and adapt to level of maturity of the child
- Consider wearing civilian clothes instead of a uniform
- Set ground rules and establish the importance of telling the truth
- Sit down at the same level as the child
- Introduce yourself, ask the child his name, explain the situation



Case Study 1: Debrief (cont.)

- Use simple conversation topics to establish trust
- Ask the child what he meant when he told the police officer that he did not want to hurt anyone
- Rehabilitation, psychological and social support are the priority after the interview

Why is interviewing children different from interviewing adults?



- The brain of a child is still developing, affecting decision-making
- The level of development and maturity of each child is different
- Children can be intimidated by figures of authority and new environments
- Children who have grown up in armed conflict environments socialize differently from those who have not



Case Study 2: Debrief

- Most of the points highlighted in case study 1 apply
- Additional considerations:
 - Adapt to the location
 - Summarize and validate the child's statements
 - Adapt vocabulary
 - Build trust
 - Avoid revictimization



Recognizing and managing distress

- Police officers not competent to determine whether a child is traumatized or not
- Recognizing possible symptoms of shock/distress can help to approach a child with greater care and to refer the case if needed
- Simple recollection of facts can bring a very high level of stress to the child
- Ensure that the child will not suffer additional stress during the interview



Causes of distress

- Shock/distress can be caused by:
 - A single event
 - An ongoing situation
 - Multiple events over time

- The same event will affect children differently

- Shock/distress can last for varying amounts of time



Case study 3: Debrief

- Points highlighted in case studies 1 and 2 apply
- Additional considerations:
 - Host-State police should seek assistance from mental health professionals
 - Officers should adapt their behaviour to the conditions in the hospital room
 - Seek support and complementary information from family members or neighbours
 - Do not make any promises



Symptoms of distress

- Everybody reacts differently to stress
- Symptoms of distress can be physical and/or psychological
- Psychological, medical, and social workers are best suited to address symptoms of distress



Adapting to distress

- The police need to adapt their behaviour when observing symptoms of distress

- Example of adapting include:
 - Taking breaks
 - Using a calm tone of voice
 - Acknowledging distress
 - Showing empathy (without physical contact)
 - Empowering the child in decision-making
 - Providing opportunities to raise questions/concerns about safety or the safety of family



Case Study 4: Debrief

- Most points highlighted in case studies 1 to 3 apply
- Additional considerations:
 - Show respect for the child
 - Be careful not to revictimize the child
 - Ask open, non-leading questions
 - Evaluate the child's level of understanding and adjust accordingly
 - Summarize and validate the child's statements

Core guidelines for child-friendly police interviews



- Do no harm
- Do not act in a discriminatory manner
- Do not use staging
- Ensure that the child and/or parent(s) or guardian(s) know that he/she is being interviewed
- Obtain consent from the child and/or parent(s) or guardian(s) to carry out the interview
- Ensure confidentiality of the information provided during the interview



Key messages for Learning Activity 1.3

- The child's level of maturity influences the interview
- Trauma can only be diagnosed and treated by health professionals
- Recognizing symptoms of shock/distress can help to approach the child with care, and to determine the need for referral
- Ensure that the child will not suffer additional distress because of the interview
- Follow core guidelines for child-friendly police interviews



Learning Activity 1.4

Instructions

- This activity consists of an interview that involves useful and less useful interviewing techniques
- Individual work: Use different colours of pens to identify the good and bad interviewing techniques used by the police officer in the interview, indicating why the line is a good or a bad technique (15 minutes)
- In groups of two: compare and review your answers (10 minutes)



The six rules of a good interview

- Create trust
- Create a child-friendly atmosphere
- Keep an open mind and remain objective
- Remain professional
- Know how to listen
- Know how to conclude the interview



Key messages for Learning Activity 1.4

The six rules of a good interview are:

- Create trust
- Create a child-friendly atmosphere
- Keep an open mind and remain objective
- Remain professional
- Know how to listen
- Know how to conclude the interview