

Additional resources on how to make an interview

Tips to interview special groups

If your interviewee is a victims of torture:

- *Avoid retraumatising the victim / witness.* Interviewing torture victims (and witnesses who are so traumatised that they are very much like victims) about their experiences is an extremely delicate process. One which should never taken lightly. A fact-finding interview may raise conscious and subconscious fears. Be sensitive to this.
- *Make individual feel important.* Avoid using terms such as ‘torture victim’, ‘victim’, and ‘case’ in your interview. This will make your interviewee a subject of pity, while you should show respect and affirm one’s dignity.
- *Deal with emotions.* Encourage your interviewee to speak. In case she/he overcomes with emotions, be supportive. Perhaps take a break in which you offer something to eat and drink. Keep in mind you are not a trained psychiatrist and your support is limited.
- *Be aware of post-traumatic stress disorder.* Your interviewee may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Their lack of trust, shame, humiliation and memory impairments can lead to confusing and seemingly contradictory statements as well as inability to remember details. If possible, obtain expert medical advice. You may also rely on other sources of information, such as friends and relatives.
- *Medical examination.* It may be needed to conduct medical examination to confirm the level of physical and / or psychological damage. Be aware that due to her/his traumatising experiences, your interviewee may have difficulties with certain examinations.

If your interviewee is a women:

- *Sensitive issues.* Female interviewees may be particularly reluctant or unable to talk about sexuality or forms of sexual violence. This may be due to the social stigma attached to such suffering. Take more time to create rapport. Also affirm the interviewee is entitled to refuse to answer any question she finds uncomfortable and can stop the interview at any time.
- *Female interviewer.* If possible have a female interviewer, and if relevant female interpreter, to conduct the interview. Especially when the topic of the interview may be sensitive.

If your interviewee is a refugee or displaced person:

- *Be aware of stress.* It is important to be sensitive that refugees and displaced persons are under a lot of stress. They are often without resources and away from their homes and (possibly) families.
- *Check status.* Is the interviewee at risk of being sent back to her/his home country or region? Is the person seeking asylum or resettlement? Where is the person staying?
- *Validate.* As it may not be sure whether the interviewee stays at the same place for a long period of time, make sure you validate the details provided. This may be through reviewing the details with the interviewee or by interviewing other refugees/displaced persons from the same area.

If your interviewee is a child:

- *Preceptions.* A child perceives the world differently from an adult. Be aware of the child's age, maturity and understanding. Use simpler words or involve with another interviewer and interpreter trained on dealing with children.
- *Family.* In addition to interviewing the child, you could possible talk to members of the child's family, community, teachers and other care-givers.

If your interviewee is from a rural population:

- *Conception of time.* Like members of indigenous groups, individuals accustomed to a rural lifestyle may have a different conception of time. Precise dates may have little meaning, so it is important to use a familiar reference. You may for instance ask: "Did that happen before or after the planting season?"
- *Confidence.* Be aware that poor, uneducated or otherwise vulnerable individuals may lack confidence and may be reluctant to share information. You may work with local organisation who have strong relationships with the local community in this respect.

If your interviewee is from a indigenous communities:

- *Culture and customs.* Indigenous communicaties may have a way of life that is very different from the rest of the society or country. You should be sensitive to and respectful of differences in language, methods of communication, sense of time and social structure. Try to learn about these customs prior to the interview.

If your interviewee is from a lower-income groups:

- *Expectations.* Lower-income groups including slum-dwellers, squatters, and those living in poverty generally may have different views and perspectives as well. They may just as easily have unrealistic high expectation of improved standard of living or may be entirely distrustful of uninvited involvement in their community. Be sensitive to their sentiment. Squatters for instance will feel reluctant when you start off the interview with questions related to laws.

If your interviewee is a government official and suspected perpetrator:

- *Diplomacy.* Interviewing authorities requires diplomacy. Remain polite and keep an open mind while questioning.
- *Planning.* Prepare a list of questions and think strategically about the order of your questions. Try to probe statements without being to confrontational.