***Training Materials on the International Protocol***

**PART 2 MODULE 4 – KEY PLANNING TOPICS**

**Session objectives:**

* Understanding the strategic and tactical advantages of careful planning and coordination
* Recognising and managing the challenges of working through interpreters
* Identifying the best way to store, organise and analyse information

**Suggested duration of session:**  60 to 120 minutes

**Exercise:** None

**Relevant sections of International Protocol:**

Pages 36-41; Module 3 – Preliminary Considerations; Module 5 – Identifying Survivors and Other Witnesses; Module 6 – Testimony; Module 9 – Storing Information

This module should be closely linked with Module 3 on Preliminary Considerations, as both modules cover important topics for the planning and preparation phase of any investigation or documentation. The trainer for these modules should therefore have experience in planning and managing an investigation or documentation process. It should be emphasised to the participants that the issues covered in Modules 3 and 4 will need to be carefully considered *before* conducting any inquiries in the field during the investigation or documentation phase.

The trainer may encounter some frustration from participants who are already investigating or documenting sexual violence without having engaged in a separate planning and preparation phase. The trainer can explain that the International Protocol represents basic standards of best international practice but is not a rulebook. Not every member of the team needs to be involved with the planning and preparation phase, but it should ideally be an important and distinct part of the overall investigation or documentation process. The participants should nevertheless be encouraged to consider whether any of the issues covered in Modules 3 and 4 have been problematic for them in their work, and whether applying any of the guidance contained in the Protocol would be helpful to them.

The first component of this module focusses on the importance of careful planning for the success of any investigation or documentation process. The trainer should encourage as much discussion as possible and encourage participants to share their experiences of planning obstacles, planning successes and the consequences of not having a proper plan in place for certain circumstances. The trainer should also emphasise the two most important questions for any planning exercise: *what do we need to do?* and *how do we do it?* The research phase provides vital background context and an overview of available information to allow for a detailed answer to the first question, while the second question will require careful consideration of practical issues about how to manage language or cultural barriers, large volumes of information and (un)acceptable levels of risk. Both questions also require an awareness of what other organisations might be dealing with sexual violence and how to ensure that your work does not obstruct or unnecessarily duplicate theirs. Basically, the participants should give careful thought to how to make their investigation or documentation as efficient and effective as possible.

The second component of this module deals with working with and through interpreters. Participants should be asked if they have any experience working with interpreters, and if so how professional or successful their experience was. The trainer should provide an example of the consequences of trying to communicate through an untrained or incompetent interpreter – this can be a personal anecdote or even a video clip (i.e. someone giving a long passionate speech in the dock which is just translated as “he says he didn’t do it”). The participants should understand that when they are working with an interpreter, the interpreter is the tool through which they communicate with an individual. If the interpreter is unprofessional, rude or insensitive, then no matter how careful your questions, the person you are speaking to may not trust or like you enough to answer them.

Likewise, if the participants do not properly brief the interpreter on what is needed and expected from them – particularly to ensure that the interpreter is capable of sensitively dealing with sexual violence – then there is a greater likelihood of losing control of their means of communication. Some of the participants may never have worked with an interpreter before, so it is important for them to understand what is good and bad professional practice.

The trainer should emphasise certain core issues for professional interpreters doing this work – using direct speech only (i.e. “How old are you?” not “She wants to know how old you are”); recognising and flagging euphemisms and linguistic/cultural signals around sexual violence that will need clarification (i.e. “they hurt me” or “he disrespected me” to describe rape or sexual assault); understanding that they must clarify any expression that they don’t fully recognise, whether it is said by the interviewee or one of the investigation or documentation team, rather than changing the meaning to what they think the person meant or omitting it as irrelevant. The trainer can explain that, although people often instruct interpreters to translate “word for word”, the differences between languages can make this impossible. If there is no direct equivalent of a word or phrase in the language they are translating to, the interpreter may have to change the exact words used by the witness to fit the closest possible translation. The crucially important thing is that the *meaning* of what the interviewee said is maintained. If the interpreter is unsure about what the interviewee meant, that should be clarified.

The final component of this module looks at managing information. It is designed to get participants to think carefully in advance about the volume of information their investigation or documentation process might collect, about any legal requirements that attach to that information (i.e. protection of personal data, necessary authority to collect evidence, requirements for admissibility in court), about how to physically store and manage that information, and about how to sort, organise and analyse the information once it has been collected.

Electronic databases are a good way of doing this, but may not be available to everyone engaged in this kind of work. Participants should be asked what information management systems they use or have experience with. The answers might range from a filing cabinet to advanced evidence management software, but the participants should be encouraged to think creatively about this. They may not have a dedicated electronic evidence database, but do they have access to Microsoft Excel or any other spreadsheet software? If so, they can use that as a system to electronically record and monitor certain categories of information and to ensure their records are standardised and searchable. If they do not have the capacity to physically store any information or electronically organise it, should they make a strategic decision *not* to pursue certain lines of inquiry? If they can store the information right now but are not sure what the results of their investigation or documentation mission will ultimately be used for (advocacy, prosecution, international accountability mechanisms), will they be able to continue to store the information until it is eventually used or only for a limited period of time? If their investigation or documentation mission is a success and they uncover huge amounts of information, how will they classify and sort that information so that it does not become unmanageable or overwhelming? The important thing is to think about these issues in advance, rather than when they are already on their way to the field, or home with a box full of potential evidence.