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

**PART 2 MODULE 9 – STORING INFORMATION**

**Session objectives:**

* Understanding the obligation to store information securely and appropriately
* Recognising that storage limitations have implications for collection of information
* Identifying the different requirements for physical, digital and forensic evidence

**Suggested duration of session:**  60 to 90 minutes

**Exercise:** None

**Relevant sections of International Protocol:**

Pages 68-70; Module 3 – Preliminary Considerations; Module 4 – Key Planning Topics; Module 6 – Testimony; Module 7 – Interviewing; Module 8 – Additional Sources of Information; Annex 6 & 7 – Chain of Custody; Annex 10 – Sample Sexual Assault Medical Certificate

The trainer for this module should have professional experience dealing with witnesses and evidence in an investigation or documentation context, and should ideally have specific expertise in information storage and management. This is the final module, and it brings together a lot of the issues from the previous modules – Do No Harm, confidentiality, risk assessments, planning, identifying survivors, testimony and other sources of information. These issues all continue to matter even after the investigation or documentation process is over, because the team still has an obligation to maintain the security and confidentiality of the evidence or information they have collected.

However, the trainer should emphasise that the participants cannot wait until the end of the process to start thinking about how to safely store and manage their information. From the planning and preparation phase and throughout the whole process, they need to think carefully about the purpose of their investigation or documentation, what kind of information is necessary or appropriate for them to collect, the different forms that information might take (testimony, documents, physical material, digital or audio-visual, forensic), whether they have the relevant training or authority to collect that type of information, whether it will be practically feasible for them to document, collect or transport that information safely, and whether they can store the information securely and to the required standard over a long period of time. The trainer should make this point clearly at the beginning of Module 3 and should emphasise it repeatedly throughout all subsequent modules. Planning and consideration of storage requirements is a vitally important issue and must happen from the very beginning of the investigation or documentation process, before the participants have collected any information or commenced any investigative or documentation activities. The trainer must ensure that they understand that it is too late to consider storage and maintenance after they have already collected the information – it must be thought about carefully in advance.

For each of the types of information covered in this module – documentary and physical, digital and forensic – the trainer should ask the participants to consider how likely they are to be collecting that type of information, and whether their current facilities would have the physical space or necessary resources to be able to store it long-term. If they already are collecting and storing this kind of information, the trainer should encourage them to discuss (in general terms) what security measures they have in place to keep the information safe and confidential, what restrictions their organisation imposes on who can access the information and for what purpose, and whether they have ever encountered problems with personal or sensitive information which was not stored correctly or appropriately.

Depending on the background and experience of the participants, the answers might range from a bicycle lock on a filing cabinet to a bolted evidence room, but the important thing to emphasise is that they are responsible for finding a way to make sure that the information continues to be protected. The size of their organisation may vary, but they need to be aware that, without a specific plan for the storage and management of sensitive information, promises they have made and steps that they have taken in good faith to respect the principles of confidentiality, do no harm and informed consent when dealing with a survivor or witness can be undermined or undone completely if one of their colleagues later releases or misuses that information. The trainer should also emphasise that the more sensitive the information (i.e. personal or identifying details, photos or recordings, information about security threats or protective measures), the greater the responsibility to keep it safe and confidential.

In relation to forensic and medico-legal information, the trainer should refer back to Module 8 on Additional Sources of Information and underline two key points: 1) that forensic information about sexual violence can be much broader than just biological evidence of sexual contact, and can overlap with physical, documentary and even digital information (i.e. clothing, ropes/ligatures, medical reports, photographs, mobile phone records, bullet casings); and 2) that the collection and proper storage of forensic evidence should only be done with the assistance of trained professionals, since evidence which has not been handled or stored properly may not be useable to help establish responsibility for sexual violence. If the participants are not able to process or store forensic information safely and competently or if they do not need it to prove specific facts, they should not collect it. The trainer should establish whether there are any forensic requirements for establishing sexual violence in the relevant jurisdiction (i.e. need for physical or biological evidence/medical examination for a criminal trial, producing statements or medical certificates to be granted civilian victim status) and should ask the participants if they have any experience in collecting or preserving that kind of material, particularly over long periods of time.

**Wrap-up and conclusion session**

As this is the last of the modules, the trainer should schedule a final session to go back over what the participants have learned and discussed during the training. If the participants have any remaining questions about any of the modules or exercises, they can have them answered during this session. The trainer should ask the participants whether they feel they have a better understanding of how to investigate or document conflict-related sexual violence than they did at the beginning of the training, and whether they will be able to use the International Protocol and the training materials as a guide in their work in future. If the trainer is going to conduct more trainings with these materials, they should also ask the participants for feedback about which modules or exercises were most useful to them and whether they would have liked more or less time for the training or for specific sessions. That will help the trainer to adjust their approach and timings for future trainings.