



FIELD GUIDE TO HUMANITARIAN INTERPRETING & CULTURAL MEDIATION

- *Interpreters and Cultural Mediators: Key responsibilities, differences and similarities.*
- *Humanitarian Interpreting Do's and Don'ts*
- *Humanitarian Mediation Do's and Don'ts*
- **Working with interpreters & cultural mediators in a humanitarian setting - Best Practice**
- *Humanitarian Principles in Practice*
- *Resources*

WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS & CULTURAL MEDIATORS IN A HUMANITARIAN SETTING - BEST PRACTICE -

Interpreter and cultural mediator are different jobs with different skill sets.
Not all interpreters (I) will be able to provide cultural mediation, and not all cultural mediators (CM) will have professional interpreting skills.

Duty of care and adequate preparation: key issues to address before starting work with an I/CM

I/CMs may be putting themselves at risk working for you. Whether or not you are contractually responsible, protect them.

Be aware that if you find something psychologically difficult to handle, your I/CM probably does too. Ask if (s)he wants support, and provide it if so.

Be aware that interpreting requires concentration, which is difficult to maintain in unfamiliar or dangerous environments. I/CMs will need regular breaks to ensure that they can remain focused.

Ensure that the I/CM understands and abides by your organization's code of conduct and the humanitarian principles.

Provide your I/CMs with appropriate comfort and facilities. Be aware of their needs and concerns.

Ensure that the I/CM has a clear job description and brief him/her as precisely as possible on the session ahead.

Provide the I/CM with the necessary background documentation (terminology, glossaries, etc.) ahead of time.

Appropriate set-up, clear communication and control: best practices during and after a session with an I/CM

Pay attention to seating/ positioning so that everyone is clear that the conversation is with you, not with the I/CM.

Interpreting and cultural mediation take time. Schedule additional time for all meetings to allow for information to be repeated.

Speak directly to session participants (not the I/CM): maintain eye contact.

Allow the I/CM to finish interpreting before speaking.

Speak unhurriedly, clearly and with pauses. Speak only one or two sentences at a time.

Minimize your use of jargon, technical terms and abbreviations.

Explain words or concepts at the I/CM's request.

Be aware of cultural differences. Ask the CM for clarification on cultural differences if needed. Interpreters may not be able to provide such nuances.

You are responsible for ensuring understanding between all the parties. If you think there is misunderstanding, check with the I/CM.

Ask for full interpretation of side conversations.

Do not allow the I/CM to answer questions on behalf of participants.

Inquire if interpretation is longer or shorter than expected.

Debrief with the I/CM at the end to address issues or concerns and get suggestions on how you can work better with I/CMs.

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