



PRI Toolkit for

Interviewing Children, their Guardians, and Staff of Juvenile Detention Facilities

November 2011

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Background

Given the risks faced by juveniles in detention and its damaging impact on a child's development, PRI's work places considerable emphasis on juvenile justice reform and has done since its inception. Its activities focus on diverting children from the adult justice system, promoting alternative sanctions to imprisonment and, where imprisonment is used, improving conditions of detention. In order to do this, interviewing children who are deprived of their liberty is vital in getting a full understanding of the situation in a country.

Purpose of undertaking interviews: Obtaining inputs from children and their families allows PRI to better focus the training workshops we provide for professionals to properly reflect the context and conditions of detention in the country we are working with. Further, it allows us to identify where the legislation, guidelines or regulations regarding a certain aspect of detention is not being implemented. The exercise is also valuable in itself in generating data, which can be published as a report containing 'voices of children' in conflict and in contact with the law. Undertaking interviews with children is also essential for those who monitor the conditions of detention at institutions where children are held and for a full overview of this please also see PRI's document "A Training Manual for Independent Monitors of Juvenile Detention Facilities" (2011).

Method: The inputs and experiences of children can be obtained at four levels: one-to-one interviews with children in institutions; interviews with staff from the institutions; interviews with parents, guardians or relatives of children in institutions; and focus group discussions with children in institutions. The most comprehensive reports are those that use all of these methods to collect data.

Implementation: The interviews are carried out by external researchers, contracted to a project, and supervised by PRI. The researchers are required to agree to and comply with relevant child protection guidelines (PRI Child Protection Policy attached as Annex I) and also need to read and become familiar with the "Guidance Note for Interviewing Children", see below.



One-to-one interviews with children

Purpose: To get inputs from children on the performance of the justice system from their first contact with the system to their present point (either in an institution on remand or after conviction, or having finished a sentence) and to try and understand the process for resocialisation measures being offered. The questions are designed under 4 broad headings:

- Background of the child including family and social context;
- Treatment at first contact with the system (i.e. police);
- Experience of the system through arrest, pre-trial detention, trial and sentencing;
- Experience within the institution including educational, recreational, vocational and resocialisation programmes on offer.

Method: The interviews are administered by researchers selected and instructed by PRI and following a questionnaire format (Annex II). Interviewers are required to agree to PRI's Child Protection Policy (Annex I) and be familiar with the 'Guidance Note for Interviewing Children', see below. PRI ensures that permission has been sought from the relevant institution for the administration of the interviews. They ideally take place on a one-to-one basis in a dedicated space in the institution that is comfortable for the child. However, it is understood and accepted that if it is necessary for security or other reasons a social worker may be present. Each interview should take between 60 and 90 minutes to complete. Interviews should take place in at least more than one institution where children are held, to give a full picture of life for children deprived of their liberty in the country. The questionnaire (Annex II) is a guideline and can be adapted to get more focused information depending on the data required.

Selection of Participants: Children from the institutions should be selected with a view to interviewing children from a mix of ages, ethnicities, religions, and category of offences. While children in some countries may be allowed to stay in the institutions over the age of 18 years, where a report is focused solely on children, interviews should only take place with those under the age of 18 years.



Interviews with Staff

Purpose: To cross-check the information provided by children in their interviews as well as to obtain additional insights from staff on the management of the institution and staff interaction with the children.

Method: Interviews are administered by researchers following a questionnaire, a sample of which is provided in Annex III. Ideally they should be conducted on a one-to-one basis with key members of staff, including where possible the head of the institution. However, where this is not possible group conversations based around the sections of the questionnaire should occur. One-to-one interviews are expected to take not more than 60 minutes.

Interviews with a parent, guardian or other relative

Purpose: To gain further insights into the reasons for a child's offending behaviour and how their families perceive the justice system. Also, to gain an understanding of a child's parental and family dynamics in order to begin to address and manage 'at risk' situations where children are living in dysfunctional families that may not be conducive to their development. The aim is to get a broad overview of the general characteristics of children in conflict with the law rather than specific characteristics of individual children. While we aim to get one-to-one matching between children in conflict with the law and their parents, guardians or relative, it is recognised that this may not always be achievable.

Method: Interviews are administered by researchers (as above) following a questionnaire, see Annex IV. Each interview should take between 60 and 90 minutes.

Selection of Participants: The selection of parents is done in two ways. Firstly, interviews should try to be organised on assigned visiting days within the institution to try and maximise the number of parents available for interview. However, often parents will not have the resources to either visit the institution to see their child or to take part in an interview and so an interviewer may have to travel to a parents home town or other convenient location in order to carry out the interview. In order to do this researchers will need support from the staff of the institution, and where possible the children, to help identify the child's parents and contact details.



Focus Groups

Purpose: To corroborate the data gathered from children in the one-to-one interviews to get a more rounded picture of children within institutions. Some children may be more willing to speak in a group setting and be less worried about reprisals and hence, it may be possible to get some better data. The questions should cover similar topics to that of the one-to-one interviews although should be adapted to allow for more discussion around specific, identified issues.

Method: Focus groups should contain children of broadly similar circumstance (e.g. children in conflict with the law who have committed similar offences or children at risk who are in institutions) with questions being adapted accordingly. This should ideally be administered with as few adults present as possible to allow the children to speak more freely. However, if for security or other reasons it is deemed necessary a maximum of 2 institution staff (including social workers) should be allowed to attend. The focus group should take 90 minutes. Interviewers should ensure key issues raised are noted for future focus groups. A sample of questions to ask at focus groups is attached as Annex V.

Selection of Participants: Focus groups should contain around 5 – 7 children per group and should be drawn, where possible, from the children who participate in the one to one interviews.



Guidance Note for Interviewing Children

Young children can provide useful information, however often interviewers are unsure as to how to let them do it. This toolkit provides in the Annexes sample questionnaires with which to interview children, however, to gain further details around certain issues you may have to ask a child to speak about a certain event, which is where free recall becomes an important tool. Where this is necessary, the less information the child gives in free recall, the sooner the interviewer may start using leading questions, which can influence the child and distort the story.

Young children may perceive the interview task differently from adults and as a result may try to tell the interviewer what they believe the interviewer wants them to say. Recounting their experiences may be upsetting or traumatic for a child and so communication and interviewing of children should be done in a sensitive and child-friendly manner. Incorrect interviewing techniques can be stressful for the child and all interviewers should be familiar with and have adhered to PRI's Child Protection Policy.

Preparing for the Interview

- Choose a location where there is as much privacy as possible, there are few distractions and the child feels safe and comfortable.
- Choose how the interview will be recorded and how these records will be kept confidential – i.e. two interviewers (one note taking), one interviewer taking notes, using recording device.

Be aware of common problems

- Children answering questions to which they don't know the answer.
- Children telling the interviewer what they believe the interviewer wants to hear.
- Fear that any information they disclose will result in reprisals once the interviewers have gone.

Making the child feel safe

- Introduce yourself properly before the interview.
- Explain the purpose of the interview, what the information they give will be used for and the limitations of the things you can change.
- Explain why you are taking notes/using a recorder during the interview and how it will be kept confidential.
- Start with conversational or non-controversial questions and work towards more sensitive issues.
- Use an informal and relaxed approach to help the child feel at ease. Understand that it may take some time for the child to become relaxed enough to be comfortable talking, especially if the events they are recalling are traumatic ones.



Getting unbiased information

- Encourage the child to give their information and tell their story in their own words.
- Explain that it is acceptable to tell the interviewer if they do not know the answer to a question.
- Explain that they should correct the interviewer if s/he is mistaken or incorrect.
- Avoid leading questions or comments that may make the child feel coerced or pressured into giving a certain answer.
- Avoid repeated questions as it may lead the child to believe their previous answer was 'wrong'.
- Use simple, age-appropriate language and ensure that the child understands the correct meaning of the question.
- To get more detail use follow-up questions, e.g. "And then what happened?"
- Plan one or two short breaks during the interview at appropriate points to allow for a child's short attention span.

Finishing the interview

- Ask the child if they have any questions for you or anything else they'd like to tell you.
- Explain again the limitations of your work and avoid raising false hopes.
- Complete your notes immediately after the interview has finished to ensure the most accurate representation of the meeting as possible.



Annex I

Working with Children: PRI's Child Protection Policy

Date: February 2011

1. Introduction

It is generally considered to be good practice for organisations working with vulnerable groups, such as children, to have a child protection policy that sets out the principles for their work in this field.

PRI's policy is set out below.

1.1 Rights of the Child (CRC)

"States parties shall protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse" (Article 19 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

1.3 Child abuse

"Child maltreatment, sometimes referred to as child abuse and neglect, includes all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, development or dignity. Within this broad definition, five subtypes can be distinguished – physical abuse; sexual abuse; neglect and negligent treatment; emotional abuse; and exploitation" (WHO website).

1.3 Child Protection Policy

It is a commitment of PRI to safeguard all children involved in our work from harm. The policy stipulates that the welfare of the child is paramount and all children without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.

All PRI staff and staff contracted by PRI who come into contact with children will adhere to these principles and ensure that they minimise all risks to children they encounter in the course of their work.

1.4 Direct and indirect contact with children

Direct: Being in the physical presence of a child, such as giving a talk to children or attending project sites where children are present.

Indirect:

1. Having access to children's personal details and/or photographs.
2. Providing funding for a project where children are involved – PRI must take responsibility for child protection issues.

2. How we will ensure children are protected



Awareness, prevention, reporting and responding are vital for ensuring children are protected.

2.1 Awareness

- All board members, staff, volunteers and consultants will sign a form to demonstrate understanding and acceptance of this policy
- Partners working with children will be made aware of this policy
- The policy will be published on our website
- Regional offices will translate the policy into local languages

2.2 Prevention

- Thorough and safe recruitment, selection and vetting procedures (including in the UK CRB checks for those staff whose work requires them to have direct contact with children)
- All concerns, and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by trustees, staff and volunteers and responded to appropriately - this may require a referral to children's services and in emergencies, the Police

2.3 Reporting and Responding

- Designate one person (executive director) and in regions (regional director) for reporting purposes
- Designated person(s) to undergo appropriate child protection training
- This policy will be reviewed every three years or whenever necessary

2.4 Taking Photographs

Photographs should only be taken with permission, particularly if inside prisons or other closed institutions. Where permission has been given by the institution, it will still be necessary to seek permission from anyone likely to be photographed. Where this is a child or young person, their identity should not be revealed in any event (for example, to ensure their faces are obscured).



Annex II

Sample Questionnaire: One-to-one interviews with children

SECTION A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Name of interviewer.....
2. Date and time of interview.....
3. Location.....

SECTION B. INFORMATION ON RESPONDENT

4. Respondent number
5. Age of Respondent
- <10 10 – 14 14-16 16-18 Unknown
6. Sex of the Respondent
 Male Female
7. Status of the respondent
 On Remand Convicted Other (elaborate)
8. Education of the respondent
 None Primary Secondary Education
 Secondary Vocational Education Higher Education
9. Have you completed this stage of education?
 Yes No Don't know
10. Who were you living with at the time of arrest?
 Parents (together) Single Parent Guardian (specify)
 Institution Independent

11. Source/Income earning activities of the respondent?
.....
.....

12. Source/Income earning activities of the household of the respondent
.....
.....



SECTION C. ADMISSION, REGISTRATION AND MOVEMENTS

Note – Information regarding questions 14/15 can be obtained from the institution register

13. Date and place of arrest

- a. Date/month/year.....
- b. Place.....

14. What was the first detention facility after being arrested?

.....
.....

15. Who arrested you/brought you in the first facility?

.....
.....

16. Were you able to contact your relatives or any other person about your arrest?

- Yes No Don't know

17. If the first facility was a police facility, how long did you stay there before you were brought to the court or a second facility?

- Less than 24 hours 1 – 2 days 3 – 4 days
 5 days + Don't know

18. Were you offered legal assistance while in police custody?

- Yes No Don't know

18.a) If yes, did you accept?

- Yes No

19. What were the reasons for being detained? (Probe)

.....
.....

Specific for the current facility

20. Were you provided with any information upon entering this facility?

- Yes No Don't know



20.a) If yes, what kind of information were you given?

.....
.....

21. Were any special arrangements made for transportation of yourself from one place to the other, such as to a second facility, to the court or, retention homes?

- Yes No Don't know

21.a) If no, how were you transported to these places?

.....
.....

SECTION D. PHYSICAL RESTRAINTS USE OF FORCE AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

22. Has anyone ever hurt you while in this or in other detention facility?

- Yes No Don't know

If no, continue to Section E

23. Can you describe what happened?

.....
.....

24. Who hurt you? (please don't mention names)?

- Warden Fellow detainee Other

25. How often did this happen?

- Once More than once Don't know

26. Did you tell any adult in the detention facility about this?

- Yes No

27. Was any disciplinary action taken against the person who hurt you?

- Yes No Don't know

27.a) If yes, what kind of disciplinary action was taken?

.....
.....



SECTION E. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND ACCOMMODATION

28. In your opinion, does the dormitory you are currently staying have enough space for the number of persons in the room?

- Yes No Don't know

29. Are you provided with adequate clothing?

- Yes No Don't know

29.a) If yes, are these appropriate for season and climate?

- Yes No Don't know

30. How many meals are you provided with per day?

- One Two Three None

31. Is there special diet for the sick children?

- Yes No Don't know

SECTION F. EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND WORK

32. Is there an education or training program in this facility?

- Yes No Don't know

If 'No' or 'Don't Know', proceed to Section G

33. What type of education/training is offered?

- Primary Secondary Vocational Other Don't know

34. Are you involved in an educational/training programme?

- Yes No Don't know

35. Who are the teachers/trainers?

- Institution Staff External teacher Other

36. Where does the classes/training take place?

- Designated room Dormitory Outside the institution Other



37. Are you provided with learning/training materials?

- Yes No Don't know

38. What is the frequency of classes/training?

- Daily Weekly Other

39. Have you or your fellow student ever sat for national exams?

- Yes No Don't know

SECTION G. CONTACT WITH THE COMMUNITY

40. Are visitors from outside allowed?

- Yes No Don't know

40.a) If yes, what is the frequency of visits allowed?

- Daily – Weekly Weekly – Monthly Anytime Unknown

40.b) What is the duration of time you are allowed to stay with a visitor?

- Under an hour 1 – 2 hours No limit Other

41. What are the other means for communicating with outside world?

- Telephone Letter Radio/TV Newspapers/magazines

42. Are you able to communicate freely with your legal counsel?

- Yes No Don't know

SECTION H. RECREATION AND EXERCISE

43. Do you have time for exercise?

- Yes No Don't know

44. Do younger children have the opportunity to participate in sports/ recreation equally to older children?

- Yes No Don't know

45. What are the other sports and cultural activities available to juvenile detainees?

- Sports TV/Radio Playing cards/games Others



SECTION I. RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

46. Are there religious services in this facility?

- Yes No Don't know

SECTION J. MEDICAL CARE AND SERVICES

47. Do you have access to medical care?

- Yes Some No Don't know

48. Are you provided with materials necessary to meet your hygiene needs (i.e. soap, toothpaste etc)?

- Yes No Don't know

49. If female, are you provided with special hygienic needs?

- Yes No Don't know

50. Is there specific care for children with mental and psychological needs?

- Yes No Don't know

SECTION K. PREPARATION FOR RELEASE

51. Have you been informed about any restrictions to be imposed upon your release?

.....
.....

51.a) If yes please explain

.....
.....

52. Do you know if there is any probation time set upon your release?

- Yes No Don't know

52.a) If yes, please explain

.....
.....

53. Have you been informed about any system for assigning an officer to monitor you while on probation?

Penal Reform International



Yes No Don't know

54. Is there an arrangement for schooling after your release?

Yes No Don't know

55. What are your recommendations for improving the situation of children in this facility?

.....
.....
.....

END



Annex III

Sample Questionnaire: One-to-one interviews with staff of the institution

SECTION A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Name of interviewer.....
2. Date and time of interview.....
3. Location.....

SECTION B. INFORMATION ON RESPONDENT

4. Position of respondent.....
5. Sex of the Respondent
 Male Female

SECTION C. ADMISSION, REGISTRATION AND MOVEMENTS

6. In your opinion, what are the reasons for the detention of most children?
.....
.....
7. Upon entering the facility, what kind of information or details do you register from a child?
.....
.....
8. What kind of information do you provide children with upon entering this facility?
.....
.....
.....
9. Are there any arrangements for transportation of the juvenile from one place to the other, such as to a second facility, to the court or, back to their homes?
 Yes No Don't know

SECTION D. PHYSICAL RESTRAINTS USE OF FORCE AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

10. Are there any incidences of children being abused or abusing others in this facility?
 Yes No Don't know

If no, continue to Section E



11. What kind of abuse?

.....
.....

12. Who are the perpetrators? (please don't mention names)?

- Warden Fellow detainee Other

13. Who are the mostly abused? (please don't mention names)?

- Younger children Girls Other Don't know

14. How often does this happen?

- Regularly Rare/not often Don't know

15. Is any disciplinary action taken against the perpetrators?

- Yes No Don't know

15.a) If yes, what kind of disciplinary action is usually taken?

.....
.....

SECTION E. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND ACCOMMODATION

16. In your opinion, do the dormitories have enough space for the number of children in the room?

- Yes No Don't know

17. Do you provide the children with adequate clothing?

- Yes No Don't know

17.a) If yes, are these appropriate for season and climate?

- Yes No Don't know

18. How many meals are the children provided with per day?

- One Two Three None

19. Is there a special diet provided for sick children?

- Yes No Don't know



SECTION F. EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND WORK

20. Is there an education or training program in this facility?

- Yes No Don't know

If 'No' or 'Don't Know', proceed to Section G

21. What type of education/training is offered?

- Primary Secondary Vocational Other Don't know

22. Who are the teachers/trainers?

- Institution Staff External teacher Other

23. Where does the classes/training take place?

- Designated room Dormitory Outside the institution Other

24. Do you provide the children with learning/training materials?

- Yes No Don't know

25. What is the frequency of classes/training?

- Daily Weekly Other

26. Do the children ever sit for national exams?

- Yes No Don't know

SECTION G. CONTACT WITH THE COMMUNITY

27. Are visitors from outside allowed?

- Yes No Don't know

28. If yes, what is the frequency of visits allowed?

- Daily – Weekly Weekly – Monthly Anytime Unknown

29. What is the duration of time the child is allowed to stay with a visitor?

- Under an hour 1 – 2 hours No limit Other

30. What are the other means for communicating with outside world?

- Telephone Letter Radio/TV Newspapers/magazines



31. Are the children able to communicate freely with their legal counsel?

- Yes No Don't know

SECTION H. RECREATION AND EXERCISE

32. Do the children have time for exercise?

- Yes No Don't know

33. Do younger children have the opportunity to participate in sports/ recreation equally to older children?

- Yes No Don't know

34. What are the other sports and cultural activities available to juvenile detainees?

- Sports TV/Radio Playing cards/games Others

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

35. Are there religious services in this facility?

- Yes No Don't know

SECTION J. MEDICAL CARE AND SERVICES

36. Do the children have access to medical care and services?

- Yes Some No Don't know

37. Do you provide the children with materials necessary to meet their hygiene needs (i.e. soap, toothpaste etc)?

- Yes No Don't know

38. Are the girls provided with materials for their special hygienic needs?

- Yes No Don't know

39. Is there specific care for children with mental and psychological needs?

- Yes No Don't know

SECTION K. PERSONNEL AND STAFFING

40. What is the ratio of staff to children?

.....
.....



41. How many members of staff have been given specific training on handling juvenile issues?
.....
.....

SECTION L. PREPARATION FOR RELEASE

42. Are there any restrictions imposed upon the children on their release?
.....
.....

42.a) If yes, please explain
.....
.....

43. Is there any probation time set upon the child's release?

- Yes No Don't know

44. If yes, please explain
.....
.....

45. Is there any system for assigning an officer to monitor the child while on probation?

- Yes No Don't know

46. Are there any arrangements put in place for the schooling of the child after their release?

- Yes No Don't know

47. What are your recommendations for improving the situation of children in this facility?.....
.....
.....

END



Annex IV

Sample Questionnaire: Interviews with a parent, guardian or other relative

SECTION A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Name of Interviewer.....
2. Date and time of interview.....
3. Location.....

SECTION B. INFORMATION ON RESPONDENT

4. Age of Respondent
 18 – 30 31 – 45 46 – 65 66+ Don't know
5. Sex of the Respondent
 Male Female
6. What is your relationship with the child?
 Mother Father Guardian (specify) Spouse Other (specify)
7. Were you living with the child at the time of the arrest?
 Yes No
8. Household status of respondent?
 Two parent household Single parent household Other
9. Main income earning activities of the household of the respondent
.....

SECTION C. INFORMATION ON THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

10. In your opinion what are the common reasons which prompt juveniles to come into contact with the law?
.....
.....
11. Who arrested your child?
.....
.....



12. Were you informed when the child was arrested?

- Yes No Don't know

13. Can you remember how long the child stayed in the police station before being brought to a court of law?

.....

14. Was the child given legal aid?

- Yes No Don't know

15. During the court case, did you understand the procedure and why the court sentenced your child to detention?

- Yes No Don't know

SECTION D. COMMUNICATIONS AND RESOCIALISATION

16. Were you given a chance of communicating with your child?

- Yes No Don't know

17. Are you allowed to visit your child in the facility?

- Yes No Don't know

18. What is the frequency of your visits?

- Daily – Weekly Weekly – Monthly Anytime Unknown

19. What is the duration of time are you allowed?

- Under an hour 1 – 2 hours No limit Other

20. Have you ever attended seminars or trainings on preventing delinquency and treating young children with conduct problems?

- Yes No Don't know

20.a) If yes, was it a useful intervention to parents/guardians?

- Yes No

21. Do you think there good arrangements that are in place to facilitate successfully reintegration of the child in to community after finishing detention term?

- Yes No Don't know



21.a) If yes, please explain

.....
.....

22. As a parent/guardian, what is your role in reintegration of the child in to the community?

.....
.....

23. Do you have any other ideas on how to end the problem of juveniles being in conflict with law?

.....
.....

END



Annex V

Sample Questions for Focus Group Discussions

Date and time of focus group

Name of the facility.....

Details of the discussion group

Introduction and aim of visit

Issues to be discussed

1. Children experience during arrest
2. Handling of detainee properties
3. Experience in police stations
4. Separation of cells and relationship between older and younger ones
5. Available mechanism to protect vulnerable groups
6. Kinds of disciplinary action and mechanisms for appealing in the facility
7. Abuse and incidences of using force
8. Situation of accommodation facilities
9. Availability of enough and appropriate clothing
10. Contact with the external community
11. Communication with legal counsel and Fair trial
12. Education and rehabilitation programmes offered
13. Available sports and exercise programmes and facilities
14. Access to religious practices
15. Observance of relevant laws and regulations in this facility
16. Preparation for release and reintegration to the community

END