

30 - Observing situations in which refugees need to use the target language

Aim: To help volunteers to decide which are the most useful things to teach by identifying the situations in which refugees actually use the language they are learning.

If you have an opportunity to observe situations in which refugees use the target language, the following checklists will help you to make notes on them. If you have the time and can work in a team with other people, you may be able to carry out systematic observation. You can also build up this information gradually, based on your experience and partial observations. Alternatively, you can use the reference lists provided in Tools 31 *Selecting situations to focus on in language support activities – a checklist* and 32 *Selecting communicative functions that are useful for beginners – a checklist*. However you collect this information, it will complement the information you gather from refugees themselves using, for example, Tools 28 *Finding out more about refugees' resources and capacities* and 29 *What are the most important things to learn? The refugees' point of view*.

Who do the refugees talk to?

- other refugees who speak the same language.
- refugees who speak other languages.
- volunteers.
- healthcare workers.
- legal aid workers.
- administrative authorities (border control officers, police, security staff, etc.).
- public officials (social services, housing assistance, other administrations).
- Teachers.
- clerics.
- local people (in general).
- neighbours.
- shopkeepers.
- [...]

Try to establish:

- which situations occur frequently.
- which conversations can usually take place with the help of an interpreter or somebody who knows a language that the refugees also understand.
- which conversations are seen by the refugees as being between equals, and which ones they do not consider as being between equals (for example, between an official and a refugee, or between an adult and a child).

- which conversations make them anxious.
- which are important for the refugees' future and which are just ordinary conversations.
- which conversations are unavoidable or obligatory, which ones the refugees themselves seek to initiate, and which ones happen by chance.
- which conversations the refugees can prepare for in advance.
- which conversations take place in specific locations (offices, shops, on the street) and which do not.
- which situations involve more than oral exchanges (a written questionnaire, reading printed information, etc.).
- the situations in which the conversation topics can be anticipated, and those in which they cannot.
- etc.