

# Effective interviewing helps advance national frameworks on torture prevention

Effective investigations are crucial for keeping societies safe and secure. They prevent and respond to crime.

However, practices such as coercive interrogations and forced confessions undermine effective investigations and can compromise access to justice and lead to miscarriages of justice. Risky police practices also place those being questioned at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

## Introducing the Méndez Principles

The Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering - the Méndez Principles - seek to replace interrogation with effective interviewing.

The Méndez Principles offer practical guidance for authorities to implement a new approach to conducting police questioning, while integrating safeguards throughout the process. They were key in advancing national frameworks on police training and practices, especially in Thailand.

Our efforts centred on gaining and building trust with key stakeholders in the criminal justice systems. This approach was instrumental to advance the national framework and to shift mindsets. It is important to recognise that this can be a multi-year process; from your first contact, to gaining 'buy-in' from stakeholders, to strengthening their knowledge, and to adoption in the national context.



# Applying this good practice

## 1. Map key stakeholders

Identify the key stakeholders in the criminal justice system in your national context who can be part of the intended change. As the Méndez Principles are ideally for policy makers, target high-level officials who have the power to advance change. These may include, for example, representatives of Ministries of Justice, Internal Affairs and the Attorney General, law enforcement bodies and the judiciary.

## 2. Introduce the Méndez Principles

Host an introduction seminar on the Méndez Principles with relevant government agencies. This seminar should present what the Principles are, why they are needed and how they achieve better results for law enforcement. Ideally, include speakers who can confidently explain substantive issues, such as the science of rapport-based interviewing or how rapport-based interviewing can be operationalised.

## 3. Discuss the difference between interrogation and interviewing

Follow up with a workshop to raise further understanding among stakeholders on the difference between interrogation and interviewing. This approach helps further strengthen understanding of the need to move away from interrogation-based approaches. This may be a workshop focusing on the importance of terminology, explaining the difference between interrogation and interviewing, and why it matters for law enforcement

## 4. Identify opportunities to further promote the Méndez Principles

Use the opportunities from other events on criminal justice in your national context to promote the Méndez Principles, where appropriate. These events may lead you to identify other potential allies that you may not have otherwise met.

## 5. Begin a dialogue on how to operationalise the Méndez Principles

Consider hosting further workshops on how to operationalise the Méndez Principles once you have established collaborative relationships with national stakeholders. It is important to remember that the Méndez Principles are not a manual that law enforcement can simply copy and adopt. It is essential to use the Méndez Principles as a framework to then localise in the country context.



# Action points

## 1. Advocate for effective interviewing practices

**Action:** Promote adoption of Méndez Principles with the relevant stakeholders in your domestic criminal justice system. This may include, for example, representatives of Ministries of Justice, Internal Affairs and Attorney General, law enforcement bodies, judges, the Bar Association and others.

**How:** Start by educating others about the Méndez Principles. Share information through social media, stakeholder meetings and with local advocacy groups. Conduct bilateral or small group meetings to present the Méndez Principles. Organise a workshop on terminology with different stakeholders to discuss the concepts that underpin the Méndez Principles. A step-by-step approach is necessary to build trust before recommending to authorities to adopt the Méndez Principles in their training and operations.

## 2. Identify and collaborate with other institutions in your country

**Action:** Partner with civil society organisations and the national human rights institutions, and reach out to international bodies, to promote the Méndez Principles.

**How:** Reach out to local civil society organisations and your national human rights institution to discuss potential partnerships and collaboration. Offer your time or expertise to help these organisations in their advocacy efforts. When there are opportunities, connect with international bodies to share your initiatives. Arrange joint events, training sessions, or awareness campaigns to amplify your impact.

