



STANDARDS ON CULTURAL MEDIATION IN PROTECTION

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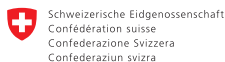
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INTRODUCTION

Mixed migration movements bring people from different regions, who speak different languages, usually languages of lesser diffusion, and who belong to different cultures and might have different needs – they can be refugees or belong to a group of international migrants. The first step in assisting them is providing them with tools for expressing their thoughts, needs, fears, concerns, feelings, etc. and making all of them understandable to the host community.

In order to achieve this, it is necessary to establish understanding between individuals who belong to two or more distinctive groups and comprehend cultural differences and similarities, to relieve prejudices and biases and also to sensitize them when addressing people of different cultural and social backgrounds. This is something that cultural mediation strives to achieve by providing information about cultures, cultural orientation, facilitating communication and promoting mutual understanding. And for achieving this goal it is also necessary for cultural mediators to review their own perceptions to diversity of cultures too, as “cultural beliefs are not homogenous and permanent, but are always being renewed and reshaped by conflict, displacement, education, media and deliberate efforts to influence values through revisions of laws or government policies” (Emergency Preparedness and Response Section (EPRS) 187).

In humanitarian context, cultural mediation can have an important role in the protection of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (later in the text beneficiaries), especially because mixed migration movement exposes beneficiaries to different protection concerns.

A model of protection through cultural mediation has been developed by Crisis Response and Policy Centre (later in the text CRPC) and described in the *Handbook of Protection through Cultural Mediation*. The application of this model has been observed in the fieldwork in the context of Serbia as one of the Western Balkan migration route countries, but it can be applied to other contexts as well, for example to addressing the issues of marginalized ethnic groups or migrants and refugees whose inclusion and integration were not successful despite having lived in a certain society for a long time (Vještica and Sjekloća 5).

The increased demand for cultural mediators (later in the text CMs) has raised the necessity for developing standards for cultural mediation in this context. These standards define protection through cultural mediation and the role of CMs as protection actors, principles and goals applicable to CMs as protection actors, tools and techniques and standards of cultural mediation in different settings.

¹ Languages of lesser/limited diffusion (LLD) - in any given geographic region, languages that are spoken by a relatively small number of people (Roat and Crezee 237).

Standards for cultural mediation in protection are intended for CMs and persons who want to become CMs, for organizations, agencies or institutions that are engaging CMs and interpreters/translators, as well as service providers and all humanitarian practitioners in general, that need to communicate with the assistance of CMs.

I. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

For understanding cultural mediation and the role cultural mediators have as protection actors, the following are terms that will be defined in the context of assisting asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants in different settings:

- **Beneficiaries** – refers to asylum seekers, those who had already been granted asylum or other forms of protection such as refugees, but also to migrants. They are beneficiaries of various services in this context.
- **Culture** – in the most general sense, it represents the way in which people are coming into contact with others and with the world around them. Culture is a set of knowledge, values, behaviors, and expressions that are common for a particular group of people, which identify each other as members of one culture or are identified as such by others. Elements that often characterize members of one culture are origin, language, tradition, ethnicity, religion, common history, sex and gender, socio-economic status, physical characteristics or disability, sexual orientation, occupation, etc. (Žegarac 7).
- **Cultural mediation** – a form of communication that involves mediators who are interpreting speech and communicating cultural content in a three-way joint interaction between culturally different individuals or groups in order to facilitate communication and promote mutual understanding (Vještica and Sjekloća 11).
- **Cultural mediator (CM)** – a person who is fluent in at least two languages and is familiar with at least two cultures and who is using these skills and knowledge to facilitate communication between two or more parties and promote mutual understanding.
- **Intervening** – utilizing tools and techniques of cultural mediation in the context of mixed movements for the purpose of facilitating communication, beneficiaries' access to services and rights.
- **Mixed movement (mixed migration)** – movement, usually irregular, of large number of people that are on the journey together, that use same routes and means of transport, but that have varying needs and profiles, which include refugees, asylum seekers, trafficked persons, unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and migrants in an irregular situation (IOM Glossary 141-142).

- **Protection** – according to the UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms (13), protection refers to all activities that aim to ensure full respect for the rights of individuals that are in accordance “with the letter and the spirit of the international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law”.
- **Service providers** – all institutions, organizations or agencies that are providing various services to beneficiaries, such as health, legal, protection, accommodation, food, non-food items (later in the text NFIs), information, social, psychosocial, etc. Service providers can also engage CMs to provide cultural mediation in different capacities.
- **Vulnerable persons or groups** - persons or groups on the move may be at heightened risk both from situational and individual perspective. Situational vulnerability relates to circumstances en-route or in countries of destination and it’s usually the case when people are moving irregularly and are being exposed to exploitation and abuse by smugglers, traffickers, etc. while individual vulnerability refers to “individual characteristics or circumstances which place a person at particular risk” (UNHCR, “‘Migrants in Vulnerable Situations’ UNHCR’s Perspective”) such as children, especially unaccompanied and separated children, single women, older persons, persons with disabilities and medical needs, persons of diverse sex, sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTI) (IOM Glossary 230).

Protection through cultural mediation

In the context of mixed movements, cultural mediation can serve as a particularly useful tool for the protection of refugees and migrants because it uses an approachable manner and tools and techniques that promote mutual understanding and acceptance of others.

Cultural mediators, although they might not be protection workers per se, are trained to facilitate relevant professionals in identifying and communicating with vulnerable persons and groups and to facilitate beneficiaries’ access to services and rights.

When performing independent fieldwork, CMs are trained to refer beneficiaries to institutions, agencies and organizations in order to obtain necessary services and to intervene on sight in order to facilitate beneficiaries who were denied rights and report it accordingly.

Role of cultural mediators as protection actors

The most important role of CMs is, of course, to facilitate communication between two or more persons, and the most important role of CMs as protection actors, besides facilitating

communication, is to facilitate asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in accessing services and rights.

CMs' roles differ from setting to setting and from context to context in which they operate. There are two main contexts that significantly impact the role of CMs: transit and integration contexts (Vještica and Sjekloća 31).

Transit context, especially in situations of large mixed movements involves the mobilization of a lot of organizations, institutions and agencies in order to respond to the needs of refugees and migrants. Most of the settings where CMs would be performing cultural mediation are open gathering spaces, refugee centers, healthcare, mental health, social welfare, and inclusion activities. Some of these settings would require additional assistance to the beneficiaries in the form of protecting their rights on sight.

Integration context usually starts when persons decide to stay in one place and integrate into the community of that place. Sometimes, integrating into a particular community might be challenging and CMs could facilitate this process for beneficiaries.

In regard to these contexts, there are three additional activities besides facilitating communication, that CMs perform independently on the field: facilitation of identification of vulnerable persons and groups, facilitation of access to services and facilitation of access to rights (Vještica and Sjekloća 32).

One of the roles of CMs as protection actors, where the CMs' assistance is essential, is facilitating professionals in identifying vulnerable persons and groups. This kind of assistance is usually conducted at places where refugees and migrants are gathering or residing, and usually, newly arrived persons are the ones who are being identified. Because CMs speak their languages and know their cultures, they can easily establish contact, approach them and build rapport. When working independently on the field, CMs are also trained to conduct the initial interview for the purpose of obtaining necessary information, identify EVIs (Extremely Vulnerable Individuals) and PSNs (Persons with Special Needs), and refer them to relevant institutions or organizations (Vještica and Sjekloća 32-33).

CMs are familiar with services that can be provided to beneficiaries, that pertain to responding to urgent needs, such as accommodation, medical, legal, social and psychological needs, NFIs, so they can assist them in obtaining them or refer them to relevant institutions, agencies, organizations. Upon referring, CMs usually escort beneficiaries and provide cultural mediation between them and service providers (Vještica and Sjekloća 34).

When facilitating access to the rights of beneficiaries, CMs take on the role of protection actors. In some particular settings, CMs might be independently assisting beneficiaries and

facilitating communication with service providers. For these settings, CMs should be trained to intervene on sight, report the incident to their supervisor and to relevant institutions.

Differences between cultural mediation and other forms of interpreting

Consecutive interpreting vs. cultural mediation

Consecutive interpreting is one of the four modes of interpreting, and it involves listening to someone's speech or part of the speech and reproducing it in another language afterward. Since the speech may last more than 15 minutes, the interpreter usually relies on taking notes, memory and interpreting techniques in order to convey the meaning of the original message as precisely as possible (Gillies 5).

Interpreter who is interpreting consecutively usually interprets between two persons or between groups of people. Consecutive interpreting occurs in different settings that are regulated accordingly. Most common settings include business meetings or liaison interpreting, conference interpreting (although simultaneous interpreting is prevalent in this setting), healthcare interpreting, court interpreting, interpreting in conflict zones.

The main difference between consecutive interpreting and cultural mediation is that cultural mediation involves both interpretation and providing additional information with the goal of facilitating communication. Depending on the role CMs have, CMs can additionally intervene in order to facilitate beneficiaries' access to services and rights, for example in cases when beneficiaries need access to healthcare, accommodation or so on (see section VI.).

Community interpreting vs. cultural mediation

Community interpreting is an established professional type of interpreting² and an international standard (ISO 13611:2014) defines it as "a bidirectional interpreting that takes place in communicative settings among speakers of different languages for the purpose of accessing community services."

Although it is a standardized profession in some countries, there are still confusions regarding the name of this profession, so it is often called intercultural mediation, cultural mediation, dialogue interpreting, interpreting for refugees, humanitarian interpreting, or public service interpreting.

This form of interpreting has been developed in a response to the needs of a large number of refugees and migrants that have resettled in Europe and North America. As these groups

² The other three modes of interpreting include simultaneous interpreting (form of interpreting where the interpreter is conveying the message into another language at approximately the same time when he is listening to it), signed language interpreting and sight translation (verbal translation of the written text).

of persons speak languages of lesser diffusion, usually persons from these groups, who are fluent in one or more languages (usually language of the host community and/or English), are trained to be a community interpreter and usually, a distinction is being made between untrained and professional interpreting in regard to the domains in which the interpreting needs to be conducted. For low-risk interactions, such as interactions between beneficiaries and different NGOs and community centers' staff, untrained interpreting can suffice, while for higher-risk interactions, involving institutions, professional interpreting is required (Tipton 80).

The term cultural mediation is younger than the term community interpreting and besides differences in their regulatory framework in different countries, these two terms differ in what they denote. As already mentioned, community interpreting implies that a member of a certain community is trained in interpreting, while cultural mediation implies that a person is mediating communication between persons of different cultures.

Furthermore, recent examples from Slovenia, where new vocational standards for both community interpreter and intercultural mediator were developed in 2020, shows us that although both of these profiles require the same competencies, such as transfer competence, linguistic competence, thematic competence, cultural competence, and conflict resolution and mediation competence, the weight given to each competence differs. And so, competencies that are more prominent for community interpreters are transfer and linguistic competencies, while conflict resolution and mediation are associated more with intercultural mediators (Mikolič Južnič and Pokorn 28-32).

II. STANDARD PRINCIPLES APPLICABLE TO CULTURAL MEDIATORS AS PROTECTION ACTORS

The *Handbook of Protection through Cultural Mediation*, devised by CRPC, listed a few principles that are crucial for cultural mediation and additionally provided a list of principles applicable to CMs who are performing independent fieldwork, such as *Do No Harm, Confidentiality, Responsibility, and Safety* (Vještica and Sjekloća 18-20). In this section, those principles will be discussed in more detail.

- **Do No Harm** – while conducting cultural mediation, CMs should not act in a manner that could put the beneficiary in harm's way or bring damage to the beneficiary. It should be taken into consideration that although beneficiaries belong to one community, knowledge of the culture of that particular community, that CMs possess, might not apply to each individual beneficiary and CMs should be aware of that when intervening in specific

situations, in order not to create biased opinions or influence someone's decision.

- **Confidentiality** – this principle is being applied in every aspect of assisting refugees and migrants. It is important to keep all the information in the strictest confidence, otherwise, any breach of confidentiality can result in severe consequences, could destroy trust and in the worst case endanger beneficiaries. Occasionally, one CM will be mediating in different settings and with different actors, but with the same beneficiaries. This is especially challenging, as CM's knowledge from the previous communication should not interfere with mediation in the next one.
- **Responsibility** – CMs should be aware of their role in each setting and should be aware of their responsibilities, which could be defined differently, depending on the rules and procedures of the agency they are engaged by. While mediating CMs should not in any way influence making of the decision of any party or suggest solutions with their inputs and interventions.
- **Accuracy** – CMs should convey the message as faithfully as possible. Sometimes, due to differences in languages and cultures or other difficulties, this might be challenging, but CMs should strive for maximum accuracy possible. Accuracy is also important in providing additional explanations and information regarding the cultural background.
- **Ethics** – CMs should convey the message correctly and in case there are misunderstandings or difficulties in communication, CMs should inform involved parties for which they are mediating. CMs should be aware of their own knowledge and skills and inform involved parties of their own limitations.
- **Safety** – Even though it is not in the jurisdiction of CMs to ensure the security of beneficiaries, they should intervene upon observing that beneficiaries are not safe or upon identifying vulnerable beneficiaries and report to competent authorities and refer them to institutions or organizations accordingly.
- **Treating others with respect and dignity** – In their line of work, CMs could encounter challenges in dealing with beneficiaries who have gone through traumatic experiences, who might feel frustrated with their current status, but CMs should act calmly and treat others with respect and dignity.
- **Equality** – All persons should be treated equally regardless of their nationality, ethnicities, race, gender, sex, age, religion, language, legal status, social status, political or other opinions, etc.

III. GOALS OF CULTURAL MEDIATION

The most important goal of cultural mediation is **ensuring mutual understanding**. This is the very first step necessary for successful communication, or even resolving conflict situations, whenever there are two or more parties involved.

However, sometimes even minor obstacles can affect achieving this goal, and in order to overcome them, CMs who act as protection actors on the field use different tools and techniques. Upon the need for intervening and depending on the capacity in which CMs are engaged for a particular assignment, CMs should take into consideration the following list of goals that they can strive to achieve while performing cultural mediation:

- **Facilitating communication** – CMs facilitate communication between two or more parties by utilizing various tools and techniques of cultural mediation that will be discussed in section V. of this document.
- **Avoiding misunderstandings** – In some situations, cultural differences and beliefs or unfamiliarity with the host country's language and the system might cause misunderstanding between involved parties and since CMs possess the necessary set of knowledge that regards these parties, CMs can intervene in order to avoid misunderstanding.
- **Avoiding conflict** – Conflicts usually arise as a result of a misunderstanding, so by assisting in solving misunderstandings, CMs help avoid conflict between parties.
- **Assist in conflict resolution** – CMs can be a good source of providing potential strategies and developing new strategies for conflict resolution since they are familiar with the cultures of involved parties.
- **Facilitating the identification of vulnerable persons and groups** – CMs facilitate professionals in identifying EVIs and PSNs, as they are equipped with necessary cultural knowledge and knowledge of particular social groups, and they speak their languages.
- **Facilitating access to services** – Besides the language barrier, which is the first obstacle for beneficiaries in a foreign country, they face different challenges when they need to access certain services. CMs can help them overcome the language barrier as well as assist in facilitating access to services by intervening on sight or by following established referral and reporting pathways.
- **Assisting in faster access to services** – CMs are usually trained to work with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and are familiar with procedures that apply to these groups of persons in different settings, so they can assist beneficiaries in faster access to services.

- **Facilitating quality services** – For quality service, it is important that all beneficiaries receive equal treatment, without discrimination and to be given the opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts in the language they are most comfortable with.
- **Avoiding negative feelings and emotions** - Cultural mediation can have an impact on avoiding and overcoming certain negative feelings and emotions, such as shame, helplessness, feelings of being discriminated against, anger, frustration, etc.
- **Assisting in problem-solving** - CMs in certain settings can propose ideas for solving certain problems, as they are aware of culture-specific matters that could be useful in such situations.

As a broader goal, cultural mediation eventually facilitates inclusion and integration of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants as it “promotes the removal of cultural and language barriers, the development of a culture of openness, inclusion and the advocacy of rights, and observance of the duties of citizenship” (Catarci 128).

IV. STANDARD SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES OF CULTURAL MEDIATORS

Since CMs will be performing cultural mediation in highly sensitive settings, as well as independent fieldwork, and they will be involved in the protection of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, it is necessary that they have adequate skills and competencies, as well as that they have completed relevant trainings.

Skillset needed for CMs can be divided into several distinct groups: language skills, translation and interpretation skills, interpersonal skills and cultural competencies.

Language skills

First of all, language skills are of essential importance. CMs should be fluent in at least two languages, of which one is their native language.

Depending on the setting in which CMs are mediating, their language skills can vary. For some tasks, such as the distribution of humanitarian aid, the A2 level of language skills (CEFR standard) could suffice, whereas for other more complex tasks, higher levels are required.

³ CEFR – abbr. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Although language skills consist of 4 different skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking, for CMs' assignments sometimes only speaking skills would suffice. This might happen due to the fact that some languages are not standardized, or their use and publishing were prohibited (for example, Kurdish languages), CMs who were born and raised in these regions did not have the opportunity to get educated in their mother languages in schools, or simply because some CMs learned the language in contact with the community, without formal education.

CMs can be fluent in one dialect of a language, but it would be preferable if they also understand and speak the standard language and are able to recognize dialects of that language. Especially, in case there is a language with many mutually intelligible dialects, such as Arabic. CMs fluent in Levantine Arabic can have difficulties understanding beneficiaries from Northern Africa.

CMs could also communicate with beneficiaries in a language that is not the native language of beneficiaries, for example, CMs fluent in Persian and familiar with the culture of Afghanistan can use Persian or English for communicating with beneficiaries from Afghanistan whose native language is Pashto and who don't speak Persian.

Higher levels of language skills include familiarity with idioms, culturally sensitive language, language adapted to children among others.

Translation and interpretation (T&I) skills

Although the term translation is used as an umbrella term for all kinds of translation and interpreting modes, the main distinction between them is that translation deals with written and interpreting with verbal or signed communication. Hence, skills and trainings required for successful translation and for successful interpreting differ greatly.

Both trained and untrained interpreters can become CMs, through additional trainings. Trained interpreters receive their interpreting training through university courses or professional courses. They might be sworn or certified or not. Certification processes differ from one country to another, in some countries interpreters need to go through additional examinations in order to obtain the certificate.

For languages of lesser diffusion there usually are no interpretation courses nor trainings in most countries, thus interpretation is being conducted by bilinguals, persons who became fluent in one of these languages through private lessons, or oftentimes relay interpreting⁴ is practiced.

⁴ Relay interpreting is the type of interpreting used in both consecutive and simultaneous modes of interpreting, and it refers to interpreting from one language to another through the third language (two interpreters are needed), which is usually lingua franca (Diriker 174).

Depending on the field of work, each agency or organization engaging CMs should consider providing them with basic training for translation and interpretation, or interpretation only, since most of the times CMs would be providing interpretation only.

Basic T&I skills that CMs should acquire are preparation for T&I assignments, terminology research, T&I techniques, such as note-taking, memory development techniques.

Interpersonal skills

Empathy is the ability to participate in another person's experience by means of imagination and the ability to connect to persons emotionally. Skills that demonstrate empathy are active listening, showing compassion and viewing situations from more than one perspective. (Deardorff, 70)

Active listening is the ability to listen and understand people and it comprises observing, using non-verbal communication, facial expressions, linguistic nuances and silence. Active listening is not only important for building trust and rapport but can also be the way of showing respect (Global Protection Cluster Group 90).

Good communication skills are certainly essential for successful cultural mediation. They represent a wide range of verbal and non-verbal skills, such as the ability to convey the message in a few words as possible, the ability to speak in a concise and clear manner, adjusting pitch and tone, interpreting and using body language, gestures, facial expressions and eye contact, and being aware of appropriate social distance during conversation and the amount of permissible physical contact (Lynch and Hanson 98). And, as already mentioned, listening has an important role in communication, since communication is a two-way process, it includes both receiving and sending information.

Even though active listening, empathy and communication skills are interpersonal skills there are specialized trainings that should be organized for all CMs, as these skills are necessary for humanitarian practitioners. Usually, active listening and empathy are part of communication skills training, or even all of them are part of conflict management and mediation trainings. These trainings should be provided to CMs by their respective organizations or agencies, either in-house or by the external training provider.

CMs should be able to articulate and verbalize ideas and thoughts and also to recognize when involved parties face challenges in articulating their thoughts and communicate it with both parties accordingly. Due to different circumstances, beneficiaries might not articulate clearly their needs, so CMs should be able to help them clarify them.

The ability to relate well to persons and to find the best approach to them is also essential, especially having in mind that beneficiaries come from different backgrounds and are of different profiles. These steps in building rapport promote mutual understanding and maintain connection.

CMs should be able to understand paraverbal signals, such as volume, intonation, and rate of speech, provide important information, as they can show emotional distress, frustrations, fear, etc. (Stachl-Peier and Pöllabauer 89) and should also be able to adjust their own pitch and tone of speaking according to the situation.

Besides that, CMs should be able to show empathy and emotional resilience. In some cases that are emotionally difficult, where beneficiaries present their traumatic experiences, it is advisable that CMs act professionally and show a high level of emotional self-control, as well as empathy. Alongside empathy, active listening is crucial, which can be useful for building trust, effective communication, identifying needs and so on.

Cultural competencies

Cultural competence represents a set of skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and abilities to interact and communicate effectively with persons of different cultures, ethnic origin, religion, socioeconomic background, etc. (Žegarac et al. 29-30). To be culturally competent means to be culturally aware and to be able to apply this set of skills in different settings and behave in a way that is expected and considered appropriate.

Being aware of the diversity that defines people and modifying one's expectations accordingly is the first step in developing cultural competence. Depending on one's language skills, this usually encompasses sensitivity to language variations in pronunciation, vocabulary, expressions, etc. It further suggests being aware of other peoples' religious and historical tensions or alliances. Geography and history knowledge of a particular region or country is also important for better understanding of the people coming from these regions or countries and for better connecting with them. Familiarity with local and regional politics is useful as well, in order to understand their current problems and be aware of potential conflict-causing topics (Deardorff 189).

Another part of this competence is cultural sensitivity, which refers to tolerance, respect or sensitivity to cultural norms and rules of other cultures (Žegarac et al. 32). For CMs it is also important to be sensitive to cultural and linguistic nuances and to be able to convey the message in a sensitive manner.

Qualifications, certifications and standardization

In order to be qualified to perform cultural mediation, certain requirements must be met, depending on the setting where cultural mediation would be performed. These requirements include language proficiency, educational background, completed trainings, and interpersonal skills.

The level of language proficiency should be determined through language certificates, if available, university degree and pre-hire assessment tests. Similarly, cultural competencies should be determined through university degrees and assessment tests.

In recent few years, there has been an increasing number in degree courses on cultural mediation, 3-year BA⁵ and 1-year MA⁶ courses, offered at European universities, as well as non-degree and online courses organized by universities⁷, international organizations and different NGOs⁸, or government offices⁹. The *Train Intercultural Mediators for a Multicultural Europe* (TIME) project has also researched courses and trainings on intercultural mediation offered at European universities or institutions at various levels.¹⁰

Certain steps have been taken in the process of defining and standardization of cultural mediation in Serbia. For example, CRPC has developed a training offered to CSOs and state employed professionals who work within organizations that offer cultural mediation and interpretation/translation services, and developed *Protection Through Cultural Mediation: Handbook*¹¹ in partnership with UNHCR. Other good examples include IOM's *Cultural Mediation Competencies Curriculum* and set of trainings organized by IOM.¹²

Apart from university degree, courses and trainings that are being offered by different institutions and organizations aren't certified. However, profession of community interpreters has been certified in many countries and internationally standardized within *Interpreting – Guidelines for community interpreting (ISO 13611:2014)*, and so is the profession of intercultural mediator¹³. There are also developed national standards for

⁵ Italian universities, such as universities in Venice, Siena, Catania, Lumsa and EAC school in France offer 3-year BA programs in Linguistics and Cultural Mediation or Cultural Mediation and Communication.

⁶ MA courses in cultural mediation are so far offered at SOAS University of London, and universities in Utrecht, Venice, Heidelberg, Verona, Hildesheim, Udine.

⁷ University of Malta offers 2-year program for cultural mediators and University of Liege offers 92-hours training course.

⁸ The newest example would be Supporting Survivors of Violence: The Role of Linguistic and Cultural Mediators, with a Focus on Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Violence against Men and Boys, a training curriculum developed by Women's Refugee Commission and UNICEF in 2021 (<https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/research-resources/supporting-survivors-of-violence-the-role-of-linguistic-and-cultural-mediators-training-curriculum/>).

⁹ Italian INDIRE (National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research) and UNAR (The anti-racial discrimination national office) developed free course Modello formativo per mediatori culturali (Training model for cultural mediators) ("Formazione per Mediatori Culturali – Indire") and Greek Police Academy and Department for Social Inclusion of the General Secretariat of Immigration and Social Integration Policy also organized course and trainings (Pokorn et al. 24).

¹⁰ For more information check the TIME project Research Report on Intercultural Mediation for Immigrants in Europe (Theodosiou and Aspioti 44-54).

¹¹ Access to this publication and many other created and compiled by CRPC is available at: <https://www.crpc.rs/publikacije/>

¹² For more information on the curriculum check <https://serbia.iom.int/node/678>. Experienced CRPC staff helped develop the curriculum and trainings.

community interpreters, providing healthcare interpreting, mostly in USA and Canada.¹⁴

However, both for those CMs who didn't attend courses on cultural mediation and for those who attended them, additional trainings and refresher sessions should be provided to them either by organizations engaging them, in-house, or by specialized organizations or institutions. These trainings should equip them with the necessary knowledge for providing cultural mediation to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, including vulnerable persons and groups, and teach them how to assist professionals working in different fields, such as protection, health, social welfare, education, legal field, as well as existing referral and reporting pathways, depending on the nature of the engagement.

V. STANDARD TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Since interpretation can be a part of cultural mediation, cultural mediation shares techniques typically used in consecutive interpretation, such as note-taking, memorizing and using computer-assisted tools (CAT).

Tools utilized by CMs are mostly concerned with language usage and these tools, sometimes referred to as interventions, are applied in order to facilitate communication and establish mutual understanding, enable faster access to services and quality access to services for beneficiaries.

When choosing between appropriate tools and techniques, CMs should always consider recipients of the message, since different languages have different dialects, regiolects¹⁵ and use a wide range of registers, the same terms and expressions won't be equally understandable for all members of one community. And besides linguistic factors, other relevant information regarding the recipients include their knowledge, experiences, tendencies, taste, competencies, age, social and geographic background, occupation and so on (Hlebec 65).

Asking for clarification and feedback

To avoid misunderstanding, CMs will have to ask beneficiaries to clarify some points in order to make sure they have comprehended the meaning correctly or CMs will have to ask beneficiaries for feedback, to ensure beneficiaries have understood the vocabulary or constructions they used.

¹³ In some countries intercultural mediation is considered as an extension of civil mediation, for example in UK and Germany (Olympic Training and Consulting Ltd 9), while in others, such as Switzerland, it's certified and standardized by the Swiss Association for Intercultural Interpretation and Mediation - Interpret.

¹⁴ California Standards for Healthcare Interpreters (2002), the US National Standards of Practice for Interpreters in Healthcare (2005), and the Canadian National Standard Guide for Community Interpreting Services (HIN 2007) and European Public Service Interpreting: minimally required competence in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as in Slovenia – NVQ for intercultural mediators (Mikolič Južnič and Pokorn 24).

¹⁵ Regiolect is a variety of a language spoken in a particular geographic region.

In the context of mixed movements, this often occurs since CMs work with a large number of beneficiaries who come from different regions and speak different dialects and regiolects. Beneficiaries might use names CMs are not familiar with, so CMs would need to check if they have heard them correctly.

Sometimes challenges in understanding arise when beneficiaries can't express themselves clearly or when they speak quietly or too fast, so additional clarification might be necessary. These kinds of interventions on the side of CMs must also be communicated with the other party.

By asking for clarification and confirming the understanding, CMs show to the beneficiaries that they are actively listening to them and keep the conversation focused, which also helps in building trust.

Explanation

The need for additional explanations or providing information may arise since the two parties are not familiar with each other's backgrounds. When mediating between beneficiaries and institutions, such as hospitals, municipality centers, etc. CMs provide explanations to both parties if they deem necessary in order to promote mutual understanding or avoid conflict.

Since CMs perform their duties independently as well, most of their work involves explanation. They explain how the system works to the beneficiaries, the steps of certain procedures through which the beneficiaries need to go through, but also cultural differences, sensitive issues, etc. to both parties.

Oftentimes, beneficiaries would presume that the other party might be familiar with some cultural concepts, persons, places, or similar, or might omit some important information because they know that CMs already know about it and presume that the CMs would convey it while interpreting. In these cases, CMs should ask beneficiaries to clarify their messages or ask them for consent to offer their own explanations (Vještica and Sjekloća 16). Whenever CMs are providing their own explanations or additional information, it is standard that they signal both parties about the intervention they are performing and to clearly communicate the distinction between the interpreted speech and CMs' comment.

Reformulation

Reformulating a message means "communicating ideas and information from one cultural context to another without altering what is expressed in the original text or speech" (Clouet 148). In this case, altering refers to omitting, adding or in any other way changing the meaning of the message.

The most important purpose of reformulation is that the recipients of the message understand its meaning. Since CMs are those who receive feedback directly from recipients, they can signal or further explain to the senders of the message if the particular message has not been understood or to what extent it has been understood.

Having in mind specific cognitive, social and communicative needs and the setting where the communication is taking place, CMs could also use “de-terminologization”, which is part of a broader process of recontextualisation and reformulation. It is an umbrella term that includes “explanation, definition, exemplification, illustration, analogy, comparison and substitution” (Montalt-Resurrecció and Shuttleworth 16).

Reformulation does not mean prodding or instructing parties to answer questions in a certain way, guiding the conversation, redirecting it in order to stay on point. This violates the above mentioned principles and seriously undermines the competence that is expected from each party (Mulayim and Lai 87-88).

In some cases, only reformulation or rephrasing is possible, as CMs will be interpreting terms that are highly specific for certain cultures. These terms usually don't have equivalent terms in the target language or CMs won't be prepared for certain on-sight interpretation, so the only way to accurately interpret these terms is through longer paraphrases or explanations. These paraphrases are not considered as additions or alterations (Hebenstreit et al. 73).

However, reformulation, especially complete reformulation or reorganization of the source speech, is usually not recommended to be used in certain settings, such as interpreting in asylum hearings, since it might influence the perception of asylum seekers' stories. As UNHCR Austria's Handbook for Interpreters in Asylum Procedures suggests, “redundancies, implicit suggestions, unfinished sentence, detailed descriptions of an event, the language register” all indicate asylum seekers' state, and if this is reformulated in order to sound coherent, without signaling these observations, the other party might not comprehend the situation fully (Stachl-Peier and Pöllabauer 89).

Summarizing

Summarizing is a tool utilized by CMs in various settings and it refers to providing condensed versions or “summarized renditions” of the source speech to the beneficiaries (Licoppe and Boeri 57). There are many reasons for utilizing this tool and some of them were listed in Licoppe and Boeri's study on summary interpreting (57), such as technical problems disrupting communication (especially in over-the-phone-interpreting and in video remote interpreting), cognitive overload for interpreters, time constraints on the communication, an institutional demand or a socio-political strategy adopted by interpreters or CMs.

Not much study of summarizing has been done so far, as it is often being seen as inappropriate and unprofessional for providing condensed renditions of the original speech or text, which necessarily implies that something will be omitted. The use of summarizing is especially problematic in legal settings where accurate and precise renditions are required. However, it has been recognized that summarizing is being used (sometimes as the last resort) and can be useful and even more appropriate than consecutive interpreting, such as in emergency settings, crises, or in situations where speakers can't or won't pause their speech (Licoppe and Boeri 57).

Oftentimes institutions staff members in order to save time request CMs to provide beneficiaries only with the 'syntheses' of what is relevant and most important for the beneficiary, which either staff members provide or leave for CMs to assess what that would be. In these cases, staff members also address the beneficiaries in the third person and clearly express that they need quick and efficient communication.

In cases when summarizing is used, besides specific use of reflexive pronouns, standards also suggest another element of summarizing – "reflexive formulations", i.e., specific adjacent forms of interpreter's preface and closings of the summarized renditions when CMs use 'double greetings' to introduce that they will summarize the other party's speech and close conversations (Licoppe and Boeri 67).

Appropriate use of reflexive pronouns

As mentioned above, the use of reflexive pronouns is usually adjusted to the setting where CMs are performing cultural mediation. This technique is almost always raised when cultural mediation is being compared to interpreting, as this is the most obvious difference.

The standard rule for interpreters is to interpret speech using first person pronouns, as speakers do. However, for cultural mediation this is not always the most suitable or appropriate solution. In some cases, when the conversation is heated, when involved parties are arguing, or when one party is frustrated or angry, using the first-person pronoun while interpreting might spark even more anger and be counterproductive.

There are also urgent situations or crises, when the goal of cultural mediation is to assist in providing necessary service as fast as possible, so CMs should be efficient and use summarization, which also involves specific use of reflexive pronouns.

One more reason why CMs choose not to use first-person pronouns during cultural mediation is their coping strategy, since stories refugees recount can be highly stressful and intense and can have a strong impact on CMs' well-being. Especially during cultural mediation in mental health setting, using the first-person pronoun while interpreting distressing material, CMs can bring these experiences to their homes (Miller at all. 36).

Adjusting tone and intonation

According to the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada's code, "a faithful interpretation should not be confused with a literal interpretation. The fidelity of an interpretation includes an adaptation to make the form, the tone, and the deeper meaning of the source text felt in the target language and culture" (Hale, 112). Therefore, the tone is an important element of the message and should be conveyed to the target audience, either by adding information or explaining.

It is important not only to interpret the content of the utterances of a speech, but also to interpret the manner in which these utterances are expressed, since they denote the intended meaning of the speaker (Hale, 25). Some interpreters would mimic the tone of the voice and convey all the content of the message in that way. However, mimicking the tone might turn the conversation into mockery (Mikkelson 89) or might even create conflict or put one of the parties in a position of unequal power, especially in cases when the tone of one speaker seems forceful, hesitant, threatening, or similar. It is standard rule for the CMs not to mimic that tone, but to produce it in a neutral manner with additional explanation of how the tone seems.

In situations when the conflict had already started or escalated between two persons or groups of persons, CMs should use a calm tone and tone down distressing content in order to assist with conflict resolution and calming down the situation, although the messages should be conveyed in their entirety.

Choosing appropriate register

Registers are just one element of a language variety that people use. Another element refers to dialect and there are two main kinds of dialect: geographic dialect, which is associated with the location of speakers, and social dialect, which is associated with the particular demographic group the speakers belong to (Biber and Conrad 11). All of these varieties should be considered during cultural mediation since they might influence communication, especially if speakers don't understand or can't use a standard variety of a particular language.

The register is defined as "a variety associated with a particular situation of use", which also includes the purpose of communication. There are three main elements that describe registers, and these are situational context (speech or writing, interactive or not, including communicative purpose), linguistic features (lexical and grammatical) and the functional relationships between them (Biber and Conrad 6).

ISO standard on the typology of language registers (ISO/TR 20694:2018) has identified a number of different registers, some of which are formal, informal, neutral, legal, in-house, technical, taboo, slang, vulgar, etc. Some of these registers, such as vulgar, might be socially

inappropriate in certain communities, so CMs should warn involved parties if that's the case. CMs should also be aware of taboos present in cultures they are mediating between and should intervene by explaining how involved parties feel about certain concepts or words.

Cultural background is also the factor in choosing an appropriate register, as speakers from one cultural or social background might feel that discussing their own personal feelings and attitudes with strangers is inappropriate, while speakers from different cultural or social background might not (Biber and Conrad 299). These kinds of differences might put some beneficiaries in difficult positions if they are uncomfortable with sharing problems they are experiencing and might also influence the communication purpose. CMs should be aware of these differences and intervene if they observe there are obstacles in communication, caused by this misunderstanding.

CMs should also be careful not to raise someone's register and make him sound differently, i.e., if the situation requires a formal register and beneficiaries are not aware of it, the standards suggest that CMs intervene and explain the context of the situation to beneficiaries rather than to change the register without them knowing.

Pragmatical conveying of sensitive expressions

Expressivity of emotions differs from culture to culture¹⁶ and from one group to other, even though, types of emotions are universal and same types of emotions are experienced in similar situations (Hale et al. 3).

Profane, obscene, or crude language is habitual in some languages, while in others could sound vulgar, disrespectful, shameful, offensive or could even create conflict. Blasphemy also falls into this group of sensitive expressions, to that extent that even anti-blasphemous laws are being applied in some countries. CMs should draw attention to both parties to this sensitive matter if one of them starts using this kind of language.

While it is important to provide accurate renditions, sometimes these profane utterances can be reformulated with additional explanation of why this language is used. This is standard rule in informal settings, where CMs are allowed to take the role of protecting beneficiaries from unnecessary feeling uncomfortable.

Profanity is used for a number of different reasons, one of which is to convey emotional expressivity, and that is a factor that varies between cultures and contexts. Profanity may express both negative (anger, frustration) and positive emotions (surprise, joy) and it can also be used neutrally, as a force of habit (Hale et al. 3).

¹⁶ Low context cultures (individualist) express more high than low arousal emotions, while high context cultures (collectivist) express the opposite (Hale et al. 3).

Even for faithful interpretation of profanity, sometimes it will be needed to use reformulation and to take a pragmatic approach. The discourse should be considered as a whole, together with the intention behind the utterance and the desired effect, which depend on culture, context, setting, relationship, tone of voice, etc. Therefore, in order to provide accurate rendition both the “emotional weight and pragmatic function of the vulgar language should be assessed” and the most appropriate equivalent should be used (Hale et al. 6).

VI. STANDARDS OF CULTURAL MEDIATION IN DIFFERENT SETTINGS

Mixed movements in the past few years in some European countries have mostly affected healthcare, social welfare, legal and education sectors. The development of cultural mediation followed the rising need for promoting relationships and facilitating communication. Sectors such as healthcare and social welfare were among the most affected and needed assistance in responding to the needs of refugees and migrants coming from different regions.

In comparison to interpreting, cultural mediation provided more than just interpretation. CMs were trained to assist beneficiaries in providing relevant information, escorting, intervening when appropriate and facilitating access to rights and process of inclusion and integration. However, when CMs are providing cultural mediation for professionals, such as social workers, police officers, medical professionals, the level of their intervening should be limited to providing relevant information regarding language and cultural differences, while they should remain impartial and provide interpretation.

Since CMs are usually engaged by NGOs or agencies operating in fields that provide services to refugees and migrants, CMs are easier and faster to reach and available for urgent assistance. This chapter focuses on providing cultural mediation in different settings and proposes recommendations and responsibilities that apply to CMs and service providers.

Cultural mediation in refugee and migrant accommodation centers

The most usual setting in which CMs operate are places where a large number of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants reside, such as asylum centers, reception centers, specialized facilities for children, safe houses, one stop centers, etc. These centers and institutions are almost always managed by government institutions or agencies, rarely by non-governmental organizations.

In these environments, CMs usually mediate between refugees and migrants and other actors representing governmental or non-governmental sectors, on some occasions even between different groups of refugees and migrants themselves. Governmental actors that

are present in such setting are specialized agencies that provide accommodation and hospitality and multiple other services (such as Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration - SCRMI), members of the police force, centers for social welfare, health care providers, etc., while non-governmental actors usually include representatives of humanitarian and protection agencies (e.g., organizations providing legal aid, cultural mediation and interpretation, psychosocial support, etc.) and international organizations within their mandate as well.

In this particular setting, CMs' range of roles and responsibilities are determined by the organization/agency they are engaged by, but also by rules and regulations that are implemented in a specific center or institution and rules and regulations that are implemented in a specific country. Whichever roles and responsibilities they undertake, the duties and activities they carry out should be clearly defined, as well as referral and reporting pathways.

Besides mediating, CMs are also trained to do certain tasks independently but in close collaboration with other service providers. These involve providing information, identification of vulnerable persons, referral of persons to competent institutions and organizations, reporting to competent authorities, providing escort to various institutions, conducting cultural orientation sessions for beneficiaries, facilitating negotiation and support conflict management, providing psychological first aid, etc.

These trainings are usually offered to CMs by organizations or agencies that engage them, in-house, or some other organizations, agencies or institutions specialized in these fields of work. Even CMs who don't work independently should complete these trainings, as it would help them provide better service quality.

Trainings that should be provided to CMs by their respected organizations/agencies should include the ones on identification of needs, identification of vulnerable persons and groups, existing referral pathways and reporting. This is highly important as upon the identification of beneficiaries, especially those most vulnerable and with special needs, proper referrals and reporting should be made in line with the existing pathways and mechanisms. In settings where beneficiaries stay for some time irregularly, especially in conditions of mixed movements, the role of referral and reporting systems are crucial, since in CMs' independent fieldwork they might identify vulnerable persons or groups.

Depending on the needs of involved parties, language proficiency should be taken into account, i.e., for distribution of humanitarian aid basic levels of language knowledge could suffice, while for mediating between beneficiaries and representatives of the governmental sector, higher levels of language proficiency are required.

Taking into consideration that in refugee centers there are persons belonging to different cultures, it is advisable to communicate with beneficiaries with the assistance of a CMs specialized in providing cultural mediation for specific cultures, since other professionals in health care, social care, protection, providers of accommodation, public order officials, might not be familiar with a certain culture.

Cultural mediation in places where refugees and migrants gather (hotspots)

Places where refugees and migrants gather or stay for a short period of time, are usually aid distribution points, information points, rough sleeping areas, border areas and similar.

Activities CMs are involved range from assisting in information sharing on regular accommodation and risks of sleeping rough, aid distribution, providing cultural mediation for different types of counseling and other service providers, etc. CMs training for this setting should envisage and be adapted to the specifics of this setting. This setting is usually highlighted by inhumane conditions and accordingly CMs should be trained to provide cultural mediation for activities that vary and have adequate levels of interests, skills and knowledge for working in such places.

CMs should be trained to identify vulnerable persons and refer them timely to competent institutions and organizations. This is especially important as the persons sleeping rough are at heightened risk since these are places where persons stay irregularly, in poor conditions and exposed to weather conditions and various crimes, without access to basic services and with little or no presence of authorities, organizations, etc.

At places where refugees and migrants gather or stay for a short period of time, CMs would usually be engaged to work independently and independent fieldwork would include providing information, identification of vulnerable persons, referral of persons to competent institutions and organizations, reporting systems, providing escort to various institutions, etc. for which they should be trained by organizations or agencies they are engaged with.

For all the mentioned reasons, it should be noted that oftentimes working conditions in these places are very harsh (Pokorn et al. 22), and sometimes they have to provide cultural mediation in highly stressful situations.

Cultural mediation in healthcare setting

Cultural mediation in healthcare setting is also known as medical interpreting and healthcare interpreting and is usually distinguished from other modes of interpreting because it requires an additional set of skills and specific knowledge, and it has been standardized in some countries as such.

Standard elements that characterize cultural mediation in a healthcare setting are escort, facilitation of communication, facilitation of access to rights and psychosocial support.

It is possible that CMs will be accompanying beneficiaries by themselves to health institutions. This kind of escort requires CMs to provide beneficiaries with necessary information about the host country's health system and required documents. Facilitation of communication is essential in order for beneficiaries to obtain quality care and overcome obstacles that might arise. CMs could propose different strategies and use different tools and techniques to ensure successful communication. Facilitation of access to rights is the main element that distinguishes cultural mediation from other modes of interpreting. CMs are familiar with referral and reporting pathways and procedures and can use this knowledge if such needs arise. On some occasions, beneficiaries would be distressed or upset by the discomfoting news, so CMs, if trained, are the ones who could offer psychological first aid.

Good communication is necessary for quality care and beneficiaries' safety, which involves building rapport, eliciting a health history, understanding symptoms, obtaining informed consent for tests, explaining the diagnosis, explaining treatment options, negotiating a treatment protocol, teaching about a condition or how to use medical equipment, doing a follow-up (Roat and Crezee 241). Furthermore, good communication also includes taking into consideration and respecting beneficiaries' cultural background, which is usually provided with the assistance of CMs.

Facilitation of communication and facilitation of access to rights are interconnected elements, since they aim to the same goal, as mentioned above. CMs often serve as facilitators, especially in situations when the balance of power relations is disturbed, which is most often the result of a communication barrier. These communication barriers include not being familiar with the language, culture and health system of the host country, health illiteracy and low level of education, feelings of shame caused by various reasons.

There are some conditions for CMs that need to be fulfilled before performing cultural mediation in this setting. Knowledge of specialized vocabulary and additional trainings for interpreting and cultural mediating in healthcare setting is required. CMs should also possess a specific set of interpersonal skills, such as emotional resilience, empathy, dealing with feelings of shame, etc.

Cultural mediation in mental health setting

Special attention has been paid to interpreting and cultural mediating in mental health setting due to multiple factors. These factors include exposure of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to extreme violence, threats to life, torture, war-related distress, brutality and subsequent psychological trauma, and also the experience of losses, such as losses of family and social networks, valued social roles, etc. (Miller et al. 27).

Having this in mind, CMs performing cultural mediation between psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists will be participating in highly intense and emotionally charged conversations, interviews, counseling sessions or therapies. Therefore, the standard requirements for CMs working in this setting is to have necessary competencies, such as language proficiency, knowledge of specialized vocabulary, culture-specific knowledge, to complete trainings for performing cultural mediation in this setting and to have a set of interpersonal skills, of which empathy and emotional resilience are crucial, as they need to be able to listen and reproduce highly stressful and emotional stories.

What differs cultural mediation in mental health setting from cultural mediation in healthcare setting is the need for the long-term involvement of the CMs. Ideally, same CMs would be performing cultural mediation for the same beneficiaries to ensure confidentiality, build trust and ease the therapeutic process for beneficiaries. It's important to reduce the beneficiaries' vulnerability, as survivors of war trauma, violence or torture have to share their traumatic experiences, experiences of victimization and humiliation with two persons, i.e., witnesses, the therapist and CMs (Miller et al. 28-30).

Beneficiaries need to build rapport and trust with both of them, so CMs' should also take into account their conduct in this setting – beneficiaries should not perceive CMs as “disinterested, judgmental or dismissive”. CMs should also consider their tone of speech, not to sound casual, sarcastic, skeptical, etc. (Miller et al. 30). This is the reason why empathy is required and why CMs can't be acting as an “invisible translation machine” or “shadow”, as often wrongly described.

Regarding the choice of CMs that could be suitable for these kinds of communicative settings, several things should be noted. Ethnic differences can significantly impact communication and trust between therapists and beneficiaries (Miller et al. 31), so if CMs come from the same country as beneficiaries, it should be checked with beneficiaries beforehand if they would feel comfortable sharing their personal experiences with these CMs. Another thing that is important to be noted in this case is that these CMs can also experience beneficiaries' stories as severely traumatic, especially if they had gone through similar experiences in the past. Having these points in mind, CMs who are not from the same country as beneficiaries would be preferable for this setting.

Trainings for cultural mediation or interpretation in mental health setting are rare and are usually organized by organizations that provide cultural mediation or interpretation of psychosocial support for refugees and migrants. Trainings are essential for both CMs and therapists in order to provide quality service and feeling of safety for beneficiaries.

Tools and techniques of cultural mediation utilized by CMs need to be agreed upon with therapists, and therapists should also clarify goals they expect to achieve of each conversation, so that the cultural mediation can be effective.

Cultural mediation for social welfare centers

Cultural mediation in this setting implies providing cultural mediation for social workers, temporary and legal guardians, various outreach employees workers, case managers of social welfare centers, etc. Types of conversation in which CMs would be performing cultural mediation are dialogues, interviews, consultations, group sessions with a group of beneficiaries, workshops, or interventions and emergency situations. Most of the communication is done face-to-face, although CMs could be providing cultural mediation remotely (over-the-phone interpreting, video remote interpreting).

This is a very sensitive setting, as beneficiaries can be children, LGBTI+ persons, trafficking or a GBV survivors, etc., so the standards require CMs who are proficient in the language or dialect they will be interpreting, who are culturally competent, have an adequate level of education and are additionally trained to perform cultural mediation in this field. It's important that CMs understand concepts and technical language and to be able to interpret it as such, without adding, paraphrasing, or omitting information and without softening or euphemizing if they feel it would be difficult for family members to accept (Lynch and Hanson 105).

Having this in mind, it should be noted that often there will be languages and dialects that don't recognize certain concepts or terms, i.e., there will be words that won't have direct equivalents in the source or target language, or there will be words with foreign origin that beneficiaries might not be familiar with. In order to overcome this challenge, CMs might apply one of the standard tools – reformulation. Ideally, CMs could explain to the service provider how certain concepts and terms, that are necessary for the conversation, translate into the target language and the weight they carry, so that they can together devise strategies for providing accurate renditions. In this case, CMs should have an understanding of the nature and the purpose of the conversation with family members and of the content that will be addressed (Lynch and Hanson 105).

Interaction in this setting tends to be more cooperative, than in court and police setting (Hale, 174), as cooperation leads to effective dialogue. It is further advised that CMs should be able to “guide the service provider respectfully and assertively with regard to pacing,

responding appropriately to family cues and significant verbal and nonverbal responses, and observing various DOs and DON'Ts" (Lynch and Hanson 105).

In order to ensure accuracy of interpreted content, CMs should also be familiar with the interviewing techniques that professionals would be utilizing, as they could "wittingly or unwittingly influence the course and the success of an interview" (Krainz and Bergaus 27). Besides that, CMs should exhibit professionalism in their appearance, sensitivity, and behavior, respect the principle of confidentiality and remain neutral. Neutrality is especially emphasized, as family members might try to push both the CMs and service provider to respond to their perceived needs or expectations that might be inappropriate (Lynch and Hanson 105-106) or service provider might ask CMs to evaluate the accuracy of information provided by beneficiaries, which doesn't fall within CMs' roles and responsibilities.

It is standard rule always to use trained CMs for the purpose of interpretation between families and children than to use some of their relatives or members of community for assisting in interpretation. This rule should be especially applied for cultural mediation in this setting. Family and community members might allow their own concerns to shape the message they are conveying (Lynch and Hanson 60) or are not familiar with possible interpretation tools and strategies that should be used. However, this is sometimes difficult to achieve, because there might not be CMs or interpreters available for certain language pairs.

Cross-cultural competence is necessary requirement for CMs working in this setting. According to Lynch and Hanson (75), there are 4 elements that comprise cross-cultural competence: clarification of the service provider's own values and assumptions, collection and analysis of ethnographic information related to the community in which the family resides, determination of the degree to which the family operates transculturally and examination of the family's orientation to specific child-upbringing issues.

Cross-cultural competence, that is fulfilled with the engagement of CMs, helps in achieving certain goals, such as to assist service provider to „feel comfortable and effective in their interactions and relationships with families whose cultures and life experiences differ from their own, to interact in ways that enable families from different cultures to feel positive about the interactions and to accomplish goals that each family and service provider establish" (Lynch and Hanson 75).

Cultural mediation in education institutes

Cultural mediation in education institutions, such as primary and secondary schools, plays an important role in developing links, promoting effective relationships between people from different cultures and in facilitating the social inclusion of refugees and migrants, as proposed by Catarci (128) and Assenza (32).

CMs are usually engaged to provide cultural mediation in this setting when the school counsellors are performing necessary assessments and consultations with children and their parents and when teachers are performing consultation with children and their parents.

Most of the time, parents would need more time to learn the language of the host community, so CMs could assist them in getting more involved in children's education, by improving their understanding of the school systems, rules and regulations, content of school material, expectations and later the development of their children.

Depending on the school program, when children start attending schools, they either learn the language of the host community first and then start attending regular classes, or they are introduced immediately to the regular classes regardless of their knowledge of the language of the host community. In the latter case, sometimes, CMs could also assist teachers in preparing children for school.

If children are residing in asylum centers, reception centers or facilities for unaccompanied or separated children, CMs could provide cultural mediation for these centers' facilitators in assisting children to comprehend school material. Additionally, within many accommodation centers there is an access to informal education, in the form of language classes and arts and crafts workshops and this is also the context where cultural mediators are performing cultural mediation or even organizing these activities, if they fulfill necessary requirements, in regard to education and competencies.

Cultural mediation in inclusion and integration

The goal of cultural mediation in inclusion and integration settings is to "develop links and promote effective relationships between people from different cultures" (Catarci 127), which leads to easier and faster inclusion and integration into host communities.

As above mentioned, CMs could help both beneficiaries and institutions in various settings and contexts arrive at mutual understanding, by facilitating communication throughout different areas of life. It has been observed by Vještica and Sjekloća (43) that cultural mediation contributes greatly to integration by means of facilitation of better access to services, improvement of links with other communities through a range of activities, sometimes even facilitated by CMs themselves, and through provision of additional support in acquiring different skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for integration.

One of the biggest obstacles for successful inclusion and integration is language barrier. Acquiring the language of the host community or language the host community can understand (lingua franca) might be a very difficult endeavor and a long process for some people, especially older persons.

Another obstacle for inclusion and integration are cultural differences that seem hard to surmount. CMs can significantly help in overcoming this obstacle by providing information,

additional explanation, promoting cultural acceptance and bridging the cultural gap between communities.

Special attention should be paid to recognizing value systems that violate human rights and laws and regulations of the host country and effort should be made in order to assist beneficiaries to understand and accept that such practices, such as harmful practices, cannot be performed (Vještica and Sjekloća 44).

Another aspect of inclusion and integration where CMs' assistance can be useful is helping asylum seekers, refugees and migrants obtain housing, while also providing feedback to service deliverers to help make their facilities and programs more accessible (ICMC Europe). Together with finding housing, CMs also support refugees and migrants integrate into the labor market by providing them with useful information in regard to CVs, job applications, and interviews (ICMC Europe).

It should also be noted that as experience shows “the linguistic and/or cultural mediation that is usually provided formally through government agencies, language courses and knowledge-of-society courses has shown not to be always sufficient from the point of view of individual refugees and migrants leading their daily lives and needing to gain a foothold in the host society.” Informal learning, that is reflected in communication with all members of a particular community – neighbors, service providers, refugees and migrants, volunteers, etc. - has been suggested as a good example leading to effective inclusion and integration, having in mind that both inclusion and integration are a two-way processes (“Linguistic and Cultural Mediation”).

Cultural mediation in remote (digital) setting

As already mentioned, cultural mediation can be also provided remotely and well-known and developed remote ways include over-the-phone interpreting (OPI) and video remote interpreting (VRI). However, communication needs exceed these two platforms and digital communication technologies nowadays offer a wide range of ways of online communication, such as social media sites and apps, online games, multimedia, text-based communication (such as instant messaging and chatrooms), online learning platforms, etc. Depending on the setting in which CMs would be providing cultural mediation remotely by using any of the above-mentioned means of communication, all standards and tools of cultural mediation are utilized. In addition, roles and general conditions of each involved party should be clearly communicated to each side (Vještica and Sjekloća 46).

The need for remote cultural mediation has increased with the emergence of epidemics and pandemics caused by infectious disease outbreaks (IDOs), such as Covid-19, Ebola, etc., since they impose limitations on movement and face-to-face contact. In these situations, children, in particular, but also other vulnerable groups, are put at heightened risk for a

variety of reasons, with the addition of lack of or limited traditional protection responses (Fischer et al. 7).

In order to continue providing support and assistance in these circumstances, humanitarian organizations and government institutions, such as schools and centers for social welfare, had to switch to online communication and adapt their activities accordingly. All actors involved in online communication, including CMs, should be trained in ensuring safe online environment for beneficiaries, since increased online activity could also expose children to potentially harmful content, such as age-inappropriate and potentially harmful content, including content that is violent, misogynistic, xenophobic, that promotes political or ideological violence or incites suicide and self-harm, and put children and vulnerable persons at risk of online harms, such as sexual exploitation, cyber bullying (UNICEF et al. 1-2). CMs should also be familiar with safeguarding and data collection policies in this setting.

There are certain recommendations for CMs that consider remote communication, such as communicating only through established channels of communication and using not using private phone numbers and accounts. If this is unavoidable, then this must be approved by case manager or supervisor. (UNICEF et al 3).

In order to ensure quality service, it is important that CMs are computer-literate and to be provided with adequate equipment, including stable internet connection.

Besides these settings where the role of CMs is defined, there are some other settings and activities in which CMs might be engaged, because professional interpreters are not available or because there are no interpreters for a specific language, which is often the case with languages of limited diffusion (LLD). Such settings are usually police stations and courts and activities include police questioning, asylum hearings, court hearings, etc. In most countries, certified or sworn interpreters perform these activities and there are specific rules and regulations that define their roles and responsibilities, but in case there is a lack of certified interpreters, as practice shows, non-certified interpreters, who are usually CMs with an excellent command of both languages or dialects can perform interpretation in these settings.¹⁷

Another activity that sometimes might be asked from CMs, either in these settings or during the reception of beneficiaries, is to assess the country of origin according to the language analysis.¹⁸ CMs should refrain from making these judgements, as this is beyond their expertise and might harm beneficiaries.

¹⁷ According to the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Serbia, Article 87, paragraph 3: If the interpreter or translator has not previously been sworn in, the interpreter or translator shall take an oath to faithfully convey the questions addressed to the defendant and the statement the defendant makes.

¹⁸ LADO - Language Analysis for the Determination of Origin (Patrick 533)

VII. CULTURAL MEDIATORS' INDEPENDENT FIELDWORK

As above mentioned, CMs can also perform cultural mediation independently. Independent fieldwork involves communicating directly to beneficiaries, facilitating their access to service providers (this includes communication as well) and intervening in situations when beneficiaries' rights have been denied.

There are different settings in which CMs could assist with their independent work and one of them is in places where refugees and migrants are gathering or residing, such as asylum centers, reception centers, refugee hubs, etc., especially in places where the large number of persons are accommodated.

Activities that CMs perform in this setting include: 1) reaching out to persons in order to provide information and cultural orientation, 2) identifying EVIs and PSNs, 3) facilitating beneficiaries in accessing services, referring them to service providers, escorting them to relevant service providers and providing cultural mediation between them, 4) facilitating beneficiaries in accessing their rights.

In order to perform independent fieldwork, CMs need to possess the necessary skills, knowledge, competencies and to complete additional trainings, which would differ depending on the needs on the field and nature of the work a particular organization is doing. CMs would also need to consult their supervisors or case managers while conducting fieldwork. They should follow established reporting and referral pathways (Vještica and Sjekloća 35).

The intervention field of CMs can differ from setting to setting and can range from consecutive interpretation to promotion of inclusion and integration, awareness raising and conflict resolution. The most usual tasks during independent fieldwork, according to TIME project partnership - Self-study Course for Trainers of Intercultural Mediators, can be divided into:

1. facilitation of communication - which involves building rapport and establishing trust and ensures effective cooperation between all parties;
2. provision of information to beneficiaries – this information relates to administrative procedure, rights and duties, access to services and resources, cultural orientation. Beneficiaries should be referred to relevant service providers according to established referral pathways;
3. promotion of mutual understanding – mediating between two or more parties belonging to different cultures and helping them understand each other;
4. on-sight intervention – under certain circumstances, supporting beneficiaries in recognizing their rights violations and intervening, especially in situation where the balance of power has been disturbed (Olympic Training and Consulting Ltd 8). Interventions should be reported according to established pathways.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Following is the list of recommendations and responsibilities that should serve as a guide to ensure the minimum of requirements are met to perform cultural mediation and achieve goals of cultural mediation.

CMs should:

- adhere to respective organizations or agencies' Code of Conduct and respect principles of cultural mediation;
- prepare for tasks accordingly;
- act professionally, arrive on time for assignments, respect dress code policy and all other policies;
- inform respective organizations or agencies they are engaged by of their own limitations in the context of their language level proficiency and cultural knowledge or of their readiness for participating in emotionally difficult and stressful tasks;
- take care of themselves and their wellbeing;
- report immediate risks, incidents, irregularities to competent authorities, organizations, agencies or institutions, respecting referral pathways;
- intervene when necessary, according to the role they have in a particular setting;
- pay attention to the environment in which they are providing cultural mediation (seating arrangement ideally should resemble triangle (Krainz and Bergaus 29), distance from speakers should be adequate).

Service provider engaging CMs should:

- constantly work in the field of cultural mediation standardization, utilize developed resources and create, if possible, new ones;
- provide adequate training for services and activities they are conducting;
- introduce Code of Conduct and other policies to CMs;
- share knowledge and experiences acquired during fieldwork with CMs;
- take care of CMs' wellbeing and other staff members;
- provide necessary information about circumstances and conditions that might affect CM's wellbeing;
- share helpful background with CMs about requested tasks, so that CMs can prepare;
- share goals and objectives with CMs of requested tasks;
- introduce CMs and CMs' role to other parties;
- check if the beneficiary would feel more comfortable if the CM is of the same sex as the beneficiary;
- check which language or dialect the beneficiaries are comfortable with;
- should work on development of CMs' registry for certain geographical region in order to ensure easier access to cultural mediation services.

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