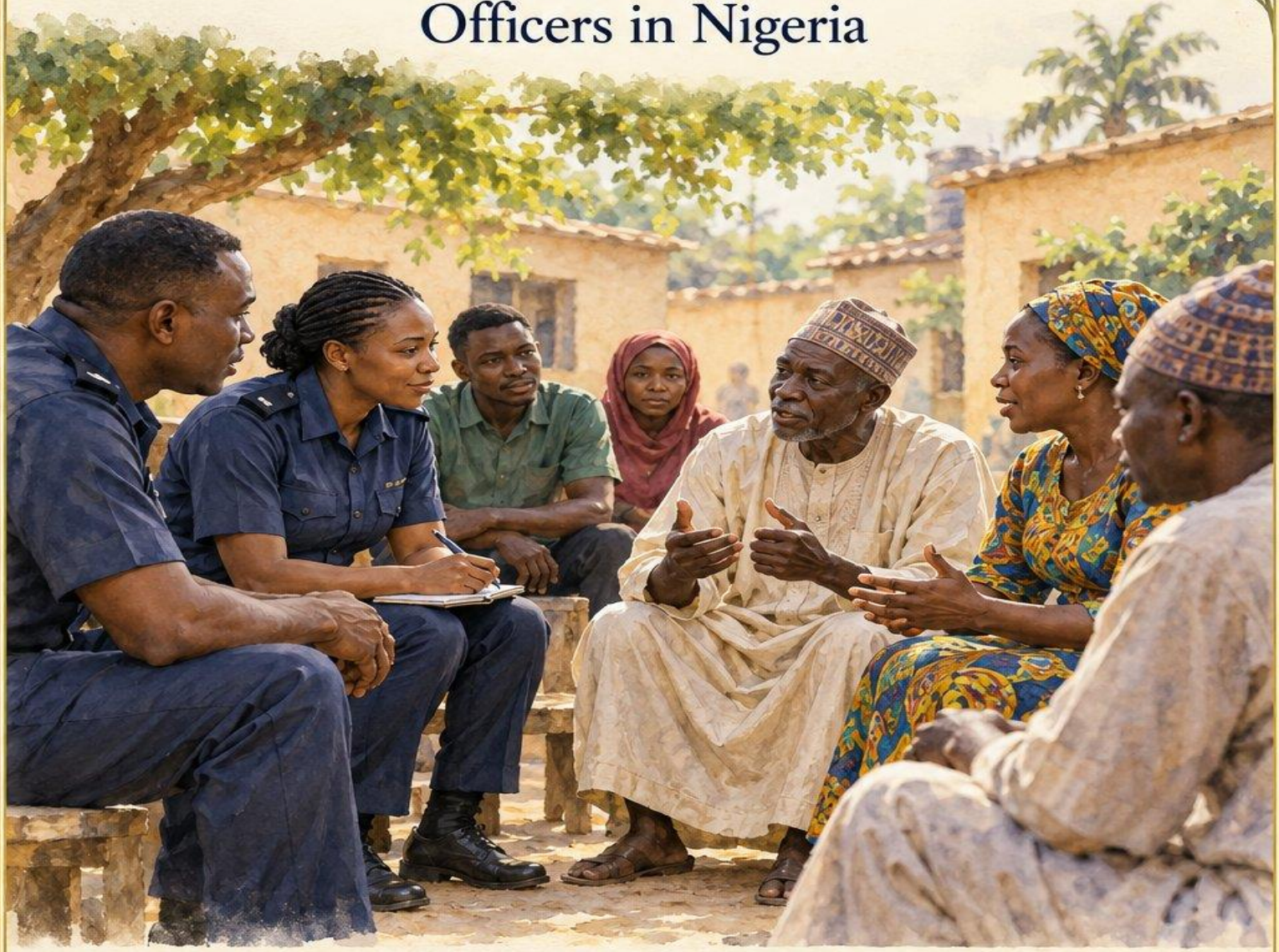
De-escalation and Peaceful Conflict Management

A Practical Guide for Law Enforcement Officers in Nigeria



Korede Olafimihan

De escalation and Peaceful Conflict Management

A practical guide for law enforcement officers in Nigeria

Korede Olafimihan

Purpose and scope

This handbook supports respectful communication, lawful decision making and community trust in Nigerian policing. It provides practical learning guidance for officers and facilitators, with twelve fictional cases, model reasoning and worksheets. It is an independent educational resource, not an official Nigeria Police Force manual, certification or statement of agency policy.

Read the relevant chapter, rehearse the scenario and complete the worksheet using fictional details. Apply learning through supervised practice. For powers, arrest, detention, searches, public assemblies and safeguarding, use current applicable law and lawful agency procedures. State legislation and referral services differ. Obtain qualified legal and operational review before adopting any material as institutional training.

Safety and authority

Calm communication can accompany urgent protection but cannot guarantee safety or replace emergency assistance. This book does not teach weapons, restraint, physical intervention, interrogation or crowd control tactics. Do not delay urgent medical or protective action to complete a script or worksheet. No community agreement overrides a person’s rights or a duty to report or investigate.

Editorial and illustration note

Prepared 23 October 2026. Practice phrases, cases and exercises are original educational examples. Source numbers identify the limited legal and international foundations listed at the end; they do not imply official approval of every recommendation. AI generated watercolor illustrations show fictional people in generic uniforms without official insignia. They do not represent actual incidents.

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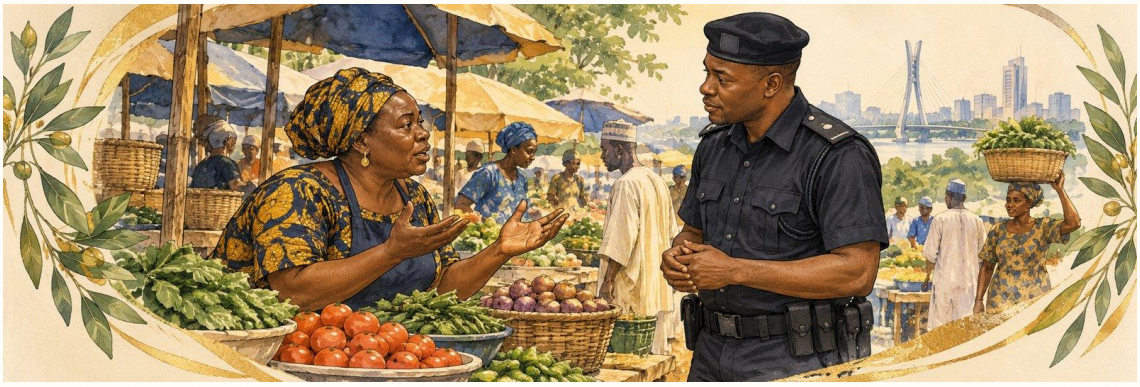
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Learning outcomes

Practise a clear opening, listen without prejudging, identify access needs, recognise when dialogue is unsuitable, make a verified referral and record decisions fairly. The materials support peacebuilding through accountable everyday service; they confer no diplomatic status or new police powers.

CHAPTER 01

Peacebuilding and lawful policing



De-escalation means reducing tension so that people can communicate and lawful decisions can be carried out with less risk of harm. It does not mean ignoring crime, promising immunity or postponing urgent protection. Success may be a safe referral, a clearer explanation, a lawful investigation or an encounter that ends without avoidable injury. It is not measured simply by silence or obedience.

Why this matters in Nigeria

Officers may meet people who associate a uniform with protection, past mistreatment, political influence or fear. A market trader losing income during an encounter may sound impatient. A resident who has repeatedly reported threats may arrive angry. Start with what the individual says and does; do not assign intentions from ethnicity, religion, accent, clothes or neighbourhood. Respectful treatment supports cooperation even when the eventual decision disappoints someone.

A short legal foundation

The Police Act 2020 places rights protection within police functions. It also prohibits arrest merely for a civil wrong or breach of contract and arrest in place of a suspect [1]. The NHRC reiterates that torture cannot be justified by exceptional circumstances [2]. UN Basic Principles call for non-violent means as far as possible before force [3]. These are foundations, not a complete account of powers. Applicable law and lawful agency procedures govern each action.

A practical cycle

Notice what is happening, check immediate safety and welfare, listen, explain the lawful purpose, offer genuine options and review the response. Repeat when circumstances change. Do not treat this editorial learning cycle as an official NPF procedure. Where danger is imminent, obtain appropriate assistance and follow lawful emergency procedures; this handbook does not teach physical intervention.

An important boundary

Community leaders can help communication but cannot replace an individual's rights. A settlement cannot legitimately depend on threats, an unofficial payment, withholding care or silencing an abuse report. Where a crime is alleged, preserve the appropriate reporting and investigation process. Refer legal uncertainty to an authorised supervisor or legal adviser rather than improvising a power.

A debt complaint at reception

A business owner asks an officer to detain a customer's sibling until a disputed invoice is paid. The sibling is frightened and starts shouting. How should the officer respond without promising that no offence could ever arise from the underlying facts?

Model response and reasoning

Explain that a relative will not be held as leverage and that an invoice dispute alone does not justify arrest. Hear the complainant's factual account to identify any separate allegation requiring lawful assessment. Provide an appropriate civil referral for a purely contractual dispute. Tell the sibling what happens next and record the request and response. Calm communication works here because the officer corrects an improper demand rather than bargaining over a person's liberty.

Practise

In pairs, rehearse a respectful refusal to the business owner. Repeat with the owner claiming influential connections. The observer should check that the officer gives the same lawful explanation without mocking or threatening either person.

Worksheet 1 Define success

Immediate protection or welfare need: _____

Facts known and facts still unverified: _____

Lawful purpose and advice needed: _____

What a fair outcome could look like today: _____

What must not be traded for cooperation: _____

Reflection

An encounter is quiet because a person fears retaliation. Is it resolved? Explain why outward calm alone is an unreliable measure.

Managing your own response



An officer's frustration can become part of the conflict. Heat, long duty hours, hunger, fatigue and repeated insults can narrow attention. Notice your own signs: a rising voice, rushed instructions, an urge to win an argument or assuming that every question challenges your status. These signs are prompts to regain composure and seek support, not reasons to punish the speaker.

Pause without abandoning responsibility

Where circumstances allow, slow the next sentence, release unnecessary muscle tension and identify the decision actually required. Ask yourself whether you are responding to a present risk or to embarrassment. Do not delay urgent medical or protective action while completing a calming exercise. Arrange a change of communicator or supervisor support when your own response is making an otherwise manageable situation worse.

One clear communicator

Conflicting instructions from several officers can confuse a person and increase anxiety. Agree who will lead the conversation, who will obtain assistance and who will document relevant facts within policy. Colleagues should avoid heckling, humiliating jokes or commentary that contradicts the speaker. A colleague can help by saying privately, 'Let me take the explanation while you check the record.'

Respect does not require emotional agreement

You can acknowledge an insult's effect without answering it. Say, 'I want us to deal with what happened. I will explain the next step.' Avoid promising that respectful behaviour will make an allegation disappear. Equally, do not make access to care or complaint channels conditional on polite language. Distinguish unpleasant speech from specific conduct that creates a genuine risk.

Supervisor responsibility

Repeated exhaustion or distress requires organisational attention, not merely advice to be tougher. Supervisors should make welfare support accessible, address degrading team habits and encourage early help-seeking. Confidentiality has limits where safety or reporting duties apply; explain these rather than promising absolute secrecy. Staff support should sit alongside accountability for misconduct.

An insult in front of bystanders

During a station enquiry, a visitor says the officer is useless. A colleague laughs and suggests teaching the visitor respect. The visitor has made no threat and is asking about a missing report.

Model response and reasoning

Do not turn the enquiry into a contest over status. Say, 'You are concerned about the report. Tell me when it was made so I can check the next step.' Ask the colleague to stop the commentary and request supervisor assistance if needed. Confirm what can actually be checked, give a realistic update point and document any service problem. The goal is to address the enquiry without rewarding or retaliating against an insult.

Practise

Rehearse the same response after an interruption. The observer should identify any threatening tone, sarcasm or promise outside the officer's authority. Repeat until the explanation remains natural rather than robotic.

Worksheet 2 Personal pressure plan

My early signs of frustration: _____

One safe action that helps me regain attention: _____

Words I will avoid when embarrassed: _____

Colleague or supervisor support I can request: _____

Welfare issue requiring follow-up: _____

Reflection

Describe a situation in which changing the communicator would improve service. How would you explain the change without publicly blaming a colleague?

Beginning an encounter



The opening of an encounter helps a person understand who is speaking, why the contact is happening and what is expected. Introduce yourself as required by agency policy, state the actual lawful purpose and use a normal speaking volume where conditions permit. Avoid opening with an accusation you have not established. A clear beginning reduces the uncertainty that often fuels resistance or fear.

Explain the present status

Do not let a person believe a voluntary conversation is compulsory. Where an action is legally required, explain the basis in understandable terms and provide the applicable safeguards. This guide does not set out arrest, search or detention procedures. Obtain current instruction on those powers, including the person's rights and the duties attached to their exercise.

Make one request at a time

Multiple questions delivered rapidly may be hard to follow, especially in traffic noise or a second language. Explain the next step, allow reasonable time to understand and check whether an access or interpretation need exists. Do not assume that a delayed answer proves deception. Avoid unnecessary touching or intrusive proximity; consider privacy and surroundings while following lawful safety procedures.

Offer only genuine choices

Say, 'If you prefer, we can discuss your complaint at the reception desk where it is quieter,' only if that choice is available. Do not present a threat as a choice or offer release, exemption or a guaranteed outcome you cannot authorise. If no choice exists about a lawful requirement, explain what remains flexible, such as the way information can be understood or an appropriate support arrangement.

Close the explanation loop

Ask, 'What do you understand the next step to be?' rather than relying only on 'Do you understand?' If the person repeats something different, clarify without ridicule. State any expected waiting period honestly; if it changes, provide an update. Never invent urgency simply to prevent questions.

A roadside misunderstanding

A driver thinks a routine question means the vehicle will be seized. Passengers begin arguing, and one says the driver has limited English. No immediate medical or violent threat is apparent.

Model response and reasoning

Restate the actual purpose and current status without implying powers not being exercised. Ask which language the driver understands best and arrange appropriate assistance. Give one instruction or question at a time, then check understanding. Explain any lawful action and required safeguards separately. Do not use a passenger's assurance as a substitute for confirming what the driver understands, particularly if interests conflict.

Practise

Write an opening that fits an authorised enquiry in your actual role. Have a partner misunderstand one phrase. Repair the explanation without raising your voice or adding threats.

Worksheet 3 Opening script

My introduction under current policy: _____

The specific purpose stated in plain language: _____

Whether this contact is voluntary and how I will explain it: _____

One genuine option within my authority: _____

How I will check understanding: _____

Reflection

Why can a technically correct but unexplained instruction still create avoidable tension?

Listening and clear communication



Listening gathers information and shows that the person has a voice. It does not require accepting every claim as true. Let a person describe the main concern without unnecessary interruption, then ask focused questions. Separate what they witnessed from what they were told and what they infer. Summarise the concern and invite correction before deciding what to do.

Acknowledge without deciding the case

Say, 'Waiting without an update has been frustrating,' when that is what the person describes. Do not say, 'The other person is guilty,' to show sympathy. Avoid 'calm down' as a stand-alone command. A more useful response is, 'I want to understand. Tell me the most urgent concern first.' Keep the tone respectful and match the person's access needs.

Questions that reduce confusion

Ask what happened, when, where and who has direct knowledge. Avoid blame-filled questions such as why a survivor stayed or why a resident did not confront a threatening neighbour. Ask what support is needed now. Allow silence for recall or emotion. Do not fill gaps with a preferred account or suggest details a witness has not supplied.

Explain limits honestly

An officer can describe a process without guaranteeing its result. Say, 'I will record your concern and explain the referral,' rather than 'I will make sure you win.' If you need to consult someone, say so. Explain what information can be shared, with whom and why. Never promise confidentiality that lawful reporting obligations or safety needs prevent you from keeping.

Useful language

'Let me check that I have understood.' 'What is the most urgent concern?' 'I can explain the options I am authorised to offer.' 'I have not established that yet.' 'I will tell you when I have an update.' These are original practice phrases, not prescribed official scripts. Adapt them naturally and avoid sounding dismissive by repeating the same line without answering the person's question.

An angry complainant

A resident says, 'Nobody here cares. I reported threats last week.' An officer cannot locate the earlier entry immediately. The resident fears going home that evening.

Model response and reasoning

Address the current safety concern before debating the missing entry. Ask what threats have occurred and what makes returning home unsafe. Explain the immediate assessment and support available within procedure. Record the new information and seek the earlier record without accusing the resident of inventing it. Give an honest next step, named responsibility where appropriate and a realistic update arrangement. A service failure should be reviewed separately rather than hidden.

Practise

Turn three dismissive responses into useful ones: 'Stop making noise'; 'That is not my problem'; and 'Come back another day.' Each replacement must include an action or explanation, not just softer wording.

Worksheet 4 Listening record

The person's main concern in their own words: _____

Direct observation versus second-hand information: _____

Immediate need identified: _____

My summary and the person's correction: _____

Next step explained and understanding checked: _____

Reflection

How can an officer acknowledge fear while remaining impartial about disputed facts?

Culture language and inclusion



Nigeria contains many languages, faiths, regions and individual ways of communicating. Cultural awareness starts with curiosity and self-restraint. It does not mean memorising a stereotype for each group. A quiet person may be frightened, thoughtful or struggling to hear. A direct gaze or averted gaze does not reliably establish honesty. Ask what helps this individual participate.

Language access

Ask the person's preferred language and arrange a competent, impartial interpreter through available approved channels. Speak to the person, use short sentences and allow interpretation to finish. Check understanding of important decisions. Record who interpreted and any limitation. Avoid relying on a child or a person implicated in the dispute; an abusive partner or interested neighbour may distort an account.

Faith and respectful practice

Ask before assuming that a handshake, form of address, mixed meeting or particular timing is comfortable. Accommodate reasonable religious and access needs within lawful duties. Explain unavoidable requirements respectfully. Religious leaders can help arrange communication but must not be treated as automatic consent-givers for every member of a community. Avoid ranking beliefs or making theological judgments during an enquiry.

Disability and dignity

Ask how a person prefers to communicate. Offer accessible spoken, written or visual information as appropriate; written English is not a universal solution. A person with a disability may need more time or a support person of their choice, subject to safeguarding and procedure. Speak to the person directly rather than only to a companion. Do not confuse access needs with incompetence or guilt.

Gender and power

Some people cannot speak freely in front of relatives, employers, landlords or community leaders. Provide an appropriate private opportunity to raise concerns. Ask who they want present and assess risks before sharing information. Cultural respect cannot excuse violence, humiliation or denial of access to justice. Explain legal limits without insulting a person's community.

The wrong interpreter

A woman reporting threats speaks a language the officer does not understand well. A neighbour offers to interpret, but the woman becomes quiet when he approaches. He is a close friend of the person she fears.

Model response and reasoning

Do not treat the neighbour's availability as evidence of neutrality. Arrange an alternative competent interpreter and an appropriate private setting. Explain the interpreter's role and confidentiality limits. Ask the woman directly about support and safety, then confirm key information through interpretation. Record the difficulty without presenting a guess about motive as fact. Urgent protection or medical care should not wait for a perfect interview arrangement.

Practise

Work with an adult role-player to explain an appointment in short sentences. Pause for interpretation. Ask the role-player to repeat the next step in their own words.

Worksheet 5 Participation needs

Preferred language and communication format: _____

Interpreter or access support and conflict check: _____

Privacy or safeguarding concern: _____

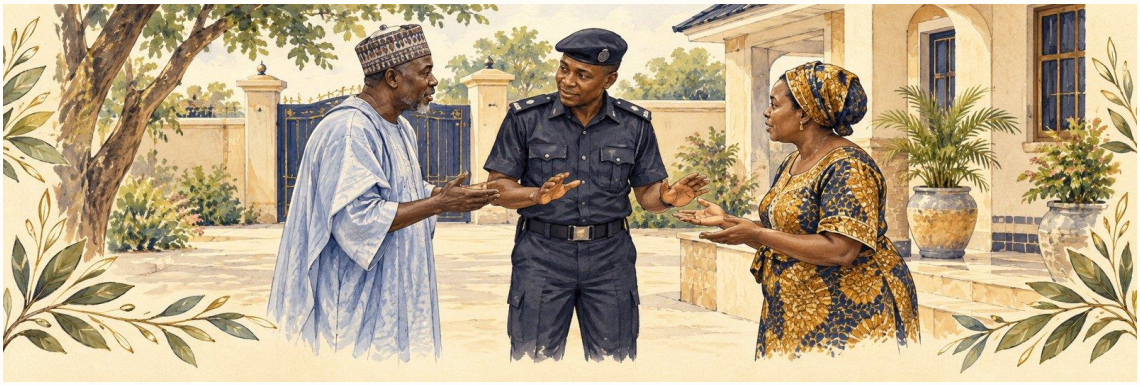
Adjustment agreed with the person: _____

How understanding was confirmed: _____

Reflection

What is the difference between asking about a person's preference and assigning a preference because of their surname or clothing?

Everyday disputes and voluntary dialogue



Noise, shared access, parking, trading space and household disagreements can become serious when frustration accumulates. Establish whether anyone is injured, threatened, coerced or alleging an offence before proposing dialogue. A civil disagreement may coexist with a separate criminal allegation. Identify the issues without using police authority to impose a private settlement.

Check whether dialogue is suitable

Participation must be genuinely voluntary and safe. Ask separately whether either person fears retaliation or feels unable to disagree. Do not press for a joint meeting where intimidation, abuse or major power imbalance makes it unsafe. Explain that declining informal dialogue does not cancel access to lawful reporting. Check your role and use an appropriate trained mediator or referral service when required.

Discuss behaviour and interests

Separate an immediate practical need from a broad accusation. 'The walkway must remain usable' is more workable than 'These people never respect us.' Let each person speak without personal attacks and summarise points of agreement and disagreement. Ask what arrangement each can realistically carry out. Avoid promising a result on disputed land ownership, tenancy or debt that requires legal advice or adjudication.

Write a modest agreement

Where appropriate, record voluntary actions, responsible people, dates and review arrangements. Do not disguise an unofficial fine, payment to an officer or waiver of rights as a peace agreement. Clarify the agreement's limited purpose and the route for unresolved legal questions. Give participants an understandable record consistent with privacy and procedure.

Follow-up matters

A meeting can sound successful while the weaker party remains at risk. Check whether the arrangement is implemented and whether participation created new pressure. If threats emerge, reassess suitability rather than insisting the agreement must stand. Refer criminal or protection concerns through the proper process.

A blocked compound entrance

Two neighbours argue over a generator placed in a shared passage. One wants access for an older relative's mobility aid. The other fears theft if the generator is moved. No violence or threats are reported, and both agree to discuss a temporary arrangement.

Model response and reasoning

Hear each account and check that agreement is voluntary. Focus on access and safe storage rather than deciding property rights. Help them identify a feasible temporary location they both accept, without prescribing unsafe electrical arrangements. Record who will seek competent technical advice, when the passage will be clear and when they will review it. Explain that unresolved ownership or tenancy questions need the appropriate legal route.

Practise

Role-play an impartial summary containing both interests. Add an allegation of a threat halfway through. Stop the informal process and explain how that changes the assessment.

Worksheet 6 Suitability and agreement

Issues and any separate allegation requiring assessment: _____

How voluntary participation was checked: _____

Reasons dialogue may be unsafe or unsuitable: _____

Agreed actions with responsibility and date: _____

Review and route for unresolved matters: _____

Reflection

Why is a signed agreement not enough to prove that a process was fair?

CHAPTER 07

Domestic abuse and safeguarding



Domestic abuse is not simply a disagreement between equally powerful people. Threats, violence, coercive control and sexual harm require protection-focused assessment and the appropriate legal response. Do not pressure a person to reconcile to preserve a marriage, family reputation or community harmony. A calm alleged perpetrator may still present a serious risk; a distressed survivor may still provide important information.

Speak privately and respectfully

Where safe and appropriate, speak away from the person accused and others who may influence the account. Ask about immediate danger, injuries, children and urgent support needs. Avoid asking questions that imply blame. Explain what you can do, what must be reported and any confidentiality limits. Do not promise an arrest, prosecution outcome or absolute secrecy before the relevant assessment.

Protection and specialist support

Seek urgent medical or protection assistance where indicated and follow applicable safeguarding and investigation procedures. Use a trained gender or family support unit, child protection service, appropriate healthcare provider or verified specialist organisation where available. Services and legal arrangements differ by state and locality; verify availability, eligibility, accessibility and safe contact methods. Do not send a person to an address you have not checked.

Preserve choice without abandoning duties

Ask how follow-up can occur safely. A text, call or printed referral may expose the person if someone monitors their communications. Explain available options and legal responsibilities without making the survivor responsible for managing all risk. Do not contact the accused to arrange a joint reconciliation as the default response. Do not make help conditional on public disclosure or a photograph.

Children and other people at risk

Consider children's immediate welfare, avoid repeated unnecessary questioning and obtain appropriate specialist help. A family member is not automatically a safe support person. Use the applicable child protection and reporting framework; this book does not assume that one state procedure applies throughout Nigeria.

A request to send her home

An adult woman reports that her partner threatened to seriously harm her. A relative urges the officer to send her home quietly because the family will settle it. She says she is afraid to return.

Model response and reasoning

Take the threat seriously and speak with her privately. Assess immediate protection and medical needs, seek specialist support and follow required reporting and investigation procedures. Explain the available options and safe contact arrangements. Do not permit the relative's wish to override her account or substitute a family promise for proper assessment. Record her words, the threat, identified needs and actions taken accurately and securely.

Practise

Rehearse responding to the relative without revealing private details. The observer should check that cultural courtesy does not become pressure on the survivor.

Worksheet 7 Safe referral planning

Immediate protection and medical needs: _____

Children or other people whose safety needs assessment: _____

Verified service and responsible contact: _____

Safe method and limits of follow-up: _____

Required reporting and supervisor consultation: _____

Reflection

Why might a joint meeting increase danger even when everyone at the station is speaking quietly?

Distress disability and medical needs



Unusual speech, confusion, agitation or delayed responses can have many explanations. An officer should not diagnose a condition from appearance or assume intoxication or deliberate defiance. A medical emergency, disability, acute distress, injury or communication barrier may require a different response. Observe facts, check welfare and seek appropriate professional help promptly.

Reduce avoidable pressure

Where safe and feasible, reduce noise, unnecessary questioning and the number of people speaking. Introduce yourself, use short concrete sentences and allow processing time. Explain before changing what is happening. Do not ridicule beliefs or argue about experiences you cannot verify. Acknowledge fear without confirming an unsupported account: 'That sounds frightening. Let us get appropriate help.'

Ask about useful support

Ask whether there is someone the person trusts or an established support arrangement. Check that involving this person is safe and appropriate; a companion may be part of the problem. Ask how to communicate and whether urgent medical help is needed. Do not force disclosure of a diagnosis in front of bystanders simply to justify a reasonable adjustment.

When help is urgent

Serious injury, loss of consciousness, major breathing difficulty, severe confusion or expressed intent to harm oneself or others requires urgent appropriate assistance under emergency procedures. Do not leave a person at immediate risk without arranging suitable supervision or professional handover. This handbook provides no restraint, clinical assessment or treatment instructions. Follow authorised training and professional direction.

Handover and privacy

Give the receiving professional relevant observations, the person's own statements and actions already taken. Distinguish what you saw from what a bystander guessed. Share only necessary information through authorised channels. Do not post an incident video as a lesson or entertainment. Check that the receiving service actually accepts the handover rather than assuming a referral alone completes responsibility.

Distress at a motor park

An adult at a busy motor park appears frightened, speaks rapidly and does not respond to several shouted questions. A bystander claims the person is dangerous but describes no threatening act. The person asks for a sibling.

Model response and reasoning

Assess immediate welfare and observable risk without adopting the label. Reduce competing voices where possible, use a calm introduction and ask one simple question at a time. Arrange appropriate medical support if indicated, and check whether contacting the sibling is safe and desired. Avoid diagnosing the person or treating distress as an offence. Record actual behaviour and ensure any referral includes a clear handover.

Practise

Rewrite 'He was mad and aggressive' as a factual observation using only the scenario's information. Identify what remains unknown.

Worksheet 8 Observation and support

Observed behaviour without diagnosis or labels: _____

Urgent welfare concern and assistance requested: _____

Communication adjustment tried and response: _____

Trusted support and safety check: _____

Receiving professional and handover confirmation: _____

Reflection

Why should repeated failure to understand a shouted instruction prompt reassessment rather than louder repetition?

Young people and community trust



Young people are residents, students, workers, organisers and rights holders. Clothing, hairstyle, phone ownership or presence in a particular neighbourhood does not establish criminal conduct. Distinguish children from adults and use the applicable safeguards. Community trust improves when officers explain decisions, listen to concerns and apply rules fairly without public humiliation.

Avoid labels that close communication

Terms such as troublemaker or bad boy turn an assumption into an identity. Ask what happened and who witnessed it. A young person may fear speaking in front of peers or adults. Offer an appropriate setting and explain the purpose of questions. Do not make a public apology, exercise or degrading performance a condition of assistance.

Children need specific safeguards

Use trained child protection personnel and the applicable local legal and agency procedures when a child is involved. Consider immediate welfare, appropriate support and safe involvement of a parent or guardian. Do not assume a guardian is safe when abuse is alleged. Avoid repeated unnecessary questioning, public identification or posting images. This guide does not provide a national custody checklist for children.

Engagement outside an incident

Hold accessible listening sessions with diverse young people, including young women and people with disabilities. Explain what police can do and what belongs to schools, health services, local government or other actors. Avoid using participation as a means to compile lists of lawful critics. Ask permission for feedback and make attendance voluntary. State how concerns will receive a response.

Make commitments that can be checked

A forum should produce limited responsibilities and dates, not vague promises that every problem will end. If students describe unsafe routes, identify the authority responsible for lighting and transport issues while recording any criminal allegation properly. Do not promise infrastructure beyond police authority or describe a meeting alone as evidence of reduced violence.

An argument after a football match

Several adult youths argue outside a community pitch. A resident demands that everyone wearing the visiting team's shirt be arrested. One participant reports being struck; others only watched.

Model response and reasoning

Check injury and immediate safety, establish individual conduct and identify witnesses. Do not treat a team shirt or group presence as proof of wrongdoing. Explain the lawful process and separate the assault allegation from general frustration about noise. Offer appropriate welfare support and assess evidence through the proper procedure. A later community discussion about match arrangements must not replace investigation of an alleged offence.

Practise

Plan a ten-minute youth listening session. Include a way for quieter participants to contribute and a response to a concern that falls outside police responsibility.

Worksheet 9 Engagement plan

Young people whose voices are often missing: _____

Safeguards and accessible participation arrangements: _____

Concern and authority responsible for it: _____

Specific commitment and date for feedback: _____

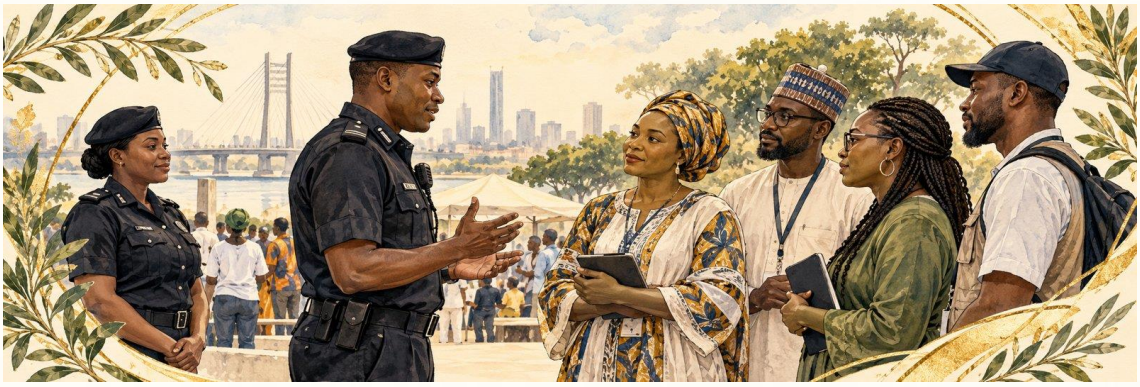
How participation and privacy will be protected: _____

Reflection

What would demonstrate fair treatment in the football scenario, even to a person who dislikes the final decision?

CHAPTER 10

Public gatherings and community liaison



Public gatherings can involve expression, worship, celebration, mourning or protest. An angry or noisy assembly is not automatically violent. Assess actual conduct and risks rather than political views or the popularity of a message. International guidance emphasises facilitating peaceful assembly and differentiating individual conduct [4]. Applicable Nigerian law, current legal advice and lawful agency direction must guide specific decisions.

Communicate before problems grow

Where appropriate, establish a liaison contact and discuss practical needs such as access, medical support, movement and communication. Liaison should help protect people and clarify information, not require participants to surrender lawful criticism. Organisers may not control every individual; listen to more than one voice and do not assume a representative can consent for all participants.

Explain changes clearly

Use understandable messages that identify what is happening, the reason and the next information point. Avoid collective accusations or vague threats. Check whether people can hear and understand, including those with disabilities or different language needs. Do not announce a safe route, available service or permission unless it has actually been confirmed by the responsible authority.

Keep disagreement separate from danger

Insults, filming and questions may be uncomfortable without establishing a threat. Do not use annoyance as a substitute for a lawful assessment. Assess individual harmful acts through the proper process and protect uninvolved people. This chapter does not prescribe dispersal, arrest formations, weapons or crowd-control tactics; those require current lawful operational training and oversight.

Review the public experience

Afterwards, gather feedback on clarity, accessibility, injuries, complaints and whether promised updates were given. Preserve records under policy and refer allegations of misconduct appropriately. A gathering ending does not by itself demonstrate a lawful or fair response. Learn from affected people, including residents and traders, without treating inconvenience as permission for collective punishment.

A peaceful demonstration becomes noisy

At a peaceful demonstration about delayed services, participants chant criticism of officers. A liaison representative reports that an older attendee feels faint. An officer suggests ending the conversation until the chanting stops.

Model response and reasoning

Arrange appropriate medical assistance immediately and communicate clearly with the representative. Continue necessary liaison without conditioning welfare support on agreeable speech. Explain confirmed practical arrangements and assess actual behaviour rather than the criticism. Document the welfare response and any separate incident factually. The absence of a pleasant tone does not remove the duty to treat people with dignity.

Practise

Draft a short update about a confirmed medical support point. Have an observer identify any unverified promise, collective blame or language that could be misunderstood.

Worksheet 10 Liaison record

Purpose of contact and representatives consulted: _____

Confirmed access and welfare arrangements: _____

Language or disability access needs: _____

Message given and next update responsibility: _____

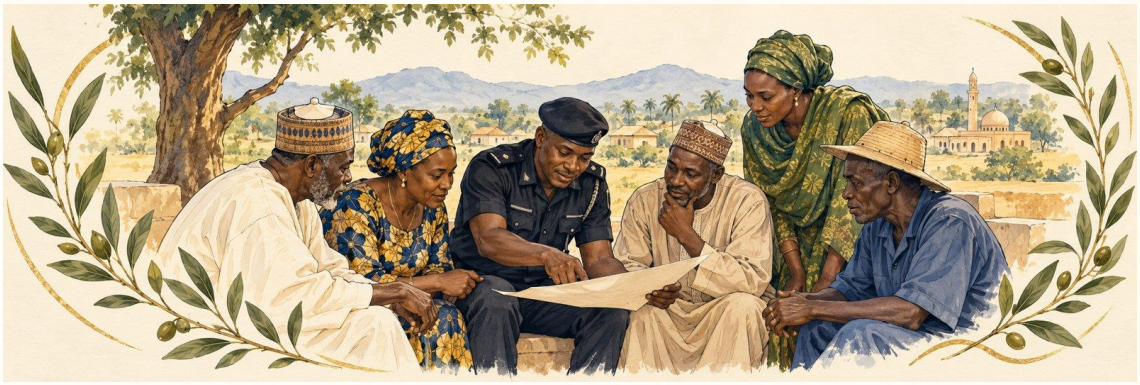
Unresolved concern and referral: _____

Reflection

How would you distinguish an organiser's account from a claim that every participant agrees with it?

CHAPTER 11

Rumours communal tensions and development



Rumours can turn a personal dispute into suspicion of an entire community. A forwarded voice note, old image or incomplete account may circulate faster than a correction. Record the specific claim and its source without repeating inflammatory content unnecessarily. Separate verified facts, allegations and unknowns. Urgent protective action may still be needed while a claim is checked.

Verify before amplifying

Seek direct evidence and authorised verification. An image's caption does not establish its place or date. Avoid forwarding identifiable allegations to broad groups or naming a supposed offender publicly. Preserve relevant material through approved procedures. A community contact can provide context but is not a substitute for verification or a reason to target people by identity.

Speak about conduct rather than groups

Say that an allegation is being assessed, when that is true, without announcing collective guilt. Do not claim an issue is resolved before it is checked. Use authorised public communication channels and protect sensitive information. Explain uncertainty plainly and give the next reliable source of updates. Corrections should reach the audiences exposed to the rumour without needlessly repeating harmful detail.

Handle communal grievances with care

Disputes about land, water, markets or grazing can involve history, livelihoods, government responsibilities and serious allegations. Do not assign blame to an ethnic or occupational category. Ensure women, less-connected residents and affected minority voices can raise concerns safely. Dialogue may help communication but cannot determine contested legal rights or replace investigation and protection.

Link safety to development responsibly

A broken water point or unsafe transport route may need local government, technical or community action. Police can refer concerns and support lawful access within their role, while competent actors handle infrastructure decisions. Do not promise funds, jobs or diplomatic influence you do not hold. A peace project should have a clear purpose, voluntary participation and a way for residents to raise complaints.

A market voice note

A voice note falsely presented as an official announcement blames a religious community for an assault. Traders begin closing stalls. An officer has confirmed that an assault report exists, but the identities and motive have not been established.

Model response and reasoning

Assess immediate protection needs and preserve the material through approved channels. Notify the authorised communication and investigation leads. Any public update should distinguish the confirmed report from unverified identity and motive, without broadcasting the accusation further. Engage varied community contacts to share verified information and hear concerns. Do not summon an entire religious group for an individual's alleged act.

Practise

Draft a three-sentence authorised update using only the confirmed facts in the scenario. Identify which details must remain unasserted.

Worksheet 11 Claim verification

Exact claim recorded securely: _____

What is confirmed and by whom: _____

What remains unknown: _____

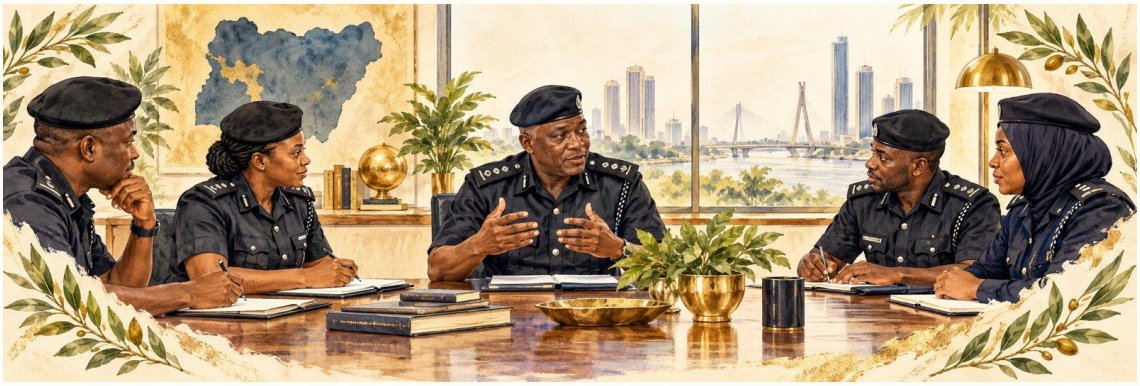
Immediate protection or referral need: _____

Authorised update and audience needing correction: _____

Reflection

How could a well-intentioned public reassurance increase tension if it repeats an unverified group accusation?

Recording accountability and continuing practice



A useful record explains what happened, what was known at the time, the decision made and the reason for it. It should help a reviewer understand the encounter without relying on labels. Record relevant times, direct observations, significant statements, assistance sought, explanations given and follow-up responsibility. Complete records honestly and promptly under policy; never alter an account to create a cleaner story.

Describe behaviour accurately

'The person asked three times why the enquiry was necessary' is different from 'The person was obstructive.' Attribute allegations and quotations clearly. Record interpretation or access limitations and changes in circumstances. Avoid irrelevant details about faith, ethnicity or disability. Protect personal information and evidence using authorised systems, retention rules and access controls.

Complaints are part of accountability

Explain verified complaint channels and avoid retaliation, discouragement or pressure to withdraw. The NPF website provides a route for reporting misconduct [5]. Verify current arrangements rather than copying old contact numbers. Internal reporting obligations and independent complaint routes may serve different purposes; consult current procedure. A complaint should not prevent a person receiving proper service in an unrelated matter.

Review decisions rather than appearances

Ask what reduced tension, what increased it, what safeguards were observed and whether a person's immediate needs were met. Review failures and near misses as well as successful outcomes. If misconduct or injury is alleged, follow the required reporting and preservation process; a learning discussion cannot replace formal accountability. Include affected people's feedback where safe and appropriate.

Build a sustainable practice habit

Choose one skill each week: a clear opening, an impartial summary, an honest explanation or a complete referral. Practise with feedback and review a realistic example with a supervisor. Use measures that capture fairness and welfare as well as resolution. Fewer complaints alone may reflect barriers to reporting, so combine counts with accessible feedback and record quality.

The misleading incident note

An officer writes that a complainant was aggressive. A colleague recalls only that she cried and asked repeated questions. The encounter ended peacefully, but the complainant says nobody explained the referral.

Model response and reasoning

Correct or supplement the record transparently through authorised procedures; do not secretly replace the original. Record observable behaviour and acknowledge uncertainty. Check what explanation was actually given and arrange a proper update. Review whether emotion was mistaken for danger. If a complaint is made, explain the route without retaliation and preserve relevant records. The peaceful ending does not eliminate the service problem.

Practise

Use one scenario from the book to produce a short incident record. Swap records and highlight unsupported conclusions. Revise using facts without removing inconvenient information.

Worksheet 12 Thirty day improvement plan

Skill I will practise and why: _____

Two observed behaviours showing improvement: _____

Colleague or supervisor providing feedback: _____

Date and method for reviewing progress: _____

Issue requiring formal reporting rather than informal learning: _____

Reflection

What evidence would persuade an independent reviewer that an encounter was both calm and fair?

Encounter review worksheet

Use fictional or securely anonymised details for training. Operational records belong in approved systems. This worksheet does not replace mandatory incident reports.

Date and learning scenario

_____

Immediate protection and welfare needs

_____

Facts directly observed

_____

Allegations and information still unverified

_____

Lawful purpose and authority checked

_____

Communication or access needs

_____

Explanation and genuine options offered

_____

Response and changes in circumstances

_____

Assistance requested and confirmed handover

_____

Follow up responsibility and date

_____

Complaint or reporting requirement

_____

One improvement for a future encounter

_____

Referral directory worksheet

Complete this locally with a supervisor before training. Verify each service directly and review periodically. Do not publish personal contact details or promise that a service is available until checked.

Emergency medical assistance

Service and official contact: _____

Area covered hours eligibility and accessibility: _____

Referral process safe contact and last verification date: _____

Supervisor and agency legal advice

Service and official contact: _____

Area covered hours eligibility and accessibility: _____

Referral process safe contact and last verification date: _____

Gender and family support services

Service and official contact: _____

Area covered hours eligibility and accessibility: _____

Referral process safe contact and last verification date: _____

Child protection and safeguarding

Service and official contact: _____

Area covered hours eligibility and accessibility: _____

Referral process safe contact and last verification date: _____

Disability and interpretation support

Service and official contact: _____

Area covered hours eligibility and accessibility: _____

Referral process safe contact and last verification date: _____

Independent complaints and legal assistance

Service and official contact: _____

Area covered hours eligibility and accessibility: _____

Referral process safe contact and last verification date: _____

Facilitator practice session

Suggested duration is ninety minutes. This is a learning plan for communication practice, not an assessment conferring operational competence. Use a qualified facilitator and follow institutional training requirements.

Preparation

Select two cases relevant to the group. Confirm the applicable local legal references and referral arrangements. Use fictional names and avoid asking participants to disclose personal trauma or confidential incidents.

First fifteen minutes

Explain the scope and ask learners what a fair calm encounter looks like. Review when urgent protection or a formal process takes priority over voluntary dialogue.

Next thirty minutes

In groups of three assign officer, resident and observer roles. Use five minutes for the encounter and five for feedback, then rotate. Role players can pause or opt out. Do not simulate force, threats, weapons or physical contact.

Next twenty minutes

Introduce a change such as an interpretation need, alleged threat or unsafe proposed interpreter. Ask learners to explain why the change affects their response. Compare reasoning with the model answer while allowing other lawful and well-supported responses.

Final twenty five minutes

Complete the encounter review worksheet and discuss the decisions. Agree one skill for supervised follow-up. Correct legal uncertainty through authorised advice, not group vote.

Observer feedback

Note whether the officer introduced the purpose clearly, heard the concern, avoided assumptions, checked welfare and access, explained limits and recorded a realistic next step. Give one specific example before suggesting an improvement. Do not score success solely by whether the resident agreed.

Sources and further reading

Consulted 23 October 2026. These sources support the specific foundations indicated in the text. Legal requirements can change; obtain current authorised texts and advice before institutional use. A reproduced Act is primary legal text even when hosted by a civil society organisation.

1 Nigeria Police Act 2020

Official enacted text reproduced by Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre. See sections 4 and 32 and 36 for the limited foundations used in chapter 1. Read the full Act for context.

Open source

2 National Human Rights Commission

International Day in Support of Victims of Torture statement dated 26 June 2026. Used for the prohibition of torture and its lack of exceptional justification.

Open source

3 United Nations Basic Principles

Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials adopted 1990. Principle 4 is the non-violent means foundation; this is international guidance, not a domestic operational procedure.

Open source

4 Human Rights Committee

General Comment 37 on article 21 adopted 2020. Background on peaceful assembly, state responsibilities and individual conduct.

Open source

5 Nigeria Police Force

Official website, including the report police misconduct route. Use current official information to verify complaint arrangements; no potentially stale telephone directory is reproduced.

Open source

About the author

Korede Olafimihan has worked with several non-governmental organisations. His interest in community engagement and cooperation informs this practical learning resource.

Using this book responsibly

Use the cases as starting points for discussion and supervised practice. Good communication matters alongside legality, reliable services, adequate supervision and accountability. No script guarantees a peaceful result. Review local conditions, legal requirements and the needs of the individual before deciding what to do.

A note for training providers

Before adopting this material, arrange review by an appropriately qualified Nigerian legal adviser and an authorised law enforcement training lead. Confirm applicable state safeguarding arrangements, current agency policy and the local referral directory. Record the review date and any required changes. Do not advertise this book as NPF approved or as conferring professional accreditation without separate verified authorisation.

Your next practice commitment

The skill I will practise:

_____

The person who will give feedback:

_____

The lawful procedure I need to review:

_____

The date I will check progress:

_____

Building trust through calm and lawful practice

Practical Nigerian scenarios, communication tools, reflection activities and worksheets for respectful conflict management.

About the author

Korede Olafimihan has worked with several non-governmental organisations. His interest in community engagement and cooperation informs this practical learning resource.

