

Topic: Rights & Responsibilities
(Church World Service, Overseas Processing Entity, Accra)

Activity: Identifying Illegal Activity

Objectives	Participants working in groups will be able to identify and become conversant with illegal actions in specific scenarios.
Lesson Time	15 minutes
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Scenarios: “The Marvin Dowar Story” and “The Usman Family Outing” (included)
Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none">The trainer introduces the exercise.Participants split into two groups, and each group is assigned one of the two stories.A group member reads the group’s story aloud, and the group identifies illegal actions and underlines them.Work stops after eight minutes. The trainer reads out each story in turn, and the group members clap at the mention of each illegal action they identified. They also name the illegality: e.g. “child abuse,” “polygamy,” etc.
Variations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Have the participants suggest actions the victim could take: e.g. cry, call 911, continue in the same situation, etc.For illiterate participants: The trainer reads each story aloud, having participants identify the illegal actions.

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The Marvin Dowar Story (a story from a country of asylum)

Marvin Dowar has done a lot for himself in the past years. Buduburam has been his “home” since 1992, when he fled the civil war in Liberia to take refuge in Ghana.

The small business he started at the refugee camp has thrived over the years, and only five days ago he bought himself a car at a public auction. He was given a temporary number plate that allowed him 48 hours to register and insure the car.

Marvin drove into the camp in his new car, and there was quite a celebration. Four days after he got his car, he decided to renew his license and both register and insure the car. This required a drive back into Accra. He got ready, gulped down the last can of beer he had in the refrigerator, and then set off, feeling fine.

At Mallam Junction, traffic was unusually light. Marvin’s mobile rang. “Hi, this is Marvin.” He drove through a red light and narrowly missed colliding with a lorry. This near-miss made him remember his seatbelt, but he found it faulty and unusable. A traffic warden from the metropolitan assembly saw him run through the red light and stopped him 50 meters later. Marvin parted with a five Cedi note after a brief “discussion” and continued to town.

Traffic around Nkrumah Circle was very, very heavy and slow. Someone called to him from the crowd. It was Elizabeth Doe Jr. with her 2-year-old on her back. She needed a ride back to the camp and was willing to wait until Marvin finished his errands. She quickly dropped an old polythene bag on the ground, got into the car, and put her baby in the back seat.

Marvin soon arrived at the licensing office only to find the place closed! It was March 6th, a public holiday!

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The Usman Family Outing (a story from the U.S.)

Usman, his wife, Mariama, and their daughter, Ummu, arrived in the U.S. as refugees three and a half years ago. Ummu, who was nine years old at the time, adjusted to American culture faster than her parents. Ummu quickly became more outspoken and more adventurous than before. This became a matter of great concern to her father, Usman, who still held fast to certain traditional African ideas.

One weekend, the family took a drive to see the beautiful Colorado River. Ummu was so excited that she would not wait to be told where to go, and she ran out of her parents' view for a while. When she returned, a very angry Usman slapped her several times and threatened her. The trip ended there and they returned home. Mariama felt sorry for her daughter but was afraid to show it. Usman noticed his wife's sympathy for their daughter and angrily threatened to beat her too if she would not stop supporting their daughter's bad behavior.

The next morning, Ummu's face was so swollen that her father did not allow her to attend school, to prevent her teacher and friends from noticing the assault. This absence from school continued until the physical signs of the attack subsided.

Worried that his daughter would soon be out of his control, Usman planned with some friends who shared his traditional African ideas to have Ummu circumcised. His wife, who had been educated about the illegality and the dangers of Female Genital Mutilation, learned of her husband's plans and moved with her daughter to stay in a women's shelter. She then wrote to ask Usman to contribute to his daughter's upkeep. Usman wrote back to say that he had nothing to do with them, and that if they continued to stay away, he felt free to take on a new wife and continue with his life.

Usman's friends then put him in touch with a newly arrived refugee family from his home country. They had a 15-year old daughter who was ready for marriage, according to tradition. They arranged for Usman to take the girl, against her wishes, to where he lived some 20 miles away. Two months later, a few friends gathered at Usman's house for the marriage ceremony.

Five days after the marriage ceremony, Usman got a very official-looking letter. It was from "Merton, Marshall and Associates, Legal Consultants, Houston, Texas."

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