

PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE: UNICEF IASC CHAMPIONSHIP 2018-2019

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IASC Inter-Agency
Standing Committee

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women and children affected by crises - natural disasters, armed conflicts, and complex humanitarian emergencies - are particularly at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse because they are in need of humanitarian assistance. Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers is an appalling protection failure and a violation of universally recognized international legal norms and standards.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance, holds a longstanding commitment to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), and in 2002 the IASC adopted Six Core Principles on PSEA as clear standards for humanitarian workers. The role of the IASC Champion on PSEA has served to keep the issue high on the agenda of humanitarian leaders. In 2018, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore took up the mantle of IASC Champion on PSEA and Sexual Harassment. The IASC adopted a Champions Strategy on PSEA and Sexual Harassment, and UNICEF Executive Director focused on accelerating PSEA in countries facing humanitarian crises, a core contribution to the strategy. During 2018-19, the IASC invested in resourcing country-level PSEA systems and services, supporting senior leadership, and deploying technical specialists in order to accelerate protection from SEA in crisis-affected communities.

Under UNICEF Executive Director Fore's leadership, the IASC developed and endorsed the IASC Plan for Accelerating PSEA in Humanitarian Response at Country Level ("the IASC Acceleration Plan"), which commits to scale-up PSEA through collective action and investment by its members. The IASC Plan articulates three priority outcomes to be implemented as part of every Humanitarian Response Plan or Refugee Response Plan: 1) safe and accessible reporting mechanisms that can receive and respond to incidents of SEA; 2) quality assistance for survivors of SEA; and 3) the ability to offer survivors prompt, confidential and respectful investigations.

To support implementation of the Acceleration Plan, the IASC conducted a mapping of country-level PSEA systems in 2018 that identified critical capacity and resource gaps, while setting a baseline for progress. In 12 countries facing humanitarian crises, less than 25 per cent of the affected population had access to a channel for SEA reporting. Access to assistance for survivors of SEA was also limited, with only four out of 34 humanitarian country teams estimating that 75 per cent or more of women and children could access gender-based violence (GBV) services. Most humanitarian country teams could not indicate an approximate timeframe for triggering an investigation after a SEA allegation is reported.

IASC members scaled up their investments in PSEA to deliver results in these three priority areas for communities affected by crises. ERC Lowcock created a \$1 million fund for investigation capacity to strengthen accountability for PSEA. During 2018-19, UNICEF committed \$21.6 million of internal resources to 32 countries facing humanitarian emergencies to accelerate PSEA. IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO all committed to filling the gaps in PSEA Coordinators; as a result, 29 of 35 countries facing humanitarian crises are supported. Humanitarian Coordinators are actively engaged in leading the PSEA work at country-level.

With a clear results framework and a structure in place under the Resident Coordinator/ Humanitarian Coordinator's leadership accountable for its implementation, Humanitarian Country Teams are tracking progress on PSEA. At country level, PSEA Coordinators will prioritize engaging government, civil society, and all partners to achieve the priority outcomes. IASC accomplishments for PSEA this year have taken root and will become integral to each humanitarian response.



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PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE: REPORT ON THE IASC CHAMPIONSHIP

From September 2018 to September 2019, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore served as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee “Champion” on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and Sexual Harassment. In this capacity, she focused her agenda on strengthening the country-level systems for SEA prevention and response. The following is a report to the Emergency Relief Coordinator and IASC Principals on progress made during the IASC Championship, as well as the challenges and next steps for advancing a system-wide approach to PSEA.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) constitutes a terrible failure of protection and a violation of universally recognized international legal norms and standards. Although we do not know the prevalence of sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers and peacekeepers, we do know that violence against women and girls in particular is rampant worldwide with one in three women and girls experiencing sexual or physical violence in her lifetime.¹ Humanitarian or emergency settings where affected populations depend on assistance to meet some or all of their needs, or on peacekeepers for protection, exacerbate the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse. As a form of gender-based violence, SEA is rooted in unequal gender norms and power imbalances that drive related forms of abuse, such

as sexual harassment. Children are often at greater risk of sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian contexts, where SEA takes place along a broader continuum of violence, such as within religious institutions, schools, homes, communities, and online. This report focuses on protection from SEA perpetrated by humanitarian workers.

SEA by humanitarian workers betrays the core values and principles of humanitarian action, fundamental to “do no harm,” and destroys trust in the international humanitarian aid sector as a whole. The actions of a single aid worker can derail the life of an individual, and possibly their family and community. It takes tremendous courage to report sexual exploitation and abuse, particularly in the face of an extreme power imbalance, and evidence shows that the number of reported cases is only a small percentage

¹ World Health Organization (2017). Violence against Women Factsheet. p.1

of those that occur.² Even when a case is reported, survivors – particularly in humanitarian contexts – face significant barriers to receiving the support and protection they need.³ Further, the data available indicates that perpetrators of such offences are too often not held accountable for their actions.⁴

The IASC, the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance, holds a longstanding commitment to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and in 2002 it adopted Six Core Principles on PSEA as clear standards for humanitarian workers.⁵ Ten years later, the IASC adopted PSEA Minimum Operating Standards, providing a framework for organizational policies and procedures on PSEA within the humanitarian sector.⁶ Under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General, the UN has established a set of commitments which are grounded in the prohibitions in the 2003 Secretary-General’s Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.⁷ The Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the UN’s response to sexual exploitation and abuse has worked to advance a system-wide approach, bolstered by the appointment of the UN Victims’ Rights Advocate. The UN’s approach is guided by the UN’s strategy on PSEA, which was put forth by the UN Secretary-General in 2017,⁸ a set of actions and commitments to effectively prevent and respond to SEA. The prohibition of SEA is in place across the IASC and the UN system, and both IASC members and the UN system must put in place the measures necessary to effectively deliver on PSEA.

Despite a global prohibition of SEA, the threat of SEA continues. From 2015 to 2018, allegations involving

UN and humanitarian personnel in Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Haiti, among others, revealed significant gaps in the country-level systems designed to implement the UN and IASC prohibitions on SEA.⁹

SECTION 2: ACCELERATING PSEA IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AT COUNTRY-LEVEL

The risk of sexual exploitation and abuse in a humanitarian response is shared across all agencies, making a collective, joined-up approach essential. To advance a common vision, Executive Director Fore, High Commissioner Grandi (as the successor in the Championship role), and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock put forward an *IASC Strategy on PSEA and Sexual Harassment* in November 2018. The Strategy focuses on advancing three overarching objectives: encouraging victims to come forward and a speak up culture; improving quality, survivor-centered support and protection; and strengthened vetting, reference-checking, investigation processes and disciplinary measures. During Executive Director Fore’s championship, IASC members advanced the strategy by focusing on a set of priority results to effectively deliver on its commitment to prevent and respond to SEA, and to advance a victim and survivor-centered approach.¹⁰

A. Adoption of the IASC Plan for Accelerating PSEA in Humanitarian Response at Country-Level

The IASC developed and endorsed in December 2018 the **IASC Plan for Accelerating PSEA in Humanitarian Response at Country Level** (“the IASC Acceleration Plan”), which commits to scale-up PSEA through collective action, Humanitarian

2 See: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_chapter6_t.pdf

3 In 2019, less than 10 per cent of humanitarian funding has been allocated towards addressing gender-based violence, despite that fact that 1 in 3 women experience gender-based violence within their lifetime. See: <https://www.unocha.org/story/gender-based-violence-closer-look-numbers>

4 See: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_chapter6_t.pdf; See also the UN data on SEA: <https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-data-introduction>.

5 The Six Core Principles were revised in 2019. See: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/product-categories/protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>

6 See the IASC MOS PSEA: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content-1>

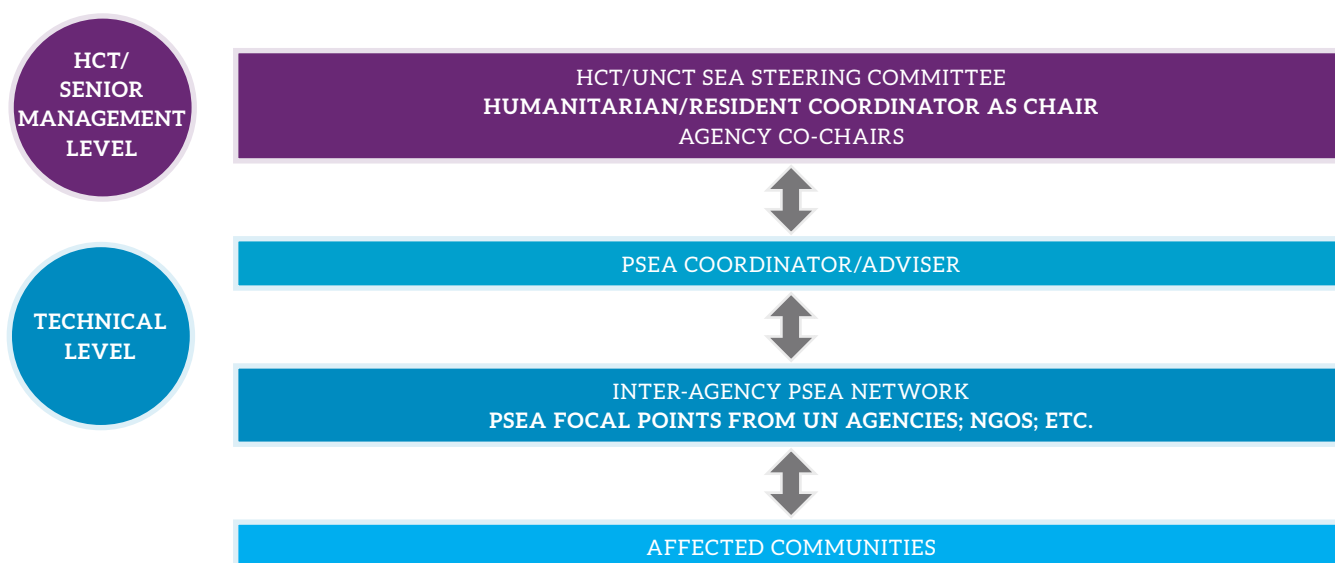
7 ST/SGB/2003/13

8 Report of the Secretary-General on Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: a new approach, A/71/818, 28 February 2017

9 See for example: <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/news-articles>. See also, for example, the International Development Committee report on Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector (HC 840), 19 November 2018: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/1764/176402.htm> and the UK Safeguarding Summit Commitments: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safeguarding-summit-commitments>

10 See IASC Champions Strategy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, November 2018: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/181101_iasc_champions_sea_sh_strategy_final.pdf

IASC PSEA LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION STRUCTURE AT COUNTRY-LEVEL



Country Team leadership, and investment by IASC members. The IASC Acceleration Plan articulates three priority outcomes to be implemented as part of every Humanitarian Response Plan or Refugee Response Plan: safe and accessible reporting mechanisms that can receive and respond to incidents of SEA; quality assistance for survivors of SEA; and the ability to offer survivors prompt, confidential and respectful investigations.¹¹

THREE PRIORITY OUTCOMES FOR PSEA

OUTCOME 1: Safe and Accessible Reporting

Every child and adult in humanitarian situations has access to a safe, child and gender-sensitive SEA reporting mechanism.

OUTCOME 2: Survivor Support

Every child and adult in humanitarian situations who reports SEA has access to immediate, quality SEA survivor-centered assistance (case management: medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, and reintegration support) in line with a survivor-centered approach.

OUTCOME 3: Enhanced Accountability

Cases of SEA are investigated in a prompt, safe and respectful way, consistent with the wishes and best interests of every child survivor.

These outcomes comprise essential components of a functioning PSEA system at country-level and contribute to the prevention of SEA.¹² The IASC Acceleration Plan calls for strengthening the leadership and coordination structures in each humanitarian response. The plan endorses a PSEA Coordinator function to support the Humanitarian Coordinator and facilitate a network of PSEA focal points from the Humanitarian Country Team.¹³ PSEA Networks deliver on the three priority outcomes, including to monitor and track progress and ensure that PSEA is integrated within the Humanitarian Response Plan.

B. Mapping and Gap Analysis against the IASC Acceleration Plan

To guide implementation of the IASC Acceleration Plan and establish a baseline to benchmark progress, UNICEF and OCHA conducted a mapping of PSEA work across countries with a humanitarian or refugee

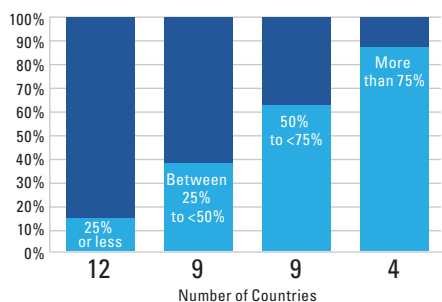
¹¹ These outcomes can be found within the IASC Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA, as well as related regulatory instruments. The IASC Plan is therefore concomitant to a regulatory approach to PSEA and focuses on three result areas that are necessary for delivering on a survivor-centered approach in both a regulatory as well as an operational, programmatic sense. For example, where agencies should have an internal complaint channel to handle allegations of SEA, the interface of this procedure with the affected population requires a child and gender-sensitive lens that incorporates community-based approaches to reporting and is linked to gender-based violence programming to provide survivors with support.

¹² The approach advances a results-based approach to PSEA, where the achievement of the three outcomes are integral to an effective PSEA system overall.

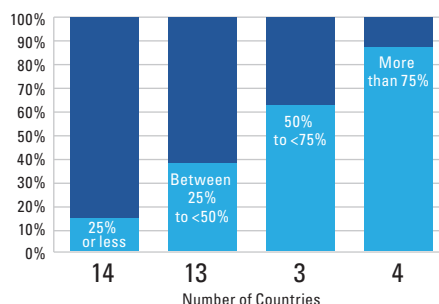
¹³ This may also include UN implementing partners, among other actors.

Snapshot of Global PSEA Mapping

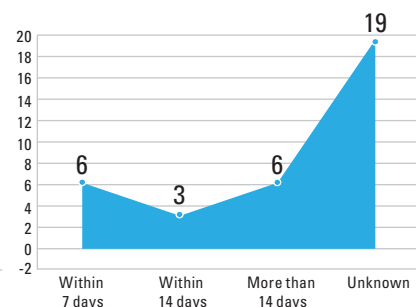
Outcome 1: Percentage of the affected population who can access safe and accessible reporting channels



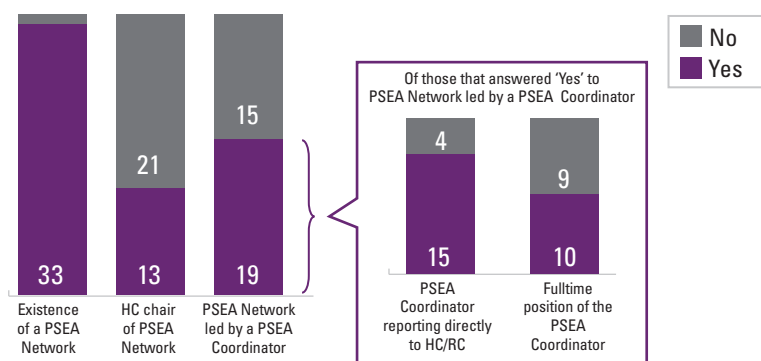
Outcome 2: Percentage of the affected population, particularly women and children, who can access survivor-centered SEA/GBV assistance



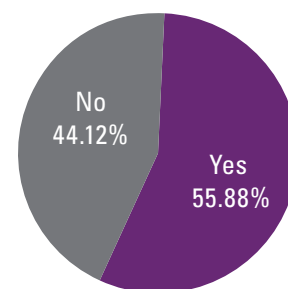
Outcome 3: Approximate time for an investigation to be initiated, upon receipt of an allegation



PSEA structure at country-level



Percentage of PSEA Networks that have integrated GBV referral pathways



response plan.¹⁴ The mapping focused on the country-level systems currently in place for PSEA coordination, as well as a snapshot status of the three outcomes. The mapping found that, while there is good progress in establishing inter-agency PSEA Networks in almost all countries with a humanitarian response, there were also a number of gaps in supporting the networks to function effectively and to deliver results against the three priority outcomes:

- **Safe and accessible complaint channels:** 12 out of 34 countries with a humanitarian response estimated that 25 per cent or less of the affected population has access to a complaint channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse.
- **Quality survivor assistance:** 14 out of 34 countries estimate that 25 per cent or less of the affected population can access survivor

assistance; only four countries estimated more than 75 per cent coverage.

- **Accountability and investigations:** The majority of HCTs reported that they do not know when an investigation will be initiated, which makes it unlikely that affected populations would know what can be expected from a humanitarian agency.

The results of the mapping, validated by Humanitarian Coordinators, indicate that strengthening country-level systems is critical for the UN and IASC to deliver on PSEA. The mapping found significant gaps in accessing a safe and trusted channel for reporting concerns of SEA wherever humanitarian aid reaches. It indicates that where SEA may be reported, there are significant constraints in being able to reach survivors with the assistance they need. For example, although the humanitarian community in Central African Republic (CAR) has put in place clear procedures for the receipt and referral of allegations of SEA across agencies,

¹⁴ Respondents: Afghanistan, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Cote D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Palestine, Pakistan, Philippines, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Turkey (cross border to Syria response), Uganda, Ukraine, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

they still estimate that less than 50 per cent of the affected population has access to a SEA reporting channel. They also estimate that less than 25 per cent of the affected population, including women and children, has access to gender-based violence and child protection services in CAR. In Democratic Republic of Congo, less than 25 per cent of the affected population was estimated to have access to a reporting channel, and no country-wide procedure has yet to be endorsed that would provide for the inter-agency referral of allegations.

The results of the mapping also show that even where agency policies, such as for investigations, may be determined at global level, there is a need for a clear, common timeframe for investigations to be communicated at country-level so anyone who reports knows what to expect. While PSEA Networks were present in almost all countries with a humanitarian response, **only half of the networks had a dedicated PSEA Coordinator**, with less than half integrated within a system-wide structure under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator¹⁵. Some countries, such as Democratic Republic of Congo, lacked a PSEA Coordinator to take forward the inter-agency PSEA work. Others, such as Nigeria, Mali, and CAR, had a part-time specialist who was also responsible for leading other agency and sector-specific work outside of their PSEA responsibilities.

SECTION 3: RESULTS ACHIEVED

To date, IASC members and UNICEF have achieved the following results in line with the IASC Acceleration Plan.

A. Strengthened leadership and support from Humanitarian Coordinators/ Humanitarian Country Teams

In May 2019, Humanitarian Coordinators validated the results of the PSEA mapping, and developed or further strengthened existing PSEA Network Action

¹⁵ In line with the acknowledged need for contextualisation, it was agreed that in country contexts where refugee situations are the predominant humanitarian concern, the most appropriate structure would be situating the PSEA Coordinator within UNHCR with a shared reporting line to the RC/HC

Plans based on a common set of indicators linked to the priority outcomes in the IASC Acceleration Plan. During the retreat, Executive Director Fore, UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner Kelly Clements and the Humanitarian Coordinators discussed progress to date and key actions needed to accelerate PSEA. Executive Director Fore brought the results of the mapping and the HCs feedback to IASC members with a call for focused investments at country-level. As a result, the requests for PSEA support from HCs/HCTs, including to fill gaps in PSEA Coordinators, significantly increased. The IASC Results Group on Accountability and Inclusion, which includes a dedicated focus on PSEA, is working to scale up coordinated, inter-agency PSEA technical support to HCs/HCTs to respond to these requests.

B. Scaled up support for country-level PSEA acceleration

INVESTING IN RESULTS: UNICEF'S COMMITMENT

As part of UNICEF Executive Director Fore's commitment to leading by example as the IASC Champion, UNICEF committed \$21.6 million in 2018 – 2019 to six regional offices and 32 priority countries facing humanitarian emergencies to accelerate work on PSEA. UNICEF integrated the IASC Acceleration Plan into an internal PSEA results monitoring framework to track progress. As a core member of inter-agency PSEA Networks, UNICEF used the funds to strengthen inter-agency capacity to deliver on the IASC priority outcomes.

As a result, UNICEF scaled up the capacity of its Country Offices, NGO and government partners, community leaders, and affected communities, particularly women and children, to put in place SEA reporting channels and quality assistance for survivors of SEA as part of the broader inter-agency work on PSEA. In Central African Republic, UNICEF supported community-based complaint channels in 17 of 28 planned localities, reaching more than 100,000 children, 18,000 adults and 1,500 community leaders with safe and accessible channels to report SEA, and provided assistance to child survivors of SEA within 48 hours of receiving

reports in 90 per cent of all cases. In Ethiopia, UNICEF supported the PSEA Network to develop a costed action plan and to establish community-based complaint mechanisms (CBCM) and PSEA coordination in three regions hosting the highest number of internally displaced persons. UNICEF is recruiting a PSEA Coordinator for the PSEA Network to support this work. As a contribution to the PSEA Network in Jordan, UNICEF developed guidelines and forms for safe referrals and is piloting the use of U-Report, an innovative, cell phone-based platform to expand the reach of reporting channels for affected children and their communities. More than 90 per cent of UNICEF partners (government and NGOs) have drafted PSEA work plans, code of conduct, and policies, as needed, resulting in increased reporting of SEA in Jordan.

UNICEF has not been alone in these efforts. For example, with the support of UNHCR, a new inter-agency helpline and email account allow refugees in Uganda to directly access information on protection and services, as well as to report SEA allegations. Similar initiatives are now in place for IDPs in Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Iraq. Further, some PSEA Networks such as South Sudan have undertaken a review of the effectiveness of their PSEA community-based complaint mechanisms, so that good practices and lessons learned can inform their next stage of work.

PSEA COORDINATORS GAPS FILLED

In order to accelerate implementation of the plan and support HCs to increase the effectiveness of inter-agency PSEA coordination, Executive Director Fore called on IASC members to ensure each humanitarian crisis had a full time, inter-agency PSEA Coordinator. In January 2019, there were full or part-time coordinators for the inter-agency PSEA Networks in approximately half of the countries surveyed (See below: IASC Mapping of PSEA Coordinators as of January 2019). By September 2019, IASC members had committed to filling the gaps through in-kind resources in 29 out of 35

countries¹⁶ with a humanitarian or refugee response underway (See: IASC Mapping of PSEA Coordinators as of July 2019).

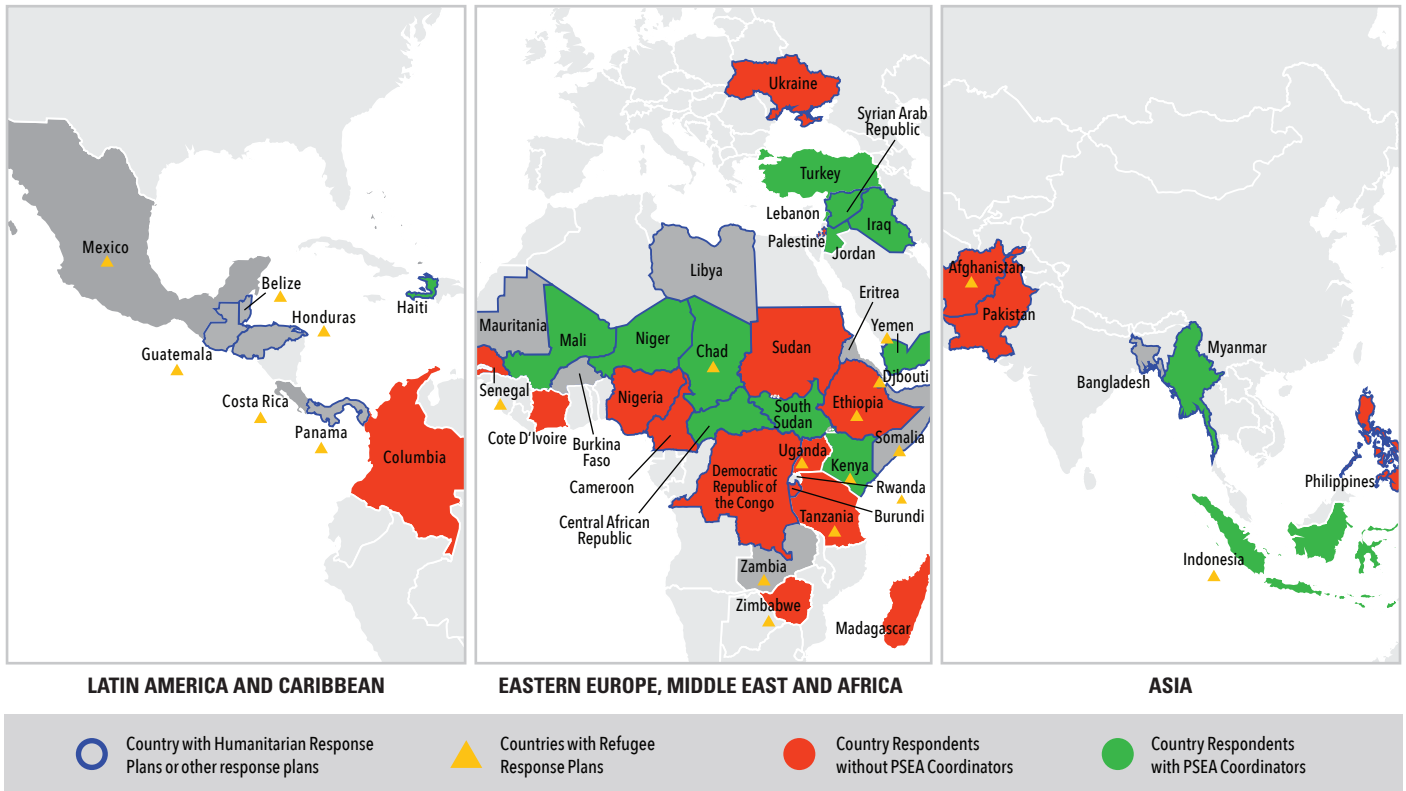
As a result of the call for support, the contributions of IASC members have more than doubled the number of PSEA coordinators, from 12 to 29, within a few months. WFP committed to fill the gaps in PSEA Coordinators in six countries. WHO and UNHCR committed to filling gaps in two countries each. UNDP has also pledged to fill at least one PSEA Coordinator position. Under the auspices of the IASC, IOM delivered a pilot PSEA Coordinator training for previous and current PSEA Coordinators to support capacity development. UNICEF committed additional resources to fill the PSEA Coordinator gaps in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria (Abuja), Philippines, Uganda, Yemen, and Zambia, with personnel now in place or actively under recruitment.

MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF PERPETRATORS

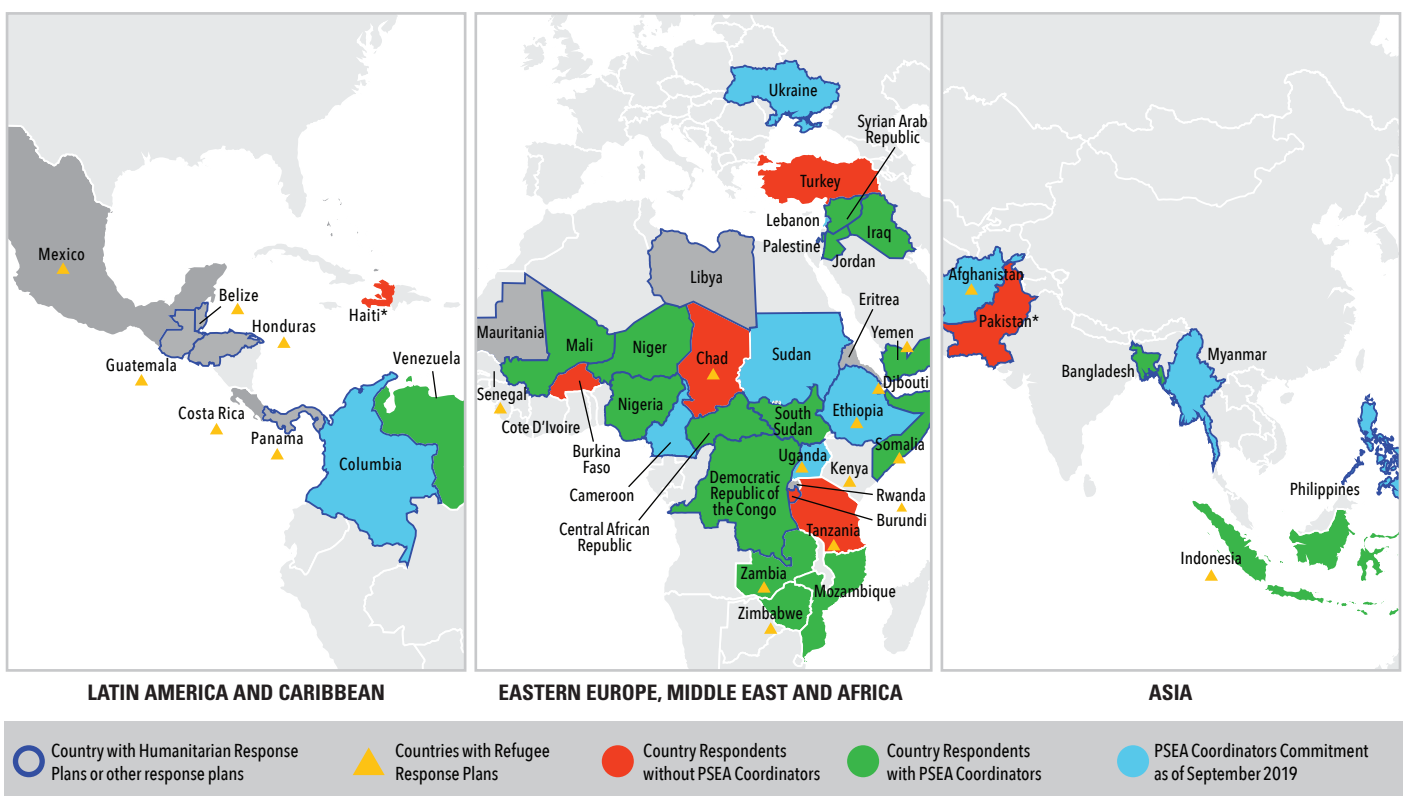
Under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, OCHA created a \$1 million fund that was launched in November 2018 to provide investigation capacity to IASC partners to strengthen accountability in response to allegations of misconduct. The CHS Alliance provides training on SEA investigations. The Inter-Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, led by SCHR, facilitates the systematic sharing of non-criminal sexual misconduct between humanitarian and development agencies. The Scheme is expected to serve as an important and complementary approach to the UN Clear Check database, which includes UN Secretariat entities and more than 25 UN agencies, funds and programmes and shares information on former staff and affiliated personnel who were either dismissed for substantiated SEA allegations or who resigned while under investigation. These global-level initiatives by IASC members have contributed to the IASC's commitment to strengthen accountability measures for perpetrators of SEA.

¹⁶ The 35 priority countries reflect those with humanitarian and or refugee response needs as of September 2019. They include: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

IASC Mapping of PSEA at Country-Level as of January 2019



IASC Mapping of PSEA at Country-Level: Additional PSEA Coordinator Commitments as of September 2019



*Pending confirmation of a PSEA Coordinator commitment

CASE STUDY: MOZAMBIQUE

Tropical Cyclone Idai made landfall as a category four cyclone across the provinces of Sofala, Manica and Zambezia of Mozambique on 14 March. The IASC activated a Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up and 10 IASC humanitarian clusters eight days after the cyclone hit. The Humanitarian Country Team established a PSEA Network in early April at national level and in Beira, the most affected area. UNICEF and COSACA¹⁷ stepped up to co-chair the network in both locations. The Humanitarian Coordinator circulated the PSEA Network Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures for inter-agency complaint handling to all members of the Humanitarian Country Team at the outset of the response, sending a clear message that PSEA is a priority.

The PSEA Network quickly rolled out a PSEA Action Plan, which contained clear indicators for tracking progress and which was endorsed by the HCT. The co-chairs of the Network sent regular updates to the Humanitarian Coordinator on progress and areas where support was needed. Communication materials with information on how to report SEA were posted at accommodation centers and resettlement sites, and an SMS on the prohibition of SEA and the right to receive humanitarian aid for free reached two million affected people. The PSEA Network worked with the GBV and Child Protection sub-clusters to integrate the referral pathways for assistance for any victims that came forward to report. A direct linkage with the Prosecutors Office was also set up to discuss alleged cases related to the Government. As a result of the strong collaboration between the PSEA Network and the two clusters, PSEA, GBV and Child Protection are clearly featured in the Mozambique Humanitarian Response Plan.

C. PSEA from the outset of a humanitarian response

Since the adoption of the IASC Acceleration Plan and strengthened engagement of HCs/HCTs on PSEA throughout the past year, there are early indications that PSEA is being more effectively integrated from the outset of the humanitarian response. The response to Tropical Cycle Idai in Mozambique

¹⁷ COSACA consists of the international aid organizations CARE International, Oxfam, and Save the Children. CARE International is the co-chair at national level in Maputo and in Beira it was initially Oxfam but was replaced by CARE International.

provides an illustration of how the IASC Acceleration Plan is being rolled out.

Putting in place a PSEA system from the outset sets a clear tone from the top that SEA will not be tolerated within a humanitarian response, and that the necessary mechanisms are in place to ensure that cases are reported and responded to effectively, should they occur. Over time, a systematic approach to PSEA at the outset of a humanitarian response should set a consistent tone for all humanitarian workers and contribute to a shift in the organizational cultures of humanitarian agencies.

D. Establishment of PSEA as integral to the Humanitarian Programme Cycle

The integration of PSEA in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle is critical for embedding the issue within the cluster system and raising the resources needed to sustainably deliver on PSEA as part of all humanitarian responses.¹⁸ For the first time, the 2019 Global Humanitarian Overview included a section on PSEA, signalling the level of prioritization and systematic integration that the IASC has now placed on the issue. A priority going forward will be the integration of PSEA within all Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Response Plans. To support this approach, as part of the development of the IASC Acceleration Plan, a PSEA Country-Level Framework was developed to provide a set of global indicators that can be adapted at country-level and tracked at global level to monitor progress

SECTION 3: REFLECTIONS ON THE WAY FORWARD

UNICEF Executive Director Fore as IASC Champion led the IASC to strengthen PSEA structures and systems in every humanitarian response, where the risk of SEA is greatest for crisis-affected populations. The IASC Acceleration Plan provides a framework for the humanitarian community and the UN system to collectively deliver on their PSEA commitments at country-level. Many of the critical advancements on PSEA – such as the real-time reporting of UN

¹⁸ <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO2019.pdf>

allegations to the Secretary-General, the promotion of a victim-centered approach under the UN Victims' Rights Advocate, and the ability of Member States to hold perpetrators accountable – rely upon community-level structures that enable affected populations, including women and children, to safely report SEA and receive assistance. Under the IASC Championship, a coherent framework for country-level PSEA has been adopted, baseline data for measuring progress has been established, and key gaps at country-level are being addressed.

Further action is needed to ensure that Humanitarian Country Teams and Humanitarian Coordinators have the support they need to fully implement the IASC Acceleration Plan. IASC members must continue to invest in country-level support, and actively monitor gaps in order to ensure that the necessary resources and technical support for PSEA effectively reach all areas where humanitarian assistance reaches. It will only be through investing in such systems that IASC and UN commitments will be realized and sustained, and that progress can be measured over time.¹⁹

This work must be done in partnership. The work achieved in 2018 and 2019 was carried out with the partnership, leadership, and support of the IASC. Active engagement from the UN Victim's Rights Advocate and the UN Office of the Special Coordinator brought the experience of the UN system-wide approach together with the work of the IASC, promoting a coherent approach to field-level coordination. Efforts by Member States and donors, including the leadership of the UK Safeguarding Conference in October 2018, also informed the approach to the IASC Championship. The development of the OECD DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance is a positive indication of a streamlined approach to PSEA,²⁰ as are the efforts by Resident Coordinators to adopt a similar approach on PSEA in

non-humanitarian settings. A coherent, streamlined approach is necessary for our collective efforts to generate results.

Finally, the work to deliver on PSEA requires a shift in the organizational cultures in which we work. The underlying gender inequalities and power imbalances that create the risk for sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, deserve focused attention. These efforts must be linked to reducing the shame and stigma that are projected onto survivors, and oftentimes their families and communities, when they do speak out and report abuse. High Commissioner for Refugees Grandi will focus on this during his IASC Championship mandate, which will provide an important continuation for the work achieved to date.

A RESULTS-BASED APPROACH TO PSEA

The IASC Acceleration Plan reflects a shift towards a results-based approach to PSEA. It builds upon the good practices that some PSEA Networks have put in place, such as the South Sudan PSEA Strategy and Results Framework (2018 – 2020), which outlines outputs and indicators to track inter-agency progress. In South Sudan, the Humanitarian Response Plan includes PSEA, and the PSEA Network has a four-year costed strategy with key indicators to track progress.²¹

To support the acceleration of results in the IASC Plan, UNICEF, OCHA and IASC members developed an **IASC PSEA Country-Level Framework** template with sample indicators that could be incorporated at country-level. The Framework employs a results-based approach to PSEA by outlining the priority outcomes, together with sample outputs and indicators that can be contextualized and adapted for use within different country contexts. This approach is based on the premise that benchmarking and tracking progress against priority outcomes will be essential to inform IASC members where further investment and attention are needed and to measure the IASC's effectiveness on PSEA over time. It will also facilitate the integration of PSEA into the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.

19 While this work to deliver on the IASC Acceleration Plan has been largely integrated within the IASC Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion, there remains a policy gap at global level with regard to aligning the timeframe for initiation of SEA investigations, in order for this information to be communicated to HCs/HCTs as well as affected communities, so that they know what to expect. The UN's decision to shorten and standardize the timeframe for the initiation of sexual harassment investigations provides an example.

20 DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and Response, 17 July 2019.

21 See South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2019: <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-2019-humanitarian-response-plan>

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