

Facilitated Dialogue on Values, Attitude and Culture,

Inter-agency Standing Committee Principals

18 January 2021

15:30-17:30 CET / 9:30-11:30 EST



1. Twenty-four participants, representing all members of the IASC participated in the (virtual) dialogue, facilitated by Ms. Caroline Harper-Jantuah (UNHCR Senior Advisor on Diversity and Inclusion) and Mr. Dean Peacock (an independent expert on the subject matter). In order to create a safe space for dialogue, it was agreed that, while a high-level note would be produced, contributions would not be attributed to individual participants (with exception of the opening and closing remarks).
2. **Opening the session**, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, outgoing IASC Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, welcomed an open and honest dialogue, encouraging participants to step out of their comfort zones as they unpacked issues which are often difficult to discuss. He emphasized the importance of how they, as leaders, react, behave and respond when faced with issues of sexual misconduct, and hoped that by listening and sharing, this session would lead to better action.
3. In the **visualisation activity** that followed, participants were challenged to tap into and become aware of their own unconscious biases. Through an experiential exercise, it became evident that everyone has biases, whether based on gender, racial or other characteristics. Participants then reflected on how their own awareness of these biases may affect their

actions or judgements. Participants expressed the view that a combination of personal experiences and the current context, in addition to their background and upbringing, influenced what they visualized. Some noted that it was not only what they saw, but how it made them feel, which led to a discussion on power, gender and racial dynamics; who benefits from those differences and who is made invisible. The visualization exercise also led to reflections on the importance of engaging and taking action when witnessing injustice.

4. Thereafter, participants watched the video “**Voices,**” which was developed as part of the High Commissioner’s Championship Communications Package, showing short anonymized testimonies from victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. In small group discussions, participants explored how the video made them feel, and what survivors would expect of them as leaders in their organizations. Several participants reflected on how, unfortunately, these testimonies did not come as a surprise. There was considerable reflection on their leadership roles within their organizations and how they need to step up, show leadership by their actions, model expected behaviour, and be accountable themselves. The challenges of how formal systems handle SEA allegations was noted, as well as the importance of establishing transparent accountable systems. The discussion emphasized the importance of a victim/survivor centred approach, of the need to create safe spaces and to stop pressuring survivors to report, as survivors may have different priorities than those of the leaders/organizations.
5. The final interactive exercise, **Courage by degrees,** used statements to explore what levels of courage are required to act against situations of discrimination, micro-aggressions or misconduct, among others. The discussion led to reflections on how situations and systems have changed significantly over the past four years, and how certain things that were tolerated before are no longer acceptable. As leaders, having the appropriate systems in place has made it easier to take difficult decisions. Participants also observed how their own personal experiences as leaders changed their perspectives. The exercise brought home how differences in power influence the amount of courage required to act, and how actions which might not be difficult for them would take a lot more courage from more junior colleagues. As the discussion continued, it became clear that some actions initially thought not to take much courage were in fact more difficult when actually confronted with the situation; and while norms, systems and processes continue to evolve, there was still more to be done to ensure safe and respectful working environments for all employees regardless of their gender, race, age, and grade. The need for support in managing the dilemmas illustrated in this exercise was discussed, and how training and mentorship for leaders in their own organizations dealing with these issues could be helpful.
6. As the session came to an end, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock thanked High Commissioner Grandi for a terrific session and for his Championship, and both he and High Commissioner Grandi warmly welcomed the new Champion, UNFPA’s Executive Director, Natalia Kanem. Executive Director Kanem acknowledged the safe space that had been created during the meaningful discussion and expressed that she was honoured to take up the Championship, sharing a quick overview of her priorities, which will be followed by more detailed communication.

7. In his **closing remarks**, High Commissioner Grandi highlighted four broad themes that were brought out during the session (i) the notion of safe spaces and the importance of not burdening the victim with reporting and recognizing the courage it takes to speak up (ii) the need to be activist leaders, to lead by example, to communicate, embody and enforce ethical standards and to choose the side of the victim, (iii) the importance of having strong and accountable processes and procedures which support leaders in undertaking difficult decisions and actions, and (iv) the need for leadership to reflect on the difference between power and authority, recognizing that sexual misconduct is rooted in power and gender differentials, and that many of these issues centre on the bad use of power and the insufficient use of authority. High Commissioner Grandi noted that a facilitator's guide would be produced so that participants could have similar discussions within their own organizations. He welcomed the reflective discussion and hoped that more such sessions could be held in the future, perhaps on the topic of racism. Finally, in handing over the Championship, High Commissioner Grandi regretted that it had not been possible, due to COVID-19, to undertake an advocacy mission together with Executive Director Kanem and hoped that such a mission could take place, also together with former Champion UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore, in 2021.