

KEY MESSAGES AND CONCEPTS

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- Sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment inflict **intolerable harm on the victims¹, their families, and their communities**; it affects many aspects of their lives, their interactions with others, and their safety and well-being.
- When humanitarian workers abuse the very people they are meant to be helping, this is **one of the gravest violations of the trust placed in us**. It is similarly unacceptable when colleagues or partners are targeted.
- The damage done can also have a major **negative impact on our credibility** and funding which, in turn hampers our ability to deliver and support people, thus causing further harm.
- It is positive, however, that incidents are coming to light. More and more, **victims have started to speak up**. One can never underestimate the amount of courage this takes and we must find every way possible to lighten this burden. **Victims** must be at the center of everything we do.
- It is true that the vast majority of us are committed professionals. But do these abuses happen and we need to work together to understand why and how to prevent them. **One case is one too many**.
- We have brought our efforts to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment together as they are both rooted in **power differentials and gender inequalities**, and the needs of the victims are similar.
- We need to foster **workplaces of inclusion, respect and accountability**, where sexual misconduct is not tolerated.
- We have made a lot of progress internally and with our partners in addressing this issue, but we need to recognize the complexities of this task and that we still have **a long way to go on this collective journey**.

KEY CONCEPTS

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE²

- SEA constitutes acts of **gross misconduct** and are **grounds for termination of employment**.
- **Sexual activity with children** (under 18 years) **is prohibited**.
- **Any sexual relationship** with beneficiaries **that involves improper use of position is prohibited**.
- Humanitarian workers are obligated to report any concerns regarding SEA by fellow colleagues through the appropriate channels.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- SH constitutes an act of **misconduct** and those who are alleged to have committed SH will be subject to **possible disciplinary or other administrative action**.
- SH may occur **inside or outside the workplace and work hours**, and may be perpetrated by or target **any colleague, of any contractual status and of any gender**.
- The victim **may choose to resolve the matter informally and on a voluntary basis** but there is **no requirement** for such action to be taken.
- **The victim may choose to make a formal report**, but they have **no obligation** to report.
- The victim has **the right to support and assistance** that is provided in a timely, sensitive, confidential and impartial manner.
- Staff should **treat all colleagues with courtesy and respect**, be **aware of how their own behaviour may be perceived**, and **take action where appropriate**.

¹ We use the term victim in accordance with terminology used across the United Nations (including by the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate), while acknowledging fully that victims of sexual misconduct are also survivors, and that for many the term survivor has a more empowering connotation.

² [Inter-Agency Standing Committee \(IASC\) Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#), (IASC secretariat (Revision of 12.09.2019))