**Compilation of Best Practices to Address Racism and Racial Discrimination
in IASC Member Organizations**

January 2021

In July 2019, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) decided to examine and address racism and racial discrimination within its member organizations and in the humanitarian sector as part of efforts to increase diversity at all organizational levels and to foster more inclusive and diverse ways of working.

The IASC agreed to ensure that the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination are fully realized within its own organizations and specifically committed to taking further action to address racism and racial discrimination, to mitigate unconscious biases towards vulnerable populations and/or local partners, and to capture best practices and lessons learned as a means to promote learning and information-sharing.

Towards that end, the IASC agreed to distribute a survey on racism and racial discrimination to its member organizations in September and October 2020 (see Annex 1). The survey results presented in this report will complement efforts by IASC members to independently review protocols, policies and practices as a means to prevent and eliminate racism and racial discrimination within their organizations. This compilation of best practices and lessons learned will also inform the development of an action plan on racism and racial discrimination as well as awareness-raising and learning initiatives.

As agreed by the IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group on 25 September 2020, IASC Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion is taking on the time-critical work on racism and racial discrimination and capitalize on the good work and progress in the area of PSEA/SHA to inform the development of an IASC action plan to address racism and racial discrimination.

This report is organized in three sections and follows the structure of the IASC survey:

- Section 1: Efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination internally
- Section 2: Efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination towards affected people
- Section 3: Efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination in partnerships.

Within each section, best practices and lessons learned are compiled under three key areas:

- Organizational dialogue and strategy
- Policies and guidance
- Managing complaints, investigations and consequences.

Section 1: Efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination internally

ORGANIZATIONAL DIALOGUE AND STRATEGY

As part of ongoing processes and in response to global movements against racism and racial discrimination following the death of George Floyd in the United States, IASC member organizations established mechanisms for internal dialogue and communications to obtain staff perspectives and experiences, to collect data to better understand patterns of racism, and to inform policy and strategy development for broader systemic/organizational change.

Messaging and communication from senior management is key in demonstrating zero tolerance and a commitment to acknowledging and addressing racism and racial discrimination. In addition, it helps to reinforce the role of managers to foster trustful, safe, open, inclusive, respectful and accountable work environments, both virtual and physical. Effective two-way communication between staff and management creates a safe space for dialogue and helps to normalize discussions on race.

Efforts to address racism and racial discrimination internally include:

- **Internal task teams/working groups and inquiry processes engaging staff on diversity and** on anti-racism and discrimination/inclusion, comprising staff from all organizational levels and including younger staff, the staff association, staff from the LGBTQI community and staff with disabilities.
- **Global management team discussions** on data related to racism and discrimination, mechanisms to report misconduct, conscious and unconscious bias, and accountability and role-modelling. In addition, dialogue facilitated by senior managers, such as senior inclusion and diversity advisers, on the role of management in addressing racism and discrimination and discussions focusing on progress against the Principal's commitments and on feedback from team engagements.
- **Regional focus group discussions** through the establishment of a staff engagement group on racism and discrimination, comprising 300 staff members who volunteered through an open-call to all staff.
- **Advisory and strategic support**, including a Global Advisory Group on Inclusion and Diversity, with an initial focus on race, and a People Management Strategy Committee.
- **Staff-led social movements** that have submitted to senior management recommendations, actions and a road map for achieving racial equality and equity.
- **Town hall meetings** with messages from the Principals, which have been recorded and made available on internal platforms such as intranets.
- **Book clubs, discussion groups, expert lectures, webinars, training and awareness-raising sessions** on racism and racial discrimination, bias, leadership and being an ally.
- **An ombuds network** to engage with groups and individual staff members.
- As part of future activities, a **global-level speaker series** on racism is planned and lectures by experts and authors are being organized.

In addition, IASC member organizations have disseminated products to address racism and racial discrimination internally, including:

- **Formal statements and messages, including blogs and opinion pieces,** by Principals to all staff explicitly acknowledging patterns of racism and racial discrimination in their organizations and in society at large and highlighting the need to take action.
- **Internal action plans and strategies**, including at the country level, to address racism and ethnicity-based discrimination and to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion within the organizations and across non-governmental organization (NGO) coalitions.
- **An independent review** of race equality and equity.
- **Guidance and other communications** to facilitate discussions on workplace racism and discrimination.
- **Staff testimonials** of racism and ethnicity-based discrimination in the workplace, which were submitted through an open call and distributed to all staff.
- **Anonymous canvassing** via an electronic platform through which staff can anonymously pose questions to the IASC Principals and Principals can respond.
- **Staff surveys** on personal experiences and perceptions of bias, racism and discrimination, as well as willingness to report such incidents. The results provided a baseline on staff perceptions of these issues.
- **A podcast** developed by a staff association on racism and ethnicity-based discrimination, with guest participation by staff from different backgrounds.
- **E-forums**, such as dedicated Yammer groups and a webpage on organizational culture, where staff can share their views.
- **E-learning** co-developed by two IASC member organizations on racism.

POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

IASC member organizations have implemented measures to address racism and racial discrimination internally, both within existing policy frameworks and through new mechanisms, including:

- **Codes of conduct and policies** that explicitly prohibit racism and racial discrimination, **harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority,** and are mandatory for all staff, including all persons employed by or working for the IASC member organizations worldwide, whether internationally or locally recruited, regardless of the type or duration of the contract, including interns, secondees, consultants and individuals holding hourly contracts.
- **Reviews of human resources policy frameworks** to ensure internal alignment across the IASC organization as well as alignment with domestic labour laws in countries where the organization operates.
- **Training on the Fundamental Principles** of humanitarian action as part of the onboarding process.
- **A global framework on diversity and inclusion,** which aims to create a more inclusive work environment and to reduce barriers associated with diversity elements including race and ethnicity.
- **General Principles of the IASC Procedure on Disability-Inclusive Human Resource Management**, which state that the organization "guarantees a workplace where self-identification is safe and does not compromise anyone's job security, workplace treatment

and career progression, and where discrimination of employees on grounds of their disability and/or other identity factors (e.g. gender, age, sexual minority, ethnicity) will not be tolerated."

- **Staff regulations and zero-tolerance policies**, including statutory commitments and regulations stating that staff are selected without distinction as to race and job advertisements stating that an organization "has a zero-tolerance policy on conduct that is incompatible with the aims and objectives of the organization, including sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination."

IASC member organizations have also taken steps to prioritize diversity and inclusion in recruitment and projects as well as in the disaggregation of human resources data, including:

- **Focusing on gender parity, geographical diversity and north/south staffing balance** in recruitment, for example taking into consideration 'industrial' countries and 'programme' countries and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) vs. non-OECD-DAC countries.
- **Reviewing recruitment practices** in terms of bias in screening and assessment, including e**stablishing a team to review all human resources policies** in terms of diversity and inclusion.
- **Analysing staffing diversity by nationality and making this data available on internal web portals.**
- **Initiating diversity projects**, such a fellowship programme to promote racial and ethnic diversity among emerging NGO leaders and an assessment of the diversity of NGO board members.
- **Disaggregating data** to inform discussions on increasing the representation of ethnic and racial minorities among staff.
- **Surveying country office practices** to explore whether diversity efforts should consider ethnic diversity within national staff as well as age, disabilities and ethnicity.
- **Appointing senior advisers** on staff diversity.
- **Reviewing the state of diversity,** incorporating an examination of organizational policies and practices, including the staff handbook, to be followed by a strategy and workplan.

MANAGING COMPLAINTS, INVESTIGATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

IASC member organizations use existing frameworks to address complaints of racism and racial discrimination, to investigate allegations and to take follow-up action, including:

- **Data collection by the audit office of the respective IASC organization** in connection with reports of possible misconduct, including on grounds of race. Information on the sex and age of alleged victims, where possible, and additional relevant data are reported, and allegations of racism and racial discrimination that amount to misconduct are investigated.
- **Interim measures to protect parties while allegations are under investigation**, such as teleworking, a change in reporting lines, temporary assignment to a different team or administrative leave.
- **Whistle-blower protection and protection against retaliation** for staff who report misconduct and cooperate with investigations. Where a case of retaliation is established,

the Principal may take appropriate measures to protect the complainant and prevent retaliatory action.

- **Disciplinary measures, managerial action or administrative action upon conclusion of an investigation**, depending on the specific nature and gravity of the situation.
- **Follow-up by the Investigation Unit of the respective IASC organization** in response to allegations of discriminatory or racist behaviour.
- **Sanctioning of staff members by management** when allegations of discriminatory or racist behaviour are substantiated. Sanctions depend on the gravity of the situation and may result in the termination of a staff member's contract or another disciplinary measure.

IASC member organizations have some measures in place to record complaints of racism and racial discrimination. For example, one organization releases an annual report on decisions related to disciplinary matters, which includes minimal data on those involved to ensure confidentiality. However, it has been noted that data relating to racism and racial discrimination are under-reported as well as under-recorded. This is mainly because allegations of racial discrimination are mixed with other workplace team issues and not always labelled as 'racism'. Ethics and Ombudsman offices are looking into how to improve recording of racism-related issues.

Recently, the investigative function of one IASC organization has started disaggregating information on all cases (including allegations of racial discrimination) by the sex of the complainant and alleged perpetrator. The data are being analysed to determine how investigative practices for allegations of racial discrimination can be adapted based on the results of the exercise. Individual racial/ethnic categories are not systematically logged, as different national/cultural contexts impede one-to-one statistical analysis of the data or the standardization of categories in the case management system.

Section 2: Efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination towards affected people

ORGANIZATIONAL DIALOGUE AND STRATEGY

IASC member organizations have extensive processes to support engagement with affected populations. Messages of inclusion, solidarity and non-discrimination are often developed by or in cooperation with affected people and the host communities.

Efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination towards affected people include:

- **Internal discussions** on racism and racial discrimination towards persons affected by humanitarian situations, led by offices with responsibilities for emergency operations.
- **Roundtables, participatory assessments and regular consultations with affected people.**
- **Local radio programmes, websites and social media,** including WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, to share messages and multimedia content in different languages during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Peaceful coexistence projects and inter-community dialogues** to promote cohabitation and prevent and address instances of discrimination, stigmatization and xenophobia.

- **A dedicated task force on xenophobia** which promotes this area of work, supports country and regional offices and coordinates headquarters activities.
- **A global anti-xenophobia communications campaign** to reverse negative stereotypes directed towards affected people, such as migrants, and to tackle misinformation.
- **Returnee-led peer-to-peer awareness-raising activities** to address xenophobia.

In addition, IASC member organizations have disseminated products to address racism and racial discrimination towards affected people, including:

- **A Resource Bank** with essential tools and practical guidance on the impacts of COVID-19 on the inclusion of affected people. Thematic areas include addressing stigmatization and discrimination, ensuring psychosocial and mental health, and providing access to social services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **A Programme Document that includes a section on gender, equity and sustainability considerations** for use during the programme-design process. In many countries, race is a relevant equity consideration.
- **Identity markers,** overlaid by ethnicity, race, migrant status, minority language, religious or class/caste group, as a means to identify the critical intersecting factors that define each person's experience of a crisis and the response, as opposed to responding to each factor separately.
- **Social power analysis**, where race and ethnicity is part of a broader intersectional approach.
- **Using disaggregation categories to measure equitable progress** during programme implementation is under discussion; categories could include sex, disability, race and displacement status (returnee/migrant/refugee/internally displaced person/non-displaced).

POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

IASC member organizations have implemented measures to address racism and racial discrimination towards affected people, both within existing policy frameworks and through new mechanisms, including:

- **An Age, Gender, and Diversity Policy** that is mandatory for operations, complemented by an accountability report published annually to analyse implementation of the policy.
- **Formal guidance for staff on diversity and inclusion of affected people**, including a strategic approach to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, a guide on how to address and respond to situations of racism and xenophobia, and guidance to encourage staff to deepen their diversity inclusion knowledge, including the importance of factors that drive marginalization or vulnerability.
- **Organizational feedback via the IASC member organizations portal**, including descriptions of community engagement and feedback mechanisms.
- **Audit of gender diversity and other measures related to the types of images used for fundraising** and supporter engagement to address both concerns about racist depictions, particularly around 'white saviour' images, and other clickbait images that have a racial dimension (e.g., images that portray starving/bloated belly/flies-in-the-eye/crying/suffering images of children) to get people to donate.

MANAGING COMPLAINTS, INVESTIGATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

The Accountability to Affected Persons framework of the IASC member organizations ensures that community engagement and feedback mechanisms are inclusive and accessible to all persons of concern. Emphasis is placed on using the preferred and trusted communication channels of the affected community and allowing the affected community to complain and raise sensitive issues, such as racial bias in humanitarian work, in a safe and confidential manner.

Many field operations report having at least one feedback mechanism for persons of concern, with the vast majority having more than one channel. Means for affected communities to raise issues related to racism and racial discrimination and for organizations to investigate allegations and take follow-up action include:

- **Web-based confidential reporting channels** whereby beneficiaries, staff and implementing partners can file complaints of misconduct. For example, one organization provides a platform that is available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish and allows confidential reporting of misconduct of all forms in two clicks. It also includes information on types of misconduct and other awareness-raising material.
- **Interim measures to protect parties while allegations of misconduct are under investigation**, for example teleworking, a change in reporting lines, temporary assignment to a different team or administrative leave.
- **Follow-up by the Investigation Unit of the IASC organization** whenever allegations of discriminatory or racist behaviour are reported.
- **Sanctioning of staff members by management** if allegations of discriminatory or racist behaviour are substantiated. Sanctions depend on the gravity of the situation and may result in the termination of a staff member's contract or another disciplinary measure.

Section 3: Efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination in partnerships

ORGANIZATIONAL DIALOGUE AND STRATEGY

Partnership is essential to humanitarian response. IASC member organizations work with a range of partners, including faith-based groups, refugee-led organizations, local and regional entities that work with/include people from disadvantaged racial/ethnic groups, representatives of indigenous and tribal peoples, small-scale farmers, pastoralists, artisanal fishers and cooperatives.

Ongoing programmes and networks in the area of operation, knowledge of the local context and trust from local communities are key components of effective partnership. Furthermore, the participation of local communities should be integral to programme design and implementation and based on appropriate consultation and feedback mechanisms.

IASC member organizations have policy frameworks in place to prevent racism and racial discrimination and to strengthen diversity and inclusion. However, more needs to be done to support the explicit prohibition of racism and racial discrimination in partnerships and harmonize policy across the IASC member organizations.

Efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination in partnerships include:

- **Strategies for partnership with civil society organizations** that include explicit references to adherence to humanitarian principles, guiding principles that prioritize equity and equality among all partners, as well as principles aimed at eliminating racism and racial discrimination.
- **Partnerships with minority non-governmental organization coalitions**.
- An IASC organization pursues diversity and inclusion through discussions within its NGO membership, member engagement, and regional development as a way to further the localization agenda.
- **Working with governments on national action plans, legislative reform and other advisory services on racial discrimination** in sectors such as education, health and access to justice, pursuant to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference against Racism (2001) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965).
- **Implementing the framework on human rights issues that affect people of African descent**, as described in the Programme of Activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) adopted by General Assembly resolution 69/16. Under the Decade, an IASC organization has organized a fellowship programme that brings young people working in their communities on issues affecting people of African descent to Geneva for an immersive exposure to the work of human rights entities and other mechanisms.
- **Online, in-person and hybrid training for partners** on humanitarian principles, protection principles and human-rights-based approaches. For example, Humanitarian Professional Certifications are offered to partners including the Certification in Applying Humanitarian Principles in Practice.
- **Reviews of IASC member organization policies on racism and racial discrimination**, including policies applicable to implementing partners.

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

IASC member organizations have implemented measures to eliminate racism and racial discrimination in partnerships, both within existing policy frameworks and through new mechanisms, including:

- **Principles of Partnership**, comprising equality, transparency, results-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity, which focus on the role of local and national humanitarian response capacity, guide IASC engagement with all actors on an equal, constructive and transparent basis, and are a key reference for partnership inception, development, implementation and review.
- **UN Partner Portal** (www.unpartnerportal.org), which was designed to improve the quality of partnership between the United Nations and civil society. As of September 2020, more than 13,000 civil society organizations are registered on the portal, of which more than 70 per cent are local and national NGOs. All organizations are requested to complete a Partner Declaration. The declaration includes the express commitment to "not

discriminate against any person or group on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, disability, birth, age or other status." An analysis of partners selected through the portal revealed that the platform has democratized and increased the transparency of partner selection and identified candidates for first-ever partnership agreements.

MANAGING COMPLAINTS, INVESTIGATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

There are multiple platforms for interaction between United Nations agencies and their partners, including field visits, spot checks, training, workshops and donor visits. However, there is currently no explicit guidance on using these platforms for regular two-way assessments of any potential racial bias in partnership arrangements.

IASC member organizations use the following mechanisms to address racism and racial discrimination in partnerships:

- **A Partnership Review Committee** to review new or existing partnership agreements. While consideration of racial bias is not explicitly stipulated in its terms of reference, any evidence/allegation/complaint of discriminatory behaviour would inevitably raise concern.
- **Standard templates** for memoranda of understanding as well as standard partnership agreement templates specifically incorporating the Principles of Partnership.
- **Sharing contact information of internal investigation offices** with partners and beneficiaries to facilitate reporting of racism and racial discrimination.

Annex:
SURVEY - Capturing IASC Members' Best Practices to Prevent and Eliminate Racism and Racial Discrimination

Introduction

Many of the IASC members are independently reviewing protocols, policies and practices to prevent and eliminate racism and racial discrimination within their organizations. In the spirit of capturing best practices, the IASC's Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG) invites IASC members to share concrete examples of what they are doing to address the issue of racism and racial discrimination internally, towards affected people and towards local partners.

Organisation Name:

Section 1: Efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination internally

1.1 ORGANISATIONAL DIALOGUE AND STRATEGY

- How has the senior leadership of your organization explicitly acknowledged patterns of racism and racial discrimination in your organization and championed institutional strategies to address them?
- How has your organization coordinated and managed internal discussions on the topic of racism and racial discrimination?
- What kinds of strategy has been put in place to manage these discussions, i.e. new sections or units, task team, feedback mechanisms, etc.?
- How have staff of diverse backgrounds, such as people of African descent, and other racial and ethnic minorities been invited to create and contribute to organizational culture and norms?
- Have your organization's statements on race and racism been informed by dialogue with staff, including from racial and ethnic minorities?

> Best Practice Example(s) – max. 300 words:

1.2 POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

- Does your organization have a mechanism to review policies and assess whether they conform to anti-racial discrimination policies?
- In which policies does your organization refer explicitly to racism and racial discrimination within the workplace, e.g. code of conduct?
- Is a zero-tolerance policy against racism attached to, or specifically referred to, in job advertisements?
- How does your organization integrate the concept of preventing and eliminating racism and racial discrimination in human resource protocols related to recruitment, selection and placement? If so, how is it consistently applied in practice?

- Are there clear policies to promote the recruitment and retention of staff of diverse backgrounds, such as people of African descent, and other racial and ethnic minorities?
- What research is undertaken to determine whether or not staff of racial and ethnic minorities less represented at various departmental and positional levels due to recruitment, selection and placement processes?
  Describe the framework and scope of your organization's policies, accountability mechanisms or communication strategies and resources that explicitly address anti-racial discrimination within the workforce?
- What kind of awareness raising activities has your organization undertaken with staff, e.g. on humanitarian principles, racism and racial discrimination?

1.2 Best Practice Example(s) – max. 300 words:

1.3 MANAGING COMPLAINTS, INVESTIGATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

- Has your organization strengthened the collection of data relating to racism and racial discrimination, by disaggregating them by race, ethnicity, sex, age and disability, and what impact has this had?
- How does your organization investigate complaints relating to racism and racial discrimination and ensure that victims are protected during the process?
- What processes are in place to address circumstances where staff members face complaints or are found to commit racist or racially discriminatory acts?

Best Practice Example(s) – max. 300 words:

Section 2: Efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination towards affected people

2.1 ORGANISATIONAL DIALOGUE AND STRATEGY

- How has your organization managed internal discussions on the topic of racism and racial discrimination towards affected people?
- Have mechanisms been put in place to prevent the incidence or the risk of racism or racial discrimination targeting affected people?
- Has your organization conducted a detailed analysis of the various racial and ethnic population composition in your service area? How was the data collected and how did it change programme services?
- What kinds of activities has your organization undertaken to raise awareness among affected people that racism and racial discrimination towards people of diverse backgrounds, such as people of African descent, and other racial and ethnic minorities, is not tolerated by your organisation?
- How has your organization adapted its culture, programmes and services to reflect the culture of a specific community in which you operate?

- How has your organization addressed structural barriers that might prevent some groups of affected people from accessing your services (consider funding, required documentation, staff demographics)?
- In practice, how does your organization uphold the principle of impartiality in supporting affected people to access services based on need alone, not on race or other considerations?
- How does your organization's communication strategy prioritize outreach and communication that specifically address anti-racial discrimination messages and outreach to communities of racial and ethnic minorities?

Best Practice Example(s) – max. 300 words:

2.2 POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

- In which policies and guidance materials does your organization refer explicitly to racism and racial discrimination vis-à-vis affected people, e.g. code of conduct?
- How does your organization analyse and address whether staff's racial demographics affect the organization's ability to adequately understand and fulfil client services for racial and ethnic minorities?

Best Practice Example(s) – max. 300 words:

2.3 MANAGING COMPLAINTS, INVESTIGATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

- Does your organization implement community engagement and feedback mechanisms that would enable members of the affected community to raise issues related to racial bias in your work?
- How does your organization investigate complaints relating to racism and racial discrimination and ensure that parties are protected during the process?
- What processes are in place to manage circumstances where staff members face complaints or are found to commit racist or racially discriminatory acts vis-à-vis affected people?

Best Practice Example(s) – max. 300 words:

Section 3: Efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination in partnerships

3.1 ORGANIZATIONAL DIALOGE AND STRATEGY

- Does your organisation proactively seek partnerships with organisations representing diverse racial, and ethnic groups in the contexts you work?

does your organisation specifically work with or support partners to address racism and racial discrimination within the operating context?

- How does your organisation proactively promote a culture of principled partnerships[1], including to ensure equality between partners of different racial and ethnic backgrounds?
- How does your organization work with governments, and address racism and racial discrimination at the society level?

Best Practice Example(s) – max. 300 words:

3.2 POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

- What policies or guidelines are in place to ensure calls for new partnerships are open to a diverse range of organizations?
- How does your organisation explicitly integrate the concept of preventing and eliminating racism and racial discrimination in partnership policies?

Best Practice Example(s) – max. 300 words:

3.3 MANAGING COMPLAINTS, INVESTIGATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

- What processes does your organization have in place for the review of new or existing partnership agreements if complaints of racial bias are raised?
- Do your partnership review mechanisms include a regular two-way assessment of any potential racial bias in the partnership arrangements?

Best Practice Example(s) – max. 300 words: