

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE DEPUTIES FORUM
SUMMARY RECORD AND RECOMMENDATIONS

29 January 2021
Virtual Meeting

Session 1: PSEA- Translating IASC Policy Commitments into Transformative Action

1. Introduction

Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator (DERC) a.i, and Chair of the IASC Deputies Forum explained the objectives of the meeting; discuss how to translate policy commitments into transformative action on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH); deliberate on the role and function of the Deputies Forum, and; consider the progress made in IASC efforts against racism and racial discrimination.

The Chair thanked Deputies for their individual and collective contributions and highlighted UNCHR's visible efforts as the IASC Champion on PSEA in 2020 and welcomed UNFPA as the new IASC Champion on PSEA. He noted that, while progress has been made, there is scope for further improvement on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and the need for enhanced accountability to ensure appropriate actions are taken to hold perpetrators to account. He discussed recent good practices and initiatives within the IASC, geared towards a harmonized approach to PSEA across the system, and encouraged members to share good practice.

The closed-door session organized by IASC Peer to Peer project, facilitated by UNHCR's Deputy High Commissioner and attended by UNFPA's Executive Director as the new PSEA Champion provided an opportunity to openly discuss challenges faced by Humanitarian Coordinators in preventing and addressing sexual misconduct and determining practical ways to support humanitarian leadership on the ground. Key points that emerged from the discussion were (i) the important leadership role that HCs play in setting the tone to establish accountability, (ii) the need for more PSEA capacity to provide effective coordination and to support awareness raising and capacity development among all humanitarian personnel, including those who implement on our behalf, (iii) appropriate reporting mechanisms, engaging with communities and ensuring that the community-based complaint mechanisms are well functioning, (iv) more field-based capacity for fact-finding and investigations, including better coordination between different agency investigative bodies, and (v) stronger advocacy with Government and local civil society partners to adhere to the same standards when delivering humanitarian assistance.

2. Identifying synergies between the workstreams on PSEA and SH, and between the IASC and CEB

Ms. Kelly Clements, Deputy High Commissioner, UNHCR, briefed members on bringing together workstreams on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH), finding synergies with the work of the CEB Task Force on various areas including a victim centered approach, background checks/vetting, training, working with partners, investigations and organizational culture change, and proposed ways to advance the common agenda with the members of the Deputies Forum.

- **Bringing together workstreams on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH):** UNHCR stressed the importance of discussing SH and SEA portfolios together, which are currently treated differently and with different mechanisms in the UN system; welcoming that they had been brought together within the IASC. Sexual misconduct often revolves around power imbalances and gender inequalities, which requires us to look at our working environments and how managers and teams treat each other. Workplace harassment issues require attention before they fester and become serious. It was important that staff voices were heard, and staff knew where to go when they faced issues. Without resolving problematic workplace and organization culture issues, it would not be possible to eradicate sexual misconduct. Against this backdrop, UNHCR, as the PSEA Champion in 2020, spent significant time on values, attitudes, and culture with sessions organized for the IASC Principals and CEB Task Force on Sexual Harassment.
- There were potential synergies between the CEB Task Force and the IASC's work on SEA and SH including (i) victim-centred approach, (ii) global reference checks, (iii) investigations, (iv) training, (v) working with partners, and (vi) workplace culture. In terms of ensuring a victim-centred approach, the CEB Task Force on SH is developing a common understanding of what a victim-centred approach truly means, drawing on work done in the context of SEA, including by the Victim's Rights Advocate. UNHCR recently adopted a policy on

a victim-centred approach outlining principles and definitions of key concepts as they relate to SEA and SH. Second, ClearCheck was an important tool to avoid re-recruiting perpetrators in the UN system. The SCHR Sexual Misconduct Disclosure Scheme is broader and efforts are underway on finding ways to promote the Scheme, which would strengthen system-wide efforts. UNHCR invited other UN agencies to join forces to look into how we better engage with the SCHR Sexual Misconduct Disclosure Scheme.

- On training, during UNHCR's Championship a training package for partners, Saying No to Sexual Misconduct, was completed and is now widely available. The CEB Task Force was exploring whether this package could be adapted for the UN system while also including a stronger focus on sexual harassment in training packages. Given that the IASC is much more active engaging with partners outside of the UN system, the IASC work can inform the work in the CEB Task Force. On investigations, there was a joint conference between the IASC and CEB Task Force with investigators. A manual on sexual harassment investigations and an e-learning course for partners on investigations are also being finalized to complete the initiatives of the High Commissioner's Championship.

3. New PSEA Championship Priorities

Mr. Ib Petersen Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA presented UNFPA's agenda and priorities for 2021 as the incoming PSEA Champion for 2021. UNFPA will focus on three priorities, namely (i) bolstering PSEA country mechanisms, (ii) improving victim access to quality information and assistance and (iii) strengthening coordination and cooperation. These were all in line with the IASC's PSEA strategy noting the importance of an integrated and coherent approach with the CEB Task Force.

To achieve these priorities, UNFPA will undertake the following;

- Support the IASC in undertaking an external review of the IASC's approach to PSEA/SH to assess the impact and effectiveness of measures implemented over the years, since the last system-wide review in 2010.
- Establishment of an inter-agency PSEA expert roster which would address a critical need for investment in sustainable inter-agency PSEA mechanisms and support to RC/HC's in their leadership and support to coordination mechanisms, which need to be set at the outset of a crisis.
- Development of PSEA/SH training package for GBV practitioners to strengthen their capacity and enable them to meet the needs of SEA victims.
- Convene dedicated sessions with UN and non-UN actors to share knowledge and experience and strengthen cohesion and coordination in response to PSEA/SH.

4. Discussions and Way Forward

The Chair echoed UNHCR's call to keep sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment together in the IASC noting that these issues were indeed rooted in power dynamics and workplace culture. Likewise, UNFPA's focus on field support including deploying PSEA coordinators was welcome and resourcing required. He noted that all these mechanisms and tools call for deconfliction of efforts, leveraging of various strengths of the UN system and IASC members, and ensuring that the IASC and CEB Task Force's work is as integrated as possible. The Chair reminded that the IASC should address to future incidents as a collectively and not signal out individual agencies.

In the ensuing discussion, members agreed on the need to make further progress on preventing, addressing and addressing jointly sexual abuse and exploitation and sexual harassment in the IASC.

Deputies echoed calls for a culture shift and made recommendations to further prevent and address SEAH in humanitarian crises. They noted that while some progress has been made, more needs to be done, particularly to bring together legal, recruitment, programming and decision-making elements, linking protection, accountability to affected populations, GBV and PSEA issues and addressing them in an integrated manner, developing a collective no-regrets rapid deployment policy for PSEA coordinators as an explicit requirement of the Scale Up protocols, investing in community-based complaints mechanisms, increasing IASC capacity starting with the top ten high risk humanitarian crises, advocating with governments on PSEAH, working with and building capacity of local actors, and sharing and mobilizing resources more effectively address PSEA. Synergies between the CEB Task Force and IASC should continue to share experience and learning. The inter-agency PSEA mission to DRC demonstrated the agility of the IASC and provided a good model for future joint action. There was a need to follow-up and monitor mission recommendations. In addition, Deputies recognized the need for proactive prevention of SEA during the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out and called on WHO and UNICEF to look into this issue. Finally, Deputies acknowledged the need to ensure consistency between PSEA standards set, HR policies and disciplinary measures in place, noting that such

consistency is fundamental for good management and accountability on this major issue with high impact on Organizations' reputations.

The IASC Deputies Forum recommended:

1. Confirm the top 10 high risk countries for a concerted and targeted effort to prevent / address sexual misconduct [**IASC PSEA group**]
2. Continue funding dedicated inter-agency PSEA coordinators in priority countries including through UNFPA project to establish a roster of experts [**IASC members**]
3. Support deployment of technical capacity from respective IASC member organizations to support IASC inter-agency missions, similar to the DRC support mission [**PSEA Task Team**]
4. Revise IASC Scale-Up procedures to include PSEA coordination capacity at the outset on a no regrets basis [**EDGs**]
5. Work together to strengthen PSEA during COVID-19 vaccine roll out [**WHO and UNICEF**]
6. Update and socialize best practices in setting up community-based feedback mechanisms (CBCM) and ensure that they are effective in the top 10 high risk contexts [**IOM/RG2 with support from Deputies Forum Members**]
7. Review SOPs for Community Based Complaint Mechanisms and to recommend closer linkages between AAP & PSEA actions [**RG2**]
8. Organise sessions on Values, Attitudes and Culture for HCs and HCTs in high risk countries [**UNHCR with support of the IASC Secretariat**]
9. Hold a session as the PSEA Champion at the HC retreat in June 2021 [**UNFPA**]
10. Look at how all IASC members might participate in the Sexual Misconduct Disclosure Scheme led by SCHR and, for UN agencies, use ClearCheck to prevent perpetrators from moving within the system [**IASC Members**]
11. Explore funding solutions for PSEA coordination and resources for PSEA prevention and risk mitigation activities, including for supporting local and national NGOs, such as use of humanitarian pooled funds. [**UNFPA and OCHA**]
12. Support the development of a cooperation framework with governments on PSEA during public health and humanitarian emergencies, establishing shared obligations and a coordination structure for receiving and referring SEA allegations [**UNICEF**]
13. Continue with efforts to ensure collaboration between the IASC and the CEB Task Force on sexual misconduct investigations [**UNHCR and OCHA**]
14. Convene Deputies Forum in June to review of progress against the above and IASC Championship initiatives [**Deputies Forum Chair with support from IASC secretariat**]

Session 2: Role and Function of the IASC Deputies Forum

The Chair thanked members for sharing feedback on role and function of the IASC Deputies Forum. He noted the relevance of the role of the Deputies Forum, as the glue bringing together the strategic discussions by the IASC Principals and the operational and policy discussions by the EDGs and the OPAG. He highlighted, the importance of maintaining the informal space to discuss strategic level discussions and called upon the members to bring their leadership to the IASC on specific subjects. Such subjects could include SEA/SHA, racism and racial discrimination, humanitarian leadership, Grand Bargain, and climate change.

In the ensuing discussion, participants agreed that the Deputies Forum could have a significant role to play and called for a discussion on its structure, decision-making power, and priorities within the IASC system. Several members noted that informal information exchanges were useful but highlighted the Forum could serve the IASC and the Principals with greater impact bringing further visibility and clout to priority issues if formalized and had decision making authority.

The IASC Deputies Forum recommended:

1. Organize a dedicated discussion on the role and function of the Deputies Forum [**IASC secretariat**]

Session 3: AOB: Update on IASC efforts against racism and racial discrimination

OPAG would discuss the racism and racial discrimination efforts in the IASC system in early February. The compilation of best practices and workplan discussed at the OPAG level would be shared with the Deputies Forum.

List of Participants

1. Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator a.i
2. Mr. Laurent Thomas, FAO
3. Ms. Alexandra Boivin, ICRC
4. Ms. Jane Backhurst, ICVA
5. Ms. Mirela Shuteriqi, ICVA
6. Mr. Julien Schopp, InterAction
7. Ms. Jennifer Poidatz, CRS
8. Mr. Gareth Price Jones, SCHR
9. Mr. Justin Byworth, World Vision/ SCHR
10. Ms. Nena Stojilkovic, IFRC
11. Ms. Laura Thompson, IOM
12. Ms. Asako Okai, UNDP
13. Mr. Ib Petersen, UNFPA
14. Ms. Christine Knudsen, UN-HABITAT
15. Ms. Kelly Clements, UNHCR
16. Ms. Hanan Suleiman, UNICEF
17. Mr. Amir Abdulla, WFP
18. Mr. Ibrahima Soce-Fall, WHO
19. Ms. Maria Dimitriadou, World Bank
20. Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, IASC Secretariat
21. Ms. Wendy Cue, OCHA