

IASC
Addressing Racism and Racial Discrimination
DRAFT Action Plan
March 2021

Background:

The United Nations is founded on a core Principle of universal respect and observance of the fundamental human rights of all people, ensuring the dignity and worth of the human person, the equality of men and women, without distinction as to race, sex, language, religion or other diversities. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set out therein, without distinction of any kind, in particular as to race, color or national origin. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial discrimination reaffirms in its preamble that any doctrine of superiority based on racial differentiation is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous, and that there is no justification for racial discrimination, in theory or in practice, anywhere, and that the existence of racial barriers is repugnant to the ideals of any human society¹.

In July 2020, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) [decided](#) to examine and address racism and racial discrimination within its member organizations and issued a joint [statement](#) in September 2020 committing to take further action in this regard to mitigate unconscious biases in the workplace, towards vulnerable populations and/or local partners.

This draft action plan was developed for the consideration by the Deputies Forum laying out proposed actions to prevent and eliminate racism and racial discrimination (*it was developed in consultation with the OPAG and building on the compilation of best practices shared separately*). The document aims to translate the IASC commitments on addressing racism and racial discrimination into practical and tangible actions².

The Action Plan is framed around the following overarching areas:

- Awareness and prevention
- Managing complaints
- Investigations
- Monitoring

¹ [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#), entered into force on 04 January 1969.

² While there are critical elements in the action plan that can benefit from collective action, specific actions, particularly those that pertain to addressing racism and racial discrimination in the workplace, are informed by organization-specific policies and governing bodies.

Basic considerations guiding the Action Plan:

- The term "race and discrimination" shall mean **any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin** which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life³.
- The prevention and elimination of racism and racial discrimination should, to the extent possible, **build on ongoing work and systems on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Community/Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms** and other community engagement mechanisms to ensure coherence and streamlining of efforts geared towards capturing grievances reported by affected populations.
- To the extent possible, IASC efforts/ action plan should be complemented/reinforced by similar critical efforts, including the CEB and the UN Secretary General's Taskforce, to ensure alignment in systems and approaches.

Area	Action	Responsibility
AFFECTED POPULATIONS		
Awareness & Prevention	Integrate racism and racial discrimination in existing communications campaigns/ strategies/ efforts being implemented on PSEA and community engagement.	OPAG/RG2 & IASC PSEA TF
	Develop collective anti-racism and anti-discrimination indicators to build into community feedback mechanisms.	OPAG/RG2
	Conduct risk assessments to provide concrete recommendations to prevent and eliminate racism, racial discrimination and/or unconscious biases towards affected populations.	IASC Members
	Promote a proactive approach to prevention by identifying and acting on initial alerts such as rumors.	HCTs, Clusters, and IASC Members
	Assess policies, practices, and workplace culture and propose adjustments based on findings.	IASC Members
	Ensure meaningful participation of affected people , inclusive of their race and other diversities, in consultations and in needs assessments at country level.	IASC Members, HCTs, ICCGs, Clusters
	Provide guidance, including terminology, on how to integrate anti-racism, racial discrimination and/or unconscious bias into programming approaches and planning processes (to be adapted to context).	IASC Members

³ [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#).

	Ensure reflection of all affected people , inclusive of their race and other diversities, in data collection and analysis, ensuring avoidance of undue risks and biases at each stage	IASC Members, Clusters
	Ensure appropriate diversity (by race, etc.) of country staff .	IASC Members
	Integrate anti-racism and anti-discrimination guidelines in cluster work .	GCCG
Managing Complaints	Ensure affected people know where to report allegations using the existing community feedback mechanism as well as the systems/processes/procedures on PSEA.	IASC Members
	Collect and analyse data from Community Feedback Mechanisms to identify and act upon possible unconscious biases and/or racism and racial discrimination.	IASC Members
	Build upon existing Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFMSs) by ensuring that specific indicators to capture possible unconscious biases and/or racism or racial discrimination are integrated, analyzed, and acted upon.	OPAG/RG 2, IASC PSEA TF, IASC Members
	Strengthen complementarity with SEA reporting and referral mechanisms , so as to capture racism and racial discrimination related information.	OPAG/RG 2, IASC PSEA TF, IASC members
	Meaningful engagement of women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds in designing complaints feedback and reporting mechanisms and consult them on preferred safe and accessible means to communicate sensitive matters such racism and racial discrimination.	IASC Organizations
Investigations	Clarify and communicate mechanisms in place (or that are being put in place) to report and investigate allegations of racism and racial discrimination (where possible, building on existing systems including protection and psea).	IASC members, HCT
Monitoring	Put in place a mechanism at HCT level to monitor uptake of anti-racism and anti-discrimination measures.	HCTs
	Develop baseline data on racism and discrimination faced by affected people	HCTs, RG2
	Include actions against racism and discrimination towards affected communities in internal reporting requirements (covering all diversities).	IASC Members
	Review annual progress on addressing racism and racial discrimination.	IASC Deputies Forum
WORKFORCE		
<i>[Please refer to the compilation of best practices for more ideas for organization-specific actions]</i>		
Prevention and Awareness	Executive and Senior Leaders and Middle Managers to speak out to ‘zero tolerance’ and create space to discuss unconscious biases and/or racism and racial discrimination in the workplace, and facilitate workshops/trainings/sessions on the issue.	IASC Members

	Organize a session on Cultures and Values (similar to the PSEA session) on unconscious bias, racism and racial discrimination tailored to IASC Principals and Humanitarian Coordinators.	OHCHR (tbd)
	Ensure diversity (by ethnicity, race, gender, caste, etc.) in recruitment of international and local staff at global and operational levels. ensure that this applies to both locally and international recruited staff, including for senior positions.	IASC Members
	Develop/update internal policies, Codes of Conduct, complaints channels and Investigation protocols to address racism and racial discrimination as well as unconscious bias (organization and implementing partners).	IASC Members
	Ensure staff training (including induction courses for all new staff), including for AAP specialists, incorporates elements to raise awareness regarding unconscious bias and/or racism and racial discrimination	IASC Members
	Promote spaces where employees of diverse backgrounds can participate in decision making, policy formulation, and other strategic processes.	IASC Members
	Annual discussion on the issue to promote sharing of lessons learned and best practices (and updating of compilation of best practices)	OPAG
Managing Complaints	Clearly communicate avenue (hotline and/or focal point) that staff can discuss or report allegations, with clarity on the reporting chain and redress process.	IASC Members
	Establish a safe space for all staff to disclose/report incidents/allegations of racism and racial discrimination at all levels..	IASC Members
	Encourage staff / make it easier for staff to report (e.g. Speak Up helpline) allegations of racism and racial discrimination, and strengthen assurances on safeguards in place for protection from retaliation, safety, security and support.	IASC Members
	Develop (or re-circulate) administrative Instruction on Protection Against Retaliation to all staff to foster an environment in which everyone feels comfortable to come forward and safe to speak up and/or report allegations of racism or racial discrimination.	IASC Members
Monitoring	Develop baseline data on workplace racism and monitor indicators on racism or racial discrimination at all levels.	IASC members
LOCAL ACTORS		
Awareness and Prevention	Ensure partnerships with local actors and NGOs are based on a principle of equality and equity .	IASC members

	Ensure diversity and transparency in selection of partners including of organizations representing minority groups (<i>use of the UN Partner Portal - www.unpartnerportal.org – which was designed to improve the quality of partnership between the United Nations and civil society, is encouraged</i>).	IASC members.
	Promote partnerships with minority non-governmental coalitions, women-led and youth-led organisations to strengthen diversity and inclusion and promote the localization agenda.	IASC members
	Support training of local actors on humanitarian principles, protection and human-rights-based approaches.	IASC members
	Ensure diversity (by ethnicity, race, gender, caste, etc.) in recruitment of local staff to avoid potential biases that reinforce racism and racial discrimination	IASC members
	Work 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).	IASC members
	Review/ update policies on racism and racial discrimination , including those applicable to implementing partners.	IASC members
	Implement targeted action, including 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.	IASC members
Managing Complaints	Establish/strengthen partnership review processes to consider issues of bias, allegation/complaint of discriminatory behaviour.	IASC members
	Communicate contacts of internal investigation officers/offices with partners and other local actors to facilitate reporting of racism and racial discrimination.	IASC members
	Raise awareness of local actors on how to identify and report allegations of racism or racial discrimination, through clear, safe and accessible channels (<i>ensuring the required steps for obtaining informed consent, including informing the victim about confidentiality and potential limits to confidentiality and mandatory reporting requirements</i>).	IASC members

