

IASC
Addressing Racism and Racial Discrimination
Action Plan
June 2021

Background:

The United Nations is founded on the principle of universal respect for and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion (UN Charter). 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, that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. 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 address manifestations of racial discrimination and eliminate barriers to equality.

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 "racial 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, **be consistent with systems on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Community/Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms** and other community engagement mechanisms to ensure coherence and streaming f 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 Task Force on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All, to ensure alignment in systems and approaches.

Area	Action	Responsibility
AFFECTED POPULATIONS		
Awareness & Prevention	Integrate issues pertaining to racial discrimination in existing communications campaigns/ strategies/ efforts being implemented on PSEA and community engagement.	RG2 & IASC PSEA TF
	Develop collective anti-racism and anti-discrimination indicators to build into community feedback mechanisms.	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, including 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 that data collection and analysis tools integrate questions adequately reflecting the diversity of affected people , including their ethnic group.	IASC members, Clusters
	Ensure appropriate diversity (by race, etc.) of teams designing tools and collecting/analyzing data..	IASC members
	Integrate anti-racism and anti-discrimination guidelines in cluster work .	GCCG
Managing Complaints	Meaningfully engage women, men, girls, and boys of diverse ethnic groups in designing complaints feedback and reporting mechanisms and consult them on preferred safe and accessible means to communicate sensitive matters such as racism and racial discrimination.	IASC Members
	Ensure affected people know where to report allegations of racial discrimination using the existing community feedback mechanisms as well as the systems/processes/procedures on PSEA/SH.	IASC members
	Integrate anti-racial discrimination in existing complaints and community feedback mechanisms, with due consideration of confidentiality.	IASC Members
	Collect and analyse data from Community Feedback Mechanisms to identify and act upon, if possible or where relevant, 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.	RG 2, IASC PSEA TF, IASC members
	Strengthen complementarity with SEA/SH reporting and referral mechanisms , so as to capture racism and racial discrimination related information.	RG 2, IASC PSEA TF, IASC members
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 to monitor discrimination and discriminatory practices 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 effectively communicate and ensure ‘zero tolerance’ , so that staff members understand that organizations do not tolerate any form of discrimination and the appropriate procedures will be taken if racism is unveiled/reported.	IASC members
	Create space to discuss racial discrimination and different manifestations including unconscious biases in the workplace and facilitate workshops/trainings/sessions on the issue.	IASC members
	Organize a session on understanding and addressing the manifestations of racial discrimination to elimination barriers to equality tailored to IASC Principals and Humanitarian Coordinators.	OHCHR
	Ensure diversity 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, taking into account applicable rules and regulations, including, where applicable, the UN System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity. In addition, all organisations should facilitate self-reporting, against an agreed list of global categories all IASC members can use, so as to facilitate a systemized collation of data.	IASC members, OHCHR, UNHCR
	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 racial discrimination and its manifestations including unconscious bias."	IASC members
	Enhance broader participation of a diverse workforce in the 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	Encourage all staff regardless of contract status to raise concerns related to racism and discrimination through any of the available channels in their organization, anytime, in any order, as they find it helpful in their specific situation.	IASC members

	Establish a safe space for all staff to disclose/report incidents/allegations of racism and racial discrimination at all levels. Clearly communicate avenues (through hotline, line manager, HR grievance, Staff Counselor, ombudsman, Staff association and/or focal point) that staff can discuss or report allegations, with clarity on the reporting chain and redress process	IASC members
	Encourage staff / make it easier for them 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. Provide support and counseling to those who have experienced or witnessed racism and racial discrimination.	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 (e.g. reduced incidents of racism, greater number of complaints etc) 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 civil society organizations and coalitions representing the diversity of the society to strengthen 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 of local staff to avoid potential biases that reinforce 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
