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# TACKLING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

## 2020-2022 STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

During the past two years, UNHCR has made significant progress in tackling sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH) within the organization and has contributed equally in doing so within the humanitarian and development sectors. These achievements are documented in the [2018](#) and [2019](#) year in review publications and are complemented by ongoing projects in the context of the High Commissioner's [priorities and initiatives](#) as Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) [Champion](#) on Protection from SEA and SH.

Critical to the success of this approach was the High Commissioner's decision, in 2018, to have a dedicated capacity and coordination structure focusing on both SEA and SH. This decision recognizes the common roots of these abuses (power differentials and gender inequalities), as well as the similar needs of victims of all forms of sexual misconduct. A clear [vision, strategy and action plan](#) were developed and taken forward by the Senior Coordinator (SEA and SH), in close collaboration with the technical level Working Group<sup>1</sup> and a Director level Task Force, led by the Deputy High Commissioner.

Despite this progress, much more remains to be done. UNHCR remains fully committed to its vision of “*providing a trusted, respectful, and inclusive environment where the people we serve and those who work for the organization feel safe, heard, equipped and empowered to speak up for themselves and others and to take robust and visible action, as appropriate, to eradicate SEA and SH*”.

<sup>1</sup> Division of External Relations, Division of Human Resources, Division of International Protection, Division of Strategic Planning and Results, Enterprise Risk Management, Ethics Office, Field Security Service, Innovation Service, Inspector General's Office, Legal Affairs Service and Ombudsman's Office.



## STRATEGIC FOCUS

Building on the achievements and developments of the past two years, and in line with a safeguarding and victim-centred<sup>2</sup> approach, UNHCR is issuing this new Strategy and Action Plan to tackle sexual misconduct, guided by the following four objectives:



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### Ensure that an end-to-end victim-centred approach is streamlined in all UNHCR practices and procedures concerning sexual misconduct

Strengthen and systematize disclosure and reporting channels to ensure victims and witnesses have access to and receive supportive guidance and comprehensive information to make informed decisions on options available to them. Reinforce protection and support for victims by ensuring that all policies and support and recourse systems are coordinated and guided by a victim-centred approach, inspiring trust and confidence.

### Equip and empower UNHCR and partner personnel to prevent, identify and respond to sexual misconduct

Ensure, through learning and awareness-raising activities, that UNHCR and partner personnel are able to identify and understand the impact of sexual misconduct, and are equipped to take up their role in preventing and responding to such misconduct. This applies, in particular, to managers, who will also be supported in creating or contributing to open, inclusive, diverse workplace cultures and working environments, safe from sexual misconduct.

### Uphold organizational accountability in tackling sexual misconduct

Continue investment in prevention, mitigation and response measures related to sexual misconduct as an institutional priority. Remain on course to progressively adopt policies, procedures and practices in the areas of prevention of, and response to, sexual misconduct; risk mitigation; vetting and reference checking; culture change; global reporting; programming; and case management.

### Maintain UNHCR's role as a key stakeholder engaging in interagency efforts

Contribute to eradicating SEA and SH in the humanitarian and development sectors through close and active engagement with partners and by ensuring that field perspectives and realities are adequately represented in interagency fora. Participate in the development of interagency tools, collate and share good practices, and foster positive working cultures that strengthen prevention and response to sexual misconduct.

<sup>2</sup> In this publication the term *victim* is used 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.



## ACTIONS

The following **priority areas for action** address one or more of the outlined objectives:

### 1 ———

**Continue to enhance processes and procedures for the handling of sexual misconduct cases to ensure a systematic, coordinated, and victim-centered approach:** Carry out analysis of sexual misconduct cases to create an evidence base for the identification of good practices as well as areas needing improvement. Carry out consultations with SH victims, led by the psychosocial case management officer (SH), and explore the feasibility of establishing an escrow matching system for SH cases. Prioritize access to safe and accessible services for SEA victims through established gender-based violence and child protection programming, and advocate for these programmes to be fully funded.

### 2 ———

**Strengthen guidance on addressing sexual misconduct:** Enhance UNHCR's guidance on sexual misconduct and ensure alignment with the range of institutional guidance materials relevant to sexual misconduct. Conclude UNHCR's internal review of existing mechanisms and protocols to ensure the safety, security and well-being of victims of, and witnesses to, misconduct, including sexual misconduct. Ensure a victim-centred approach is respected as the core of all policies and procedures.

### 3 ———

**Conduct training and awareness-raising on sexual misconduct:** Establish a global learning and development strategy on SEA and SH, building on the new training and virtual discussions for UNHCR colleagues and for partners. Integrate SEA and SH messaging and content in all relevant learning activities. Build the capacity of and strengthen links between different focal point networks in UNHCR (Peer Advisors, Risk Advisors, Field Security Advisors, HR Partners and PSEA Focal Points).

### 4 ———

**Support organizational culture change efforts:** Recognizing that sexual misconduct is rooted in power differentials and gender inequalities, contribute to internal and interagency efforts to capacitate managers to provide safe, respectful and inclusive working environments free from sexual misconduct. As part of the High Commissioner's IASC Championship deliverables, conduct a stocktaking and sharing of innovative initiatives by different agencies on fostering positive change in workplace culture, and engage with IASC Principals and other leaders in reflective processes on individual and organizational change.

### 5 ———

**Strengthen outreach to communities and community-based feedback mechanisms (CBCM) to facilitate and improve SEA reporting and community engagement:** Disseminate the results of the global stocktaking of information, education and communications (IEC) materials and approaches on prevention of and response to SEA and SH. Support UNHCR field operations in strengthening current IEC materials or facilitating their development. In partnership with ICVA, as part of the High Commissioner's IASC Championship deliverables, establish an inter-agency fund to support local NGOs in developing community awareness and engagement materials. Develop guidance on feedback and response as per [Core Action 4 of the AGD policy](#) and include a specific PSEA component.

### 6 ———

**Strengthen and further develop UNHCR's network of PSEA Focal Points:** Build the capacity of PSEA Focal Points at the regional and country levels, including through strengthening the community of practice for the PSEA Focal Points' Network. Develop a communication and engagement strategy and review terms of reference for PSEA Focal Points in line with regionalization and decentralization.



## 7

**Enhance mechanisms to ensure PSEA and SH mainstreaming, in parallel with targeted efforts to address sexual misconduct:** Following recommendations from the [Independent Evaluative Review](#) of UNHCR's policies and procedures on the prevention of and response to SEA, assess UNHCR's guidance on global programming to ensure that protection from SEA and SH are fully incorporated in annual planning and budgeting instructions and in global reporting and accountability tools and frameworks. Advocate for the full funding of SGBV programmes in operations, which also ensure support for victims of SEA. Develop further tools for proactive and systematic SEA and SH risk identification, mitigation and response. Include responsibilities for protection from SEA and SH in job descriptions, in the context of the standardization of job descriptions.

## 8

**Maintain UNHCR as a key stakeholder engaging within the interagency framework:** Continue strong interagency engagement to tackle sexual misconduct at Headquarters and in the field in close cooperation with all partners. Maintain active engagement within the IASC, and with the Office of the Special Coordinator on SEA, the UN Chief Executives Board Task Force on Sexual Harassment and the UN Victims' Rights Advocate.

## 9

**Enhance substantive level engagement with partners:** Support a harmonised implementation of the [UN Protocol on SEA Allegations Involving Implementing Partners](#) with the use of a common assessment tool. Support the roll-out of the interagency learning packages to build the capacity of personnel in all IASC member organisations in tackling sexual misconduct as well as the development and roll-out of an e-learning module on SEA investigations for partners, both of which are deliverables under the High Commissioner's IASC Championship. Continue efforts to streamline SEA and SH reporting requirements for various donors and partners.

## 10

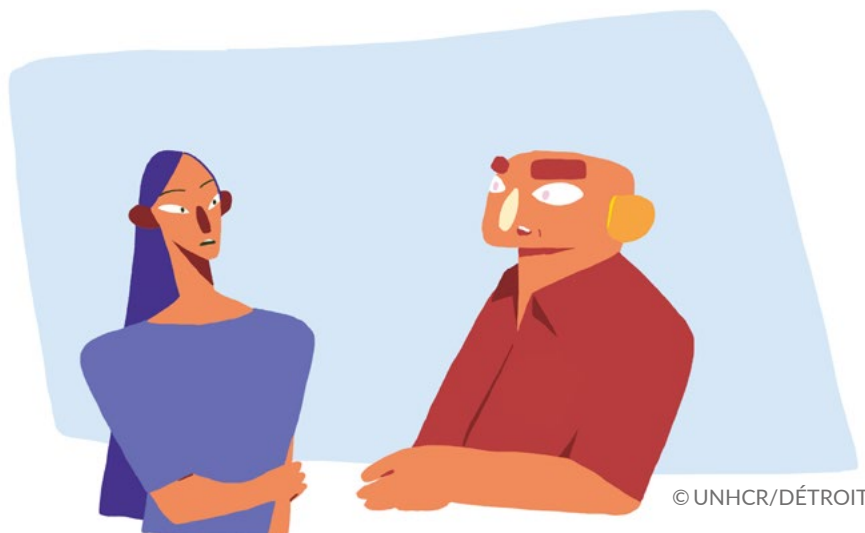
**Reinforce vetting and reference-checking mechanisms:** Continue to use the UN SEA and SH Clear Check trackers to prevent the rehire of offenders within the UN system. Undertake a global review of vetting and reference-checking procedures in the recruitment/hiring of UNHCR staff and affiliate workforce with a view to further strengthen these procedures. Explore synergies with similar initiatives such as the "Misconduct Disclosure Scheme" developed by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR).

## 11

**Strengthen external and internal communications and advocacy efforts on addressing sexual misconduct:** Develop additional communications initiatives/products to raise awareness amongst colleagues on the importance of speaking up and to share innovative ideas and new measures to strengthen UNHCR's fight against sexual misconduct. Organize dedicated interactive internal events and initiatives to ensure continued dialogue and engagement maintains momentum throughout the organization. Engage with ExCom Member States and keep them fully apprised of our efforts to tackle sexual misconduct, through publications, briefings and other events.

## 12

**Strengthen the Speak Up Helpline (processes, outreach):** Continue outreach activities to build awareness around the SpeakUp Helpline as an internal, confidential support line that remains available to all UNHCR personnel. This includes continued training and resourcing for helpline service providers and using internal platforms.



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