

**INTER – AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE – WORKING GROUP
49th MEETING**

19-20 June 2002

at

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: Auditorium

**Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crisis: The IASC Task Force on
Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises
PLAN OF ACTION**

Circulated: 14 June 2002

I. Prevention

Goal: to create an environment free of sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian crises, through integrating the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse into the protection and assistance functions of all humanitarian workers.

A. Core Principles of a Code of Conduct

Humanitarian agencies have a duty of care to beneficiaries and a responsibility to ensure that beneficiaries are treated with dignity and respect and that certain minimum standards of behavior are observed. In order to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, the following core principles must be incorporated into agency codes of conduct¹:

- Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment;
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence;
- Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
- Sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.
- Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, s/he must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.
- Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

¹ Different considerations will arise regarding the enforcement of some of these principles for humanitarian workers hired from the beneficiary community. While sexual exploitation and abuse and the misuse of humanitarian assistance will always be prohibited, discretion may be used in the application of the principles regarding sexual relationships for this category of humanitarian worker.

Objective: to adopt and incorporate into codes of conduct, specific responsibilities of humanitarian aid workers to prevent and respond appropriately to sexual exploitation and abuse and to adopt appropriate disciplinary procedures for when violations occur.		
Action	Agency Responsible	Date
1. Adopt codes of conduct that include, as a minimum, the core principles identified by the IASC Task Force, or incorporate them into existing codes of conduct.	All Agencies	By end 2002
2. Incorporate adherence to a code of conduct into new and existing employment contracts, job descriptions, terms of reference and performance appraisal systems. ²	All Agencies	By July 2003
3. Develop and implement a strategy for the dissemination of and training activities on the code of conduct for all current and future staff, including local and international staff, at all levels.	All agencies	By end 2002
4. Incorporate the core principles into all agreements with implementing partners.	All agencies	2003
5. Encourage donor governments to include the core principles into their agreements with implementing partners.	IASC Task Force	By end 2002
6. Develop and incorporate into staff rules and regulations, appropriate disciplinary procedures for when violations of the core principles occur.	All agencies, with support of IASC Task Force	By end 2002
7. Investigate the feasibility of developing a database, to be shared among humanitarian agencies, of persons whose contracts have been terminated because of violations of the core principles. ³	IASC Task Force	By October 2002

² Awaiting legal advice on this point

³ Awaiting legal advice on this point

B. Situation Analysis/Assessment of Needs

Objective: to ensure that agency situation analyses and needs assessments identify vulnerabilities to sexual exploitation and abuse and provide a basis for improved programme planning that minimises risks and opportunities for sexual exploitation and abuse.		
Action	Agency Responsible	Date
1. Conduct an inter-agency review of assessment processes and guidelines, with a view to incorporating processes for assessing vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse. All agencies should agree to common standards of assessment of vulnerabilities and capacities.	IASC Working Group	By end 2002
2. Through an inter-agency process, complete the revision of, and distribute, sexual and gender based guidelines that will provide guidance on specific issues dealing with sexual exploitation and abuse.	UNHCR	By end 2002
3. Report on the extent to which underfunding of humanitarian programmes leads to increased vulnerability of beneficiaries to sexual exploitation and abuse.	All agencies	By end 2002 and regularly thereafter

C. Camp Governance and Delivery Processes

Objective: to ensure that camp governance is conducted in an equitable manner that empowers women and children, and reduces the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, and to ensure that distribution processes, including the quantity of assistance and distribution methods, are designed and implemented in a manner that reduces opportunity for sexual exploitation and abuse.		
Action	Agency Responsible	Date
1. Define benchmarks to determine the adequacy of staff directly responsible for protection, in terms of number, profile and sex.	All agencies	By end 2002
2. In 3 pilot countries, assess the extent to which the deployment of specialised staff (protection, gender and children advisers etc.) and the existence of specialised programmes for gender based violence contribute to ensuring/strengthening activities to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.	IASC Task Force	July 2003
3. Promote the economic and social empowerment of women, thus reducing their vulnerability to abuse, through working toward equal representation of women and men among beneficiary staff, and institute measures to ensure that women participate in decision-making structures equally with men.	All Agencies	Ongoing
4. Promote the empowerment of girls, through incentives to encourage greater attendance of girls at schools.	Site Coordinating Agency	Ongoing
5. Issue ration cards in the name of a woman in each household.	Site Coordinating Agency	Ongoing
6. Review the chain of distribution and prioritise direct distribution of food and non-food items to beneficiaries, especially to women, to minimise risks of exploitation.	Site Coordinating Agency	By end 2002

Third background document: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises

7. Increase the proportion of female staff involved in the distribution of food and non-food items.	Site Coordinating Agency	Ongoing
8. Coordinate timing of distribution among agencies to eliminate the need for proxies that can make women and children more vulnerable to sexual exploitation.	Site Coordinating Agency	Ongoing
9. Improve mechanisms for ensuring stable continuity of supply, particularly in high risk areas, and discuss flexible arrangements with donors.	All agencies	Ongoing
10. In 4 pilot countries, conduct reviews of distribution, post-distribution, end-use and commodity baskets to establish the relationship between the level and nature of humanitarian assistance and vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse. The reviews will assess: appropriateness of the package; timeliness of provision; volume; distribution procedures; gender balance and beneficiary involvement in distribution committees; and gender balance among staff.	IASC Task Force	By end 2002

D. Mechanisms for Accountability to Beneficiaries

Objective: to develop mechanisms to ensure that agencies providing humanitarian relief are accountable to the communities they serve, with respect to both prevention efforts and response mechanisms.		
Action	Agency Responsible	Date
1. Take appropriate measures to ensure that beneficiaries are informed of the rationale for: assistance eligibility criteria, individual entitlements, and distribution venues and schedules. When any of the above change, beneficiaries should be notified as soon as possible.	All agencies	By end 2002
2. Ensure adequate opportunities to educate populations at risk about sexual exploitation and abuse by providing information about rights, entitlements, responsibilities and procedures for complaints and survivor assistance, for example, through participatory workshops with the beneficiary community to raise awareness about gender based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as relevant human rights instruments.	Site Coordinating Agency	Ongoing
3. Compile and disseminate a list of relevant guidelines and resource materials relating to protection issues (including gender based violence, gender and children's issues) as a basis for understanding areas of responsibility and accountability.	UNHCR to compile list/produce CD Rom All agencies to disseminate	By end 2002

II. Response

Goal: to provide basic health and psychosocial care to survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse and ensure they have access to appropriate avenues for recourse and redress.

A. Avenues for Recourse

Objective: to develop mechanisms that allow survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse to report incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse; access legal, judicial or community-based recourse systems; and seek redress, including disciplinary action against perpetrators.		
Action	Agency Responsible	Date
1. Distribute revised guidelines (see I.B.2) for gender and age sensitive investigative protocols and complaints mechanism.	IASC Task Force	September 2002
2. Establish confidential systems for <u>both</u> directly and indirectly receiving reports about possible sexual exploitation and abuse and ensuring their follow-up, with the agreement of the survivor.	Inter-agency country team ⁴ / Humanitarian Coordinator	By end 2002
3. Develop a process for determining appropriate redress for individual survivors, based on consultations with the community and local authorities, and support survivors in seeking such redress, in a manner that respects the due process rights of the accused as well as the rights of the survivor.	Inter-agency country team/ Humanitarian Coordinator	By end 2002
4. Develop a mechanism for monitoring survivors to ensure that they do not face any repercussions as a result of having lodged a complaint.	Inter-agency country team/ Humanitarian Coordinator	By end 2002

⁴ The team would include UN agencies, relevant national and international NGOs and should be linked to existing aid co-ordination structures. The team will be responsible for setting a culturally-sensitive policy for the country on the issue of protection against sexual abuse and exploitation. It will also allocate responsibility between its members for the necessary activities, based on the particular coverage, mandates, skills and resources available in that country (e.g. some functions will require universal coverage based on specific skills available at agency level, such as for interviewing children).

B. Provision of Basic Services to meet immediate survivor needs

An appropriate integrated response for survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse includes: psycho-social support for survivors; comprehensive health care including reproductive health care; access to timely legal redress; and community-driven safety and security measures.

Objective: to provide survivors of sexual exploitation with appropriate support.		
Action	Agency Responsible	Date
1. Ensure that in every camp/settlement at least one health care practitioner is trained on the physical and mental health ramifications of gender based violence, including reproductive health care, and appropriate protocols for treatment and data collection.	Coordinating agency for health	Ongoing
2. Ensure that survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse have access to appropriate reproductive health services.	Site coordinating agency	Ongoing
3. Review the availability of counseling and case management services and, based on this review, establish targets to increase available counseling and case management services, especially in areas identified as high risk for sexual exploitation and abuse.	Coordinating agency for health	Ongoing
4. Integrate concepts of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse into community service delivery programs.	Coordinating agency for community services	Ongoing

III. Management and Implementation Issues

A. Management and Coordination Responsibility

Objective: to develop mechanisms to ensure accountability of humanitarian agencies to governments and donors in the implementation of actions to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.		
Action	Agency Responsible	Date
1. Revise job descriptions, employment contracts and performance appraisal systems etc. for managers to ensure adequate attention to the responsibility to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.	All agencies	By July 2003
2. Increase the accountability and capacity of senior management to ensure protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, through training and monitoring. Priority should be given to heads of office and staff directly involved in protection activities.	All agencies	By end 2002
3. Integrate protection against gender based violence into the work and terms of reference of existing coordination and management mechanisms, such as the CAP process, Humanitarian Coordinator system, IASC mechanisms etc.	IASC Task Force	Early 2003

Third background document: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises

4. Engage more substantially with host governments and appropriate ministries in order to improve protection in camp management and strengthen mechanisms for legal redress.	All agencies	Ongoing
5. Engage more substantially with DPKO to ensure coherence and complementarity of approach to addressing sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian crises.	IASC Task Force	Ongoing
6. Coordinate the regular and confidential sharing by all agencies mandated with protection or the provision of relief items and services, of a summary and analysis of their monitoring findings regarding sexual exploitation and abuse.	Inter-agency country team	On a bi-monthly basis beginning November 2002
7. Develop a plan for implementing the recommendations and actions points agreed to through the IASC process for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.	Each Head of Agency	By September 2002

B. Monitoring and Supervision

Goal: to ensure regular monitoring and supervision of the provision of protection and assistance in humanitarian operations, with awareness of risks and opportunities for sexual exploitation and abuse

Objective: to ensure monitoring and supervision of programming for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and to support staff at a field level to implement the Plan of Action.

Action	Agency Responsible	Date
1. Compile and share all available checklists and tools in relation to prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse.	UNHCR	By end 2002
2. Ensure supervisory staff visit sites of affected populations and report on progress made to reduce sexual exploitation and abuse.	All Agencies: Head of Country Offices	Ongoing
3. Within the existing humanitarian coordination structure, nominate a team at country level, to monitor and supervise activities to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.	Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator	Following pilot
4. Engage in 2-4 field visits to targeted countries to provide technical assistance and support for implementation of the Plan of Action.	IASC Task Force	July 2003

13 June 2002