



Title:

Protection of Humanitarian Action: Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Aid Workers

Sponsors and Organizers:

IASC secretariat and IASC Co-Champion on Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Aid Workers

Date and Time: Friday 23 June 2017, 13.15-14.45

Room XXII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

This is one of the side-events to be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, in keeping with this year's theme: *Restoring Humanity and Leaving No One Behind: Working together to reduce people's humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability.*

Background and objectives

The nature of operating in conflict and disaster zones means that there are inherent dangers to humanitarian work. One critical risk that is not often discussed is that of sexual harassment and abuse of aid workers, despite growing evidence that sexual violence against aid workers is a genuine risk. This was highlighted by a recent survey conducted by the Humanitarian Women's Network, through the work of the NGO "Report the Abuse", and by ongoing research on current risk factors and responses from the Feinstein International Center.

The IASC has committed to zero tolerance for discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse within all humanitarian work environments, as demonstrated by the IASC Principals Statement in March 2017 on 'Zero Tolerance on Sexual Harassment and Abuse with the Humanitarian Sector'. IASC Principals have pledged to strengthen the overall institutional response on this issue, safeguarding the well-being of staff, addressing the climate of impunity and holding perpetrators to account, and strengthening policies, structures and accountability mechanisms to give all staff the support and protection they deserve.

This event will contribute to Member States' understanding of existing IASC commitments and actions taken by humanitarian agencies to actively tackle discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse against humanitarian workers, and to cultivate more inclusive, respectful organizational cultures in which humanitarian personnel can work safely, in dignity and with respect. It will build on the recent commitments made by the United Nations Secretary-General on the prevention of all forms of sexual violence in humanitarian spaces.

Together, we must and can further systematize the prevention of and response to sexual harassment and abuse within all emergency response operations and humanitarian workplaces.

Discussion points

Against this backdrop, the side-event will focus on the following suggested questions and discussion points:

- *Discuss concrete actions that must be taken to prevent and respond to discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse of aid workers, notably female staff.*
- *Highlight good practices that are already supported by a number of Member States and actioned by UN Agencies and various INGOs; and discuss how to build on these.*

- Identify ways to ensure that all humanitarian staff are aware of, and comply with, their rights to and their responsibilities for maintaining workplaces free from all forms of sexual violence – whether against their colleagues or the local population.

Intended outcomes/conclusions/recommendations

This event will seek an enhanced commitment from Member States and other relevant stakeholders to support IASC agencies, and the entire humanitarian community, to strengthen their individual and collective action to effectively prevent and respond to instances of sexual harassment and abuse of aid workers by aid workers. Through a combination of advocacy, research, and technical support, Member States can support a sustained change on this critical issue, in collaboration with the organisations that are already working to deliver a holistic response encompassing prevention and protection and including work on policies and procedures.

Format

Moderator:

- Ms. Belinda Holdsworth, Chief of the IASC secretariat

Panel composition:

- Ms. Kate Gilmore, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, and IASC Co-Champion on Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Aid Workers, OHCHR
- Mr. Niels Scott, UN Resident Coordinator in Georgia, UNDP
- Ms. Megan Nobert, Director, Report the Abuse

Video Clip:

- Feinstein International Center: <https://fic.wistia.com/medias/w6259gdt6s>

Background Material

- IASC Principals' Statement on 'Zero Tolerance on Sexual Harassment and Abuse in the Humanitarian Sector': <http://iasc.ch/principals/documents-public/iasc-principals-statement-zero-tolerance-sexual-harassment-and-abuse>
- Feinstein International Centre: Stop the Sexual Assault Against Humanitarian and Development Aid Workers: <http://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/stop-the-sexual-assault-against-humanitarian-and-development-aid-workers/>
- Report the Abuse: <http://reporttheabuse.org/>
- Humanitarian Women's Network Letter to IASC: http://iasc.ch/system/files/hwn_letter_to_iasc_20161102.pdf
- HWN Full Survey Results: http://iasc.ch/system/files/hwn_full_survey_results_may_2016.pdf
- HWN Facts and Figures: http://iasc.ch/system/files/hwn_facts_figures_may_2016.pdf
- HWN Background Paper: Discrimination, Harassment & Abuse of Women Aid Workers: Survey Results and Way Forward: http://iasc.ch/system/files/hwn_background_paper.pdf

Contact

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