



Prevention, Policy and Procedure Checklist: Responding to Sexual Violence in Humanitarian and Development Settings

Executive Summary

Sexual violence¹, in an out of conflict settings, is a recognised global phenomenon. While it has only recently begun to be discussed, sexual violence against humanitarian aid workers² is not a new or emerging problem. It is also not a problem without a solution.

86% of humanitarians are currently reporting that they know of a colleague who has experienced sexual violence in the course of their work

Methodology

Through a combination of research methods, involving analysis of the policies and procedures of a range of humanitarian and development organisations; seeking out best practices in security and risk management, sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and/or sexual

violence and human resources policies and procedures; along with data gathered through the survey, Report the Abuse (RTA) developed its first publication, the *Prevention, Policy and Procedure Checklist (Checklist)*.

Preparedness and Response to Sexual Violence – Current Findings

RTA researched a total of 92 humanitarian organisations, including the UN, INGOs and regional organisations, to determine what are their sexual violence policies and procedures, as they pertain to the prevention and response of such incidents experienced by their staff. Where such information was not available online, said organisations were contacted directly.

42% of humanitarians currently report that they did not file a complaint with their organisations

Of those who do report, only **17%** currently report that they feel their organisations handled their complaint of sexual violence appropriately

Some concerning information emerged from this analysis, including the fact that 9% of humanitarian organisations

examined did not at the time have any form of policy or procedure to address sexual violence as experienced or perpetrated by their employees. Of the other humanitarian organisations examined, many were relying on their internal policies and procedures regarding sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of the local population to cover their employees; while SEA is a

¹ RTA uses the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's *Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action* definition of sexual violence: "sexual violence includes, at least, rape/attempted rape, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. Sexual violence is 'any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic a person's sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless or relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.' Sexual violence takes many forms, including rape, sexual slavery and/or trafficking, forced pregnancy, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and/or abuse, and forced abortion." IASC, *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery*, 2015.

² All statistics are derived from RTA's data collection, through a self-reporting survey available through our website (<http://reporttheabuse.org/report-your-experience/>). RTA does not purport that the data collected thus far represents the full extent of sexual violence against humanitarian aid workers. However, as the first data published on the issue globally, it is the beginning picture of the issues humanitarian aid workers are facing in the field.

vital and important issue to address, it is quite different from sexual violence as experienced by humanitarian aid workers and requires a separate policy and procedure.

In fact, only 12 humanitarian organisations (16%) reviewed had an explicit policy and/or procedure to address on sexual violence as experienced by their employees. If the majority of humanitarian and development agencies do not have measures in place, a significant number of humanitarian aid workers may be without protection and support should they experience sexual violence in the course of their work.

Existing Best Practices?

After a thorough examination of existing literature, it was determined that a few guidelines and best practices exist on how to broadly handle sexual violence in conflict, sexual violence in the armed forces, and sexual exploitation and abuse of the local population by humanitarian aid workers.

Organizations need to stop pretending that this issue doesn't exist.

– Anonymous testimony

However, RTA concluded that there are no currently published best practices or guidelines regarding the prevention, policies or procedures to address sexual violence as experienced by humanitarian aid workers.

RTA Checklist – Proposed First Steps to Addressing the Issue

In the absence of existing good practices, the *Checklist* took the first steps towards establishing guidelines to address this problem. The *Checklist* is divided into three broad categories: prevention, policy and procedures. While the three categories are presented separately, in order to holistically address sexual violence it is necessary that any measures be mainstreamed throughout all areas of humanitarian operations.

Prevention - should be the core of work done by humanitarian organisations to address this problem. Not only does prevention aid in reducing the number of incidents that might occur, but it is conducive to creating an environment where survivors may be more willing to report.

Policies - responsive, survivor-centred and widely available policies is key to ensuring that the framework for both preventing and addressing incidents of sexual violence in humanitarian workplaces is created.

Procedure - the way an organization responds to incidents or accusations can dictate how survivors will recover from their experiences with sexual violence, and the outcome will largely depend on the organisation's approach, preparedness and engagement with its staff.

Conclusion

Incidents of sexual violence against humanitarian aid workers can have a significant impact on survivors, office relationships, quality of programming and our interactions with the local population. The *Checklist* provides an initial framework to establishing survivor-centred prevention and response strategies for humanitarian workplaces free from sexual violence.

Some initial financial and human resources investment is required to put in place strategies such as those contained in the *Checklist*. However, echoing InterAction, the cost of not protecting one's employees far outweighs the cost of implementation. This is an issue that requires our attention.