IASC PLAN FOR ACCELERATING PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (PSEA) IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AT COUNTRY-LEVEL

ENDORSED BY IASC PRINCIPALS ON 3 DECEMBER 2018



This scale-up plan for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) is based on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Championship Strategy on PSEA and Sexual Harassment and its PSEA commitments. The scale-up plan presents a call for collective action and investment by IASC members in all countries with Humanitarian Response Plans or Refugee Response Plans. The plan seeks to achieve three key outcomes for PSEA: 1) safe and accessible reporting, 2) quality assistance for the survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and 3) enhanced accountability, including investigations. To deliver these outcomes, the plan proposes an enhanced PSEA structure at country level that builds on existing good practice in the field and contributes to a broader accountability strategy.

The product of extensive IASC technical consultations, the plan was unanimously endorsed by IASC Principals on 3 December 2018. Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) subsequently carried out a gap analysis to inform IASC members of current needs for effective implementation of PSEA interventions at country-level.



O UNICEF/UNG

1. INTRODUCTION

rotection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment are core commitments of the IASC. Since 2002, the IASC has taken multiple measures to advance its PSEA agenda:

- 2002: The IASC adopted Six Principles on PSEA, which must be incorporated into agency codes of conduct² setting clear standards for humanitarian workers, and a plan of action on PSEA.³
- 2010: The IASC conducted a Global Review on PSEA by United Nations (UN), non-governmental
- organization (NGO), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) personnel that found gaps in how PSEA was prioritized and called for joint commitments and the pooling of resources to deliver on them.⁴
- 2011: To support these efforts, an IASC Champion on PSEA was appointed to push for stronger PSEA policies and efforts within, and between, humanitarian agencies.
- 2012: The IASC Task Team on Accountability to

Affected Populations (AAP)/PSEA, now integrated into IASC Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion, was established in 2012 to provide PSEA technical support to humanitarian agencies, in accordance with the Global Review recommendations. That same year, IASC members developed Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA (IASC MOS-PSEA) to support agencies' efforts to institutionalize PSEA at all levels.⁵

- 2015: The IASC further affirmed the roles of PSEA Senior Focal Points, Humanitarian Coordinators, and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) in implementing these commitments.
- 2017: The Terms of Reference for HCTs made PSEA a mandatory responsibility that requires a collective mechanism and approach.⁶
- Present: At the technical level, the IASC Results Group 2 (which integrates the former IASC AAP/ PSEA Task Team) will continue to provide a forum for humanitarian agencies to address PSEA. Initiatives to support PSEA action at country level have included the roll out of simplified and translated principles and the development and roll out of Guidelines on Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms (CBCM) for PSEA.⁷

The IASC's work on PSEA is informed by, and is taking place in tandem with, related actors, including the UN, donors, and civil society organizations. In 2016, the UN appointed a Special Coordinator to strengthen a UN system-wide approach to PSEA. The UN Secretary-General's 2017 Strategy on PSEA prioritized greater transparency in reporting, civil society engagement, and awareness raising, and led to the establishment of a UN Victims' Rights Advocate.8

When more allegations of SEA came to light in 2018, many humanitarian agencies re-committed to more ambitious reform within their respective agencies. The international Safeguarding Summit, held in London in October 2018, produced a series of sectoral commitments to bolster action on PSEA, including within the donor community and the UK NGO sector.⁹ The Summit followed an inquiry by the UK International Development Committee, which found that while the aid sector collectively has been aware of SEA by its own personnel for years, "the attention that it has given to the problem has not matched the challenge."¹⁰

In May 2018, IASC Principals reaffirmed their commitment to bolstering efforts on PSEA, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) committed USD 1 million towards an Investigations Fund as part of these efforts.¹¹ In September 2018, UNICEF's Executive Director Henrietta Fore, as the newly appointed IASC Champion on PSEA and SH, took forward these commitments through a letter to IASC Principals¹² that laid out key priorities for action, and allocated USD 11 million of internal UNICEF funding to scale up PSEA in 16 humanitarian responses.¹³

The plan focuses on achieving three key outcomes on PSEA in the areas of:

- 1) safe and accessible reporting,
- 2) quality assistance for the survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and
- 3) enhanced accountability, including investigations.

A call for collective action

Collective, joined-up action is essential for the IASC to effectively deliver on its PSEA commitments. Where even a single agency scales up action to strengthen PSEA at country level, the interventions put in place – whether it be a hotline, a women's centre, or a medical facility – help the humanitarian community to go one step further towards realizing their collective PSEA and broader accountability commitments. Whenever possible, this should build on efforts at country level to strengthen collective approaches to accountability, particularly around complaints mechanisms.

The following plan is a call to action for IASC members to dedicate the resources, expertise, and support necessary to deliver on a core set of PSEA outcomes for children and adults across all humanitarian responses.



2. PLAN FOR ADVANCING PSEA AT COUNTRY-LEVEL

he IASC Champion on PSEA and SH supports the vision of a humanitarian environment in which people affected by crises are safe and respected, and can access the protection and assistance they need without fear of exploitation or abuse by any aid worker, and in which aid workers themselves uphold an environment that prevents SEA and where they are supported, respected and empowered to deliver such assistance and protection in a manner that is free from SH.¹⁴ SEA and SH must not be tolerated; they are an unacceptable breach of the fundamental rights of the people served by the humanitarian sector and of those working within it, as well as a deep betrayal of its core values.¹⁵

The IASC's PSEA and SH Championship Strategy¹⁶ sets out three priorities through June 2020, reinforcing the priorities in UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore's letter to IASC Principals. These are:

 Safe and accessible child and gender-sensitive reporting: Encouraging victims to come forward by ensuring that safe, trusted and accessible mechanisms for reporting SEA are available in all humanitarian situations, and promotion of a "speak up" culture within IASC entities;

- Quality and accessible survivor assistance: Improving quality, survivor-centered SEA assistance and additional protection measures;
- Accountability and investigations: Strengthened vetting, reference-checking, investigation processes and disciplinary measures, including prompt and respectful investigations.

The plan focuses on achieving results for crisis-affected populations in these three priority areas which operationalize global-level commitments, such as the IASC MOS-PSEA and AAP. It is an implementation plan for collective action by the humanitarian community at country level.

Complementing global level efforts to strengthen the *prevention* of SEA, including new developments in screening and vetting personnel and the roll out of global training, the country-level scale-up plan includes actions that are necessary for both prevention and response.

To support the delivery of results, structural changes are proposed to clarify and further strengthen roles and responsibilities for PSEA at country-level, including those of the Humanitarian Coordinators and HCTs.¹⁷ Section 3 of this document provides a timeline and next steps for implementation.

PART A: PRIORITY RESULTS FOR PSEA

WHAT IS BEING ASKED OF IASC MEMBERS:

- The development of a country-level results framework on PSEA that prioritizes the three outcomes below, led by the Humanitarian Coordinator with the support of the HCT.
- IASC members at country-level contribute to delivering these collective results, through their respective field-level operations, SEA Steering Committee (HCT members) and PSEA Networks.
- PSEA is integrated in Humanitarian Response Plans (and similar appeals) to contribute resources towards
 PSEA outcomes.

OUTCOME 1: Safe and accessible reporting

Every affected child and adult in humanitarian contexts has access to safe¹⁸, child- and gender-sensitive reporting mechanisms and pathways to report SEA, through strengthening **existing or new community-based complaints mechanisms** that have the same reach as humanitarian assistance. Complaints mechanisms are to be appropriate to the context, developed in consultation with affected communities, particularly those most vulnerable to SEA, and linked to services for survivors.¹⁹

Proposed outputs include:

- Safe, accessible, child- and gender-sensitive reporting mechanisms are in place for reporting SEA in all areas where assistance is delivered, including high-risk areas. Complaint channels build upon existing mechanisms, where present, and aim to strengthen community-based reporting mechanisms.²⁰
- A SEA risk assessment and a contextualized needs assessment inform the development of new complaints channels and the reinforcement of existing channels, designed in consultation with communities as appropriate.²¹
- Training of humanitarian agencies (managers, staff, contractors, partners, consultants, etc.) on PSEA, including how to report allegations in a safe and confidential manner.
- Community consultation, mobilization and awareness raising on PSEA in each community receiving humanitarian assistance.²²

OUTCOME 2: Quality and accessible survivor assistance

Every child and adult survivor is offered quality assistance in line with the survivor's needs and wishes (such as medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, reintegration support).²³

Proposed outputs include:

- SEA survivor assistance is provided through ongoing programmes, including Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Child Protection, and resourced through the Humanitarian Response Plan and other funding mechanisms.
- Support services include community-based and school reintegration.
- PSEA Networks have in place referral pathways for SEA survivor assistance, as part of an integrated approach with GBV services.²⁴

OUTCOME 3: Accountability and investigations

Cases of SEA are investigated in a prompt, safe and respectful way, consistent with the wishes and best interests of every child survivor.

Proposed outputs include:25

- An IASC investigations fund is established for organizations without standing capacity.
- Clear standards and training on child- and gendersensitive, survivor-centered investigations are developed and endorsed by IASC members.
- IASC members track and report on the number and outcome of investigations and support periodic reviews to ensure cases are handled promptly and effectively.²⁶

PSEA Country-Level Results Framework

These proposed outcomes form the basis for a country-level results framework (see Annex), based on global-level commitments, that effectively strengthen PSEA and enable humanitarian actors to better respond when SEA occurs. The country-level results framework is proposed as a global template to be adapted to each specific context.

PART B: UPDATED STRUCTURE AT COUNTRY-LEVEL TO BETTER DELIVER RESULTS ON PSEA

WHAT IS BEING ASKED OF IASC MEMBERS:

- Ensure that in all humanitarian contexts a full-time PSEA Coordinator in the Humanitarian Coordinator's office is established, dedicated to supporting functioning inter-agency PSEA Networks.²⁷
- Step forward to co-chair the PSEA Steering Committee of the HCT/ United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and the inter-agency PSEA Network, and actively contribute to shared PSEA results.
- Deploy a dedicated PSEA Focal Point from each IASC member/agency in every humanitarian response as an active member of the PSEA Network to provide the technical support necessary at field level to deliver on the three outcomes above.²⁸

In order to deliver on the above priorities, the inter-agency PSEA coordination structure under the auspices of the HCTs should be strengthened, with clearly defined PSEA roles and responsibilities at senior management and technical levels.²⁹

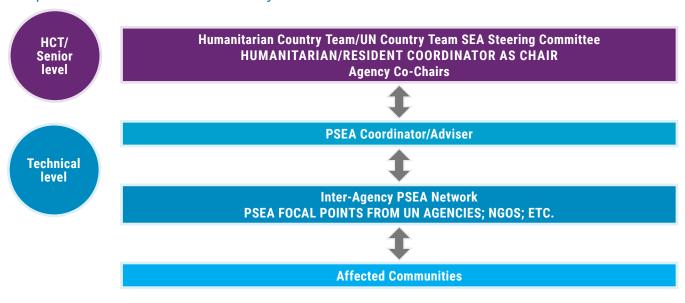
The HCT, chaired by the Humanitarian Coordinator and with the support of agency co-chairs, will serve the function of an SEA Steering Committee, supported by a technical-level PSEA Network, inclusive of all relevant partners. The Humanitarian Coordinator will regularly (quarterly) report to the Emergency Relief Coordinator – and through the Emergency Relief Coordinator to the IASC – on the

effectiveness of the PSEA Network and the actions taken to prevent and respond to SEA, including in the priority areas. This structure is proposed as a model for strengthened senior-level leadership and accountability on PSEA for adaptation as appropriate to each country context. Where a UN mission is in place, or where PSEA activities are coordinated under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator (RC) or a similar structure, for example, the proposed model would need to be adapted accordingly. The coordination of these activities should include strong collaboration with relevant actors, including AAP.

Proposed PSEA Structure at Country Level

In the proposed PSEA structure at country level (pictured below), the existing HCT would serve as the senior-level body holding the primary accountability, decision-making and oversight authority for PSEA activities at country level. In this capacity, the HCT would adopt an SEA Steering Committee function for the inter-agency PSEA Network, to provide direction, review progress, address obstacles, engage relevant stakeholders, and provide the overall support needed to effectively implement PSEA. The Humanitarian Coordinator (and/or Resident Coordinator, depending on the context), would be responsible for leading the HCT (and/or UNCT) on PSEA and overseeing the technical-level PSEA activities; these would be supported by a dedicated PSEA Coordinator who reports directly to the Humanitarian Coordinator. The PSEA Coordinator is responsible for providing the day-to-day oversight and support to the inter-agency PSEA Network.

Proposed PSEA Structure at Country Level



In some contexts, the proposed structure is already in place, or is close to being fully in place. Some Humanitarian Coordinators and Resident Coordinators have proactively allocated funding for a PSEA Coordinator, and a PSEA Network is in place with functioning systems. In other contexts, a technical-level PSEA Network may be in place, but without the oversight, proactive senior-level support and resources necessary to deliver effective systems. The proposed structure aims to systematize good practices in this area and address current gaps.30

Based on the above, the HCT (and/or UNCT) would report on PSEA to the Emergency Relief Coordinator through the Humanitarian Coordinator, with global guidance and support provided by IASC Results Group 2.

A collaborative review of this approach should take place to assess its effectiveness. The outcome of the review would become the basis for recommendations for implementation in any new emergency response, as a standard approach for the IASC going forward.

PROPOSED TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS

Actions to date



IASC PSEA/SHA Senior Focal Points reviewed and discussed the draft plan at a face to face meeting³¹.



Survey of IASC PSEA systems in 34 countries circulated to Humanitarian Coordinators to provide a baseline on current systems in place and gaps.



The IASC-UN Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment in the Organizations of the UN System convened a meeting of

Investigatory Bodies on Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment to take forward the proposed IASC Investigators Fund, and development of IASC childsensitive, survivor-centred investigation standards³².



The IASC Principals endorsed the PSEA plan.

JANUARY 2019

An IASC PSEA Country-Level Results Framework (Annex), including a set of indicators and related processes for monitoring results, was developed based on the priorities outlined above. The results of the IASC PSEA

systems mapping were circulated to IASC Principals, with a gap analysis based on the priorities outlined in the plan.

Next steps



After an IASC PSEA/SH Senior Focal Points meeting, IASC Principals, through their designated PSEA/SH Senior Focal Points, will report on how their agencies will fill gaps

identified in the mapping at the country level, to support the implementation plan.



The IASC Principals will review progress on the implementation of the PSEA priorities at country-level and endorse a monitoring system to track results.

Additional information and resources

IASC Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (AAP/PSEA) https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protectionsexual-exploitation-and-abuse

PSEA Taskforce www.pseataskforce.org/

ENDNOTES

- 1 As outlined in the Global Humanitarian Overview 2018 https://interactive.unocha.org/publication/globalhumanitarianoverview/, accessed 15 March 2019
- The six principles are: 1. SEA by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment. 2. Sexual activity with children is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence. 3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries. 4. 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. 5. Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding SEA by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms. 6. Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents SEA and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have specific responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.
- 3 IASC Plan of Action and Core Principles of Codes of Conduct on Protection from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in Humanitarian Crisis, 2002 https:// interagencystandingcommittee.org/focal-points/documents-public/iasc-planaction-and-core-principles-codes-conduct-protection-sexual>, accessed 15 March 2019
- 4 Global Review of Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN, NGO, IOM and IFRC Personnel, 2010 https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/PSEA%20Golbal%20Review%20Overview%20Publication%2015%20Sept.pdf, accessed 15 March 2019
- MOS-PSEA https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/3_minimum_operating_standards_for 2012 (Supporting agencies in institutionalizing minimum operating standards for PSEA within their respective organization at HQ level) https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/26.%20PSEA%20Work%20Plan.pdf, both accessed 15 March 2019
- 6 Standard Terms of Reference for Humanitarian Country Teams, 2017, https:// interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/hct_tors.pdf>, accessed 15 March 2019
- 7 Guideline Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2016 https:// interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/best_practice_guide_inter_ agency_community_based_complaint_mechanisms_1.pdf>
- 8 Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: a new approach, Report of the Secretary-General, 2017, A/71/818
- 9 Commitments made at the Safeguarding Summit 2018, UK Department for International Development, October 2018 www.gov.uk/government/collections/safeguarding-summit-commitments, accessed 15 March 2019
- House of Commons International Development Committee Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector Eighth Report of Session 2017–19, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/840/840.pdf>, accessed 15 March 2019
- 11 The On 31 May 2018, IASC Principals iterated their commitment to collectively strengthen the humanitarian sector's approach to preventing to SEA and sexual harassment and abuse against aid workers. They agreed on measures to strengthen the investigative capacity of agencies; share good practices on how IASC agencies prevent, investigate and respond to SEA and sexual harassment; and prevent perpetrators from moving through the sector (see Chair's statement of 1 June 2018). The IASC established a US\$1 million fund, managed by OCHA, to provide rapid grants to IASC entities to support investigations into SEA and SH allegations and to convene a meeting of the heads of their investigatory bodies to discuss challenges, how to address gaps, and further strengthen investigative capacities across the humanitarian sector.
- 12 Letter from Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF and the Champion on SEA and SHA to the IASC Principals, 24 September 2018 https:// interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-senior-focal-points-sexual-harassment-andabuse-aid-workers/documents/letter-henrietta-h-fore>, accessed 18 March 2019
- UNICEF's internal funding is dedicated to scaling up UNICEF's work on PSEA in 16 UNICEF country offices, as well as three regional offices. At present, the resources allocated will support UNICEF to enhance internal capacity to contribute to achieving the three priorities outlined in Part A below, as well as support to strengthen interagency PSEA networks (outlined in Part B). The UNICEF country offices that have received funding to scale up PSEA include: Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen.
- Strategy: Protection from and Response to SEA and Sexual Harassment- IASC Championships on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment, 1 November 2018, https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/181101_iasc_champions_sea_sh_strategy_final.pdf, accessed 18 March 2019
- 15 ibid

- 16 The IASC Championship Strategy was presented by Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) to the IASC PSEA/SHA Senior Focal Points, on behalf of UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as current and future Champions. The Strategy provides an overview of key priorities and a joint vision for the IASC's work on PSEA/SHA that the Championship role will support.
- 17 Countries and settings with Humanitarian Response Plans or Refugee Response Plans will be prioritized. For updated information see OCHA Humanitarian Response www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations>, accessed 18 March 2019
- 18 The PSEA safeguards necessary for a complaints channel include, for example, protections of confidentiality, the option of anonymous reporting, and whistleblowing protection, as well as established referral pathways to GBV and child protection service providers.
- This involves the strengthening of existing complaint channels, as needed, with the safeguards necessary for receiving and handling SEA allegations, as well as the expansion or implementation of additional channels where there are gaps. The outcome aims to provide safe, accessible, confidential, gender and child-sensitive pathways to report SEA to all members of affected communities. This includes the utilization of existing and/or new community-based feedback/ complaints mechanisms. The PSEA safeguards necessary for a complaint channel include, for example, protections of confidentiality, the option of anonymous reporting, and whistleblowing protection, as well as established referral pathways to GBV/CP service providers. For more information, see the IASC Best Practice Guide Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms, 2016 https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/documents-50, accessed 18 March 2019
- 20 In order for complaint channels to be accessible, the barriers to reporting that marginalized and vulnerable groups face must be taken into account, including related to age, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, religion, ethnicity, language and literacy level.
- 21 The types of mechanisms and targeted locations to be determined by each HCT based on an assessment of the context and linked where possible to, including a mapping of existing interagency feedback/complaints mechanisms. In instances where such a mechanism does not exist, the HCT should consider establishing an interagency feedback mechanism which includes a thorough referral system for SEA. This may include, for example existing, training of front-line staff, existing phone hotlines, SMS, PSEA focal points, including a referral mechanism to healthcare providers, and/or a combination of the above, as is culturally and linguistically appropriate for the local context.
- 22 To be carried out as part of ongoing community engagement in humanitarian contexts. This could include the sharing of PSEA principles and codes of conduct (including what will be done in response to any complaint) in accessible formats (simplified texts, picture messages, audio recordings, graphics or videos) and languages affected people are known to understand; disseminated through the widest possible range of appropriate channels to reach all affected people.
- 23 Assistance for survivors is guided by the UN Victim Assistance Protocol, Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection standards, including case management guidelines: Interagency Gender Based Violence Case Management Guidelines and Training Package, 2017, http://gbvaor.net/resources/interagency-gender-based-violence-case-management-guidelines-training-package/ and Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Training Course on the InterAgency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection, 2018, https://alliancecpha.org/en/online-learning-materials/cm-guidelines-101, both accessed 18 March 2019
- 24 This would also include training on SEA survivor assistance, and referral pathways for inter-agency complaints mechanisms more broadly, as per the country context.
- The following outputs seek to reinforce the existing commitments in the 2012 IASC MOS-PSEA, and to address current gaps. See Section 6: Effective recruitment and performance management; Section 8: Internal complaints and investigation procedures in place.
- 26 In accordance with their respective reporting requirements, which can include to governing or executive boards. For UN agencies/entities, this would include the existing reporting requirements of SEA allegations on a quarterly basis to the UN Secretary-General.
- 27 The PSEA Coordinator would be a full-time, dedicated position. This will ensure full coverage across all contexts. This could involve IASC member(s) committing to supporting this position in specific humanitarian contexts, as is the current practice, particularly where there are gaps.
- 28 The 2012 IASC MOS-PSEA includes a commitment to designate a PSEA Focal Point. This further strengthens that commitment by extending it to field operations, so that IASC members actively contribute to PSEA results at field level.
- See the IASC Global Standard Operating Procedures on Inter-Agency Cooperation in Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms, 2016, https:// interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-includingprotection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/documents-51>, accessed 18 March 2019
- 30 An HCT mapping on PSEA is currently underway and will be used to identify current gaps in PSEA systems across humanitarian contexts.
- Final Minutes of the IASC Senior Focal Points Meeting, 2 November 2018 https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-senior-focal-points-sexual-harassment-and-abuse-aid-workers/news/final-summary-joint-iasc-and-, accessed 18 March 2019