

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and United Nations Executive Group to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment

Third Meeting of Investigatory Bodies on Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment

11 and 12 June 2024
WHO Headquarters, Geneva
Summary report



Table of Contents

Background.....3

I. Setting the Scene – Towards harmonised and complementary approaches to investigations.....3

II. What a Victim/Survivor-Centered Approach to investigations entails.....4

III. Operationalising a V/SCA through the provision of victim care.....6

IV. Key performance indicators for measuring the integration of a VCA during investigations.....8

V. Good practices and guidance for the integration of a VCA into sexual misconduct investigations.....11

VI. Augmenting investigation capacity through external expertise and capacity development.....13

VII. Evidentiary standards in sexual misconduct investigations.....14

VIII. Management support for integrating a survivor centered approach in sexual misconduct investigations.....17

IX. Way forward for harmonized approaches.....19

Annex I. List of participants.....21

Annex II. Agenda.....22

Annex III. IASC UNEG Meeting of Investigatory Bodies Evaluation Summary.....24

Background

Investigations are a critical component of accountability. Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse or Sexual Harassment (SEAH) have indicated their primary reasons not to report are fear of retaliation, concern that the process takes too long, and lack of trust that it is safe to speak up – that there will be a breach of confidentiality, or they will not be believed (burden of proof). Victims may be more encouraged to report if they know that the investigation will be effective, and that their well-being and safety are at the forefront.

In the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Strategy (IASC), the overarching purpose of harmonizing SEA investigations is to encourage victims, affected people, and affected personnel to trust our accountability processes. Consistent, harmonized approaches will be encouraged, recognizing the independence of investigations and the different legal frameworks of individual IASC members.

To achieve this, the IASC and the United Nations Executive Group to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment in the Organizations of the UN System (UNEG) convened heads and senior staff of investigatory bodies and senior leaders working on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (PSEAH). In her opening statement, the World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director and IASC Champion for PSEAH, Cindy McCain, underscored the objectives of the meeting were to encourage closer coordination between the United Nations (UN), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and investigatory bodies, consider opportunities to harmonize investigative practices, and to foster a victim and survivor centered approach to investigations.

More than eighty participants included representatives from thirty UN Secretariat entities, departments, agencies, funds and programmes, the World Bank Group, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movements, and nine INGOs/NGO consortia. The Special Coordinator for Improving UN response to SEA, Under Secretary-General (USG) Christian Saunders, and the UN Victims' Rights Advocate (VRA) Najla Nassif Palma were also in attendance.

I. Setting the Scene – Towards harmonised and complementary approaches to investigations

The first session reviewed objectives and identified opportunities to address persisting challenges including from previous meetings in 2018 and 2019.

Ms. Lisa McClennon, Director of Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) at the World Health Organization (WHO), highlighted the need for close collaboration within the UN system to address the scourge of SEA. Lingering impunity had repercussions beyond one single UN agency and transcends the boundaries of “black” and “blue” UN, as the communities we came to serve do not make such distinctions. This is an opportunity to move from theory to practice and validate concrete tools to enhance effectiveness and measure progress of investigative work.

The IASC PSEAH Champion, WFP Executive Director Cindy McCain, in a video statement, underscored the importance of accountability through rigorous investigations. For this purpose, the need for a jointly agreed, harmonized results framework for monitoring progress on SEA cannot be overstated. In addition, concrete guidance for victim-centred and -sensitive investigations is indispensable.

USG Christian Saunders expressed commitment to close collaboration between his office and the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate (OVRA). In addition, he advocated for a holistic approach, addressing the root causes of SEA and enhancing gender equality, socio-economic opportunities for women, and to empower them. Limited accountability undermines victims/survivors/witnesses' trust in the system. The role of leadership to address SEA cannot be overstated. PSEA should be institutionalized across the UN system and properly resourced so that investigations are processed, and paternity claims tackled in a reasonable timeframe. A solid framework measuring progress in SEA investigations was therefore indispensable.

To optimize efficiency and victim-centred-approach of investigations, Mr. Andrew Staines, Assistant-Director General at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and Vice-Chair of the UN Executive Group to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment, underscored the need to build confidence; to enhance capacities of investigators; to support/assist survivors, also in the most difficult circumstances. The UN Executive Group remains an important ally in strengthening processes and tools, including through the ClearCheck database, the investigators manual, and the principles of victim-centred approach. UNEG remains committed, over the next two years, to disseminate the investigators' manual, enhance capacities of investigators and address timelines of investigations.

All speakers highlighted their commitment to identify and follow-up on concrete results emanating from the meeting.

II. What a Victim/Survivor-Centered Approach to investigations entails

This session focused on a victim/survivor-centered approach to investigations and explored how such an approach is defined and can be integrated across various organizations. The moderator, Ms. Khaliunaa Garamgaibaatar, Investigations Specialist for Sexual Misconduct, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) screened the short film titled "[I have the right](#)" produced by the office of the VRA. The film featured testimonies from victims, highlighting their rights to dignity, safety, support, and confidentiality.

United Nations Victims' Rights Advocate Ms. Najla Nassif Palma emphasized the crucial relation between a victim-centered approach and investigations, reconciling victims' rights with the investigative process, ensuring that victims had a voice, received assistance, and achieved justice. She noted that the main aim of investigators and victims was to stop harmful behavior, prevent future incidents and hold perpetrators accountable. Justice was identified as a shared goal between investigators and victims. This involved answering key questions about the incident while ensuring

that victims' rights were respected and addressing their fears of retaliation and providing necessary support such as transportation, translators, and psychological assistance.

The Victims' Rights Advocate emphasized that the well-being of victims must always be prioritized, even if they chose not to participate in the investigation. Privacy, confidentiality, and respectful communication are essential in this respect. Effective investigations may coexist with a victim-centered approach by ensuring justice and accountability. Specialized expertise and support from victims' rights officers facilitate a victim-centred approach.

Mr. Henrik Malmquist, Head of Investigation Service, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provided a detailed overview of the policies guiding their investigative work. He mentioned UNHCR's recently adopted policy on addressing sexual misconduct, which mandates reporting suspicions of sexual exploitation and abuse and stressed the need for balancing mandatory reporting with respecting victims' confidentiality and desires. He also discussed [UNHCR's 2020 policy on a victim-centered approach](#), which lists principles including due process and outlines the roles and responsibilities of various entities within the organization. Mr. Malmquist also noted UNHCR's regulatory framework administrative instruction from 2019, which already set out a requirement for investigators to be victim centred.

Ms. Aurélie Martin, Senior Investigation Specialist, UNHCR, explained how the organization concretely applies a victim centred approach and mentioned three elements:

- Trauma sensitive interviewing, which includes non-blaming interactions.
- Information sharing with victims at all stages of the investigation, including an explanation of the process, rules, rights, and management of expectations.
- Interaction with the senior victim care officer and protection officer, who provide support to victims of sexual harassment.

She mentioned security concerns for the victim as the primary challenge, which may lead to an investigation not being pursued.

Ms. Francesca Marotta, Chief Methodology, Education and Training Section, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) shared insights from the field, particularly in conducting investigations of sexual violence as a human rights violation. She emphasized the importance of adopting protection measures to safeguard victims and witnesses, including maintaining confidentiality and ensuring physical and emotional safety. Ms. Marotta also discussed operationalizing the principle of "Do No Harm" through trauma-informed interviewing and avoiding re-interviewing victims. She highlighted the importance of ensuring protection and accountability through collaboration with state authorities to protect victims and integrate human rights approaches into national judicial processes. This had involved advocating for and cooperating on the adoption of measures into national legislation to protect victims and encourage their participation by protecting victim's identity during judicial proceedings through protection tools such as voice distortion and face covering.

The ensuing discussion brought up several practical challenges and potential solutions. Concerns were raised about the effectiveness of investigation processes, particularly the issue of perpetrators remaining in organizations due to unsubstantiated investigations. The balance between

maintaining impartiality and providing victim support during investigations was discussed, and the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing the problem.

Protection of victims is a significant issue, especially security concerns in conflict zones where protecting victims proves particularly difficult. Sometimes the most victim-centered decision was not to pursue an investigation to ensure the victim's safety. Collaborating with national courts to provide better protection and relocating victims or altering the workplace environment to avoid contact between victims and perpetrators are practical solutions agencies have implemented. Other proposed mitigating measures include conducting objective threat assessments, maintaining confidentiality, placing perpetrators on administrative leave, and investigating other misconduct to substantiate allegations indirectly.

Resource constraints are a major barrier to implementing a fully victim-centered approach. Collaboration and clear roles across UN and NGO partners are needed, with calls for developing harmonized guidelines, increasing training, improving reporting systems, and advocating for more resources. Specialized personnel to support victims throughout the investigation process is essential to support a victim-centered approach.

The session concluded with a commitment to integrating a victim-centered approach into investigations and the importance of ongoing collaboration, resource allocation, and management support. The panelists agreed that while challenges remain, a coordinated and comprehensive effort is necessary to protect and support victims of sexual misconduct effectively.

Recommendations:

- A. Work towards a systemic, unified approach to victim support and investigation processes across the UN, ensuring consistency and effectiveness in handling cases of sexual misconduct. Improve coordination among UN agencies and adequate allocation of resources to support victims comprehensively.
- B. Explore the development of comprehensive policies and guidelines that balance investigative needs with victims' rights, incorporating trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches.
- C. Advocate for legal reforms and stronger protection measures at the national level to safeguard victims' rights and well-being.

III. Operationalising a V/SCA through the provision of victim care

In this session, the Senior Victim Care Officers from UNHCR, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Senior Victims' Rights Officer in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (in the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate) and the Victim's Advocate from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global fund) shared the main challenges and learnings from supporting survivors during investigations.

Ms. Elizabeth Pender, Global PSEAH Coordinator, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), moderating the session, recapped that SEAH does not happen in a vacuum and that victims/survivors are not a monolithic group. Each person will have a range of emotional needs,

responses, reactions and resiliency which will fluctuate throughout the investigation process. By making investigations accessible to one victim/survivor, we encourage others to come forward.

Ms. Zuhura Mahamed, Senior Victim Care Officer at UNHCR, provided practical examples of effective victim-centered collaboration between herself and the investigation team. She emphasized that all interactions begin with considering the individual going through the process, focusing on the support they need and their specific requirements. Guiding principles on Victim-Centered Approaches (VCA) are adjusted to each situation. From the outset, everyone is offered support from the victim care officer, with the option to opt-out. Prior to an investigation, a session is held to ensure individuals understand what the investigative process will entail, and psychological preparedness, such as ways to manage anxiety, is provided. For each investigation, protective measures are considered, with discussions before and throughout the investigation process with the investigations team. When further information is needed, which can be an anxiety-inducing moment for the victim, careful consideration is given to determine who should initiate contact and through which channels. When the investigators conclude the investigation, they consider how to best deliver this information to the victim/survivor. A joint appointment can be arranged where investigators explain their conclusions, with the victim care officer present to help process emotions and discuss the next steps.

Ms. Mihaela-Aurélia Porumb, Senior Victim Rights Officer (SVRO), OVRA DRC cited an instance where OIOS investigated 23 allegations of SEA in north DRC, in a very insecure location. To ensure the victims' consent in the organization's administrative process, Ms. Porumb reached out individually to all of them and assessed their needs, including psychological support, which was coordinated with United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF). She organized safe and confidential locations to interview the victims, so they were not exposed to further stigmatization by the local community. Recognizing that many victims lacked the means to participate in the investigation, Ms. Porumb provided access to safe transportation, food, and support for the victims and their children. Reflecting on her own experiences as an investigator, Ms. Porumb raised ethical challenges, such as the difficulty of facilitating the victims' participation in the investigation without it being misconstrued as an attempt to influence their statements. She noted that at that time, there was no one to support such activities, highlighting the importance of having dedicated Victims' Rights Officers in these processes.

Mr. Mirko Fernandez, Victim Advocate, the Global Fund highlighted visibility of the individual and their lived experience are an essential aspect of the victim-centered approach. Advocates should work to remove discriminatory barriers, ensuring victims can participate meaningfully in investigations. This involves identifying and addressing barriers to accessibility and availability of support services, and ensuring these services are adaptable and appropriate to individual needs. Keeping the victim informed throughout the process is empowering.

Ms. Gamu Mandangu Bakasa, Victim Support Specialist at UNOPS, emphasized the importance of maintaining a victim-centered approach when investigations and victim support involve multiple agencies. In the humanitarian field, staff often move between organisations, which can disrupt the support they receive. It is crucial to collaborate effectively to ensure there are no gaps in access to support. When one agency handles the investigation and another provides support, we

must formalize collaboration within the limits of due process to ensure victims do not feel neglected.

In the discussion, key points were identified where support is particularly crucial. These include before the investigation starts, as individuals decide whether to participate; during the investigation interview, which can be highly emotional; and during periods where there is no contact with the victim, when reassurance is needed that the investigation is ongoing. Additional support is necessary when the outcome is received or when additional information is requested, as anxiety often increases. To address this, the role of victim advocate could be embedded throughout the investigation plan to ensure collaboration at all stages, while all investigation participants need to be treated in respectful manner, including subjects. Survivors often ask for a trusted person to accompany them, providing comfort and safety, and helping process and retain information, and this should be facilitated where possible.

USG Saunders noted that SVROs often use their own money to pay for victims' assistance and that many organizations do not have a dedicated budget to support survivors. His office is looking at funding strategies for PSEA and victim support, and the VRA is putting together a working group to harmonize the types of assistance.

Though investigators and victim care officers are essential to maintain integrity during investigations, the current funding environment does not yet allow for both functions. Donors and senior leaders should be involved in these discussions to ensure appropriate systems are in place, which will require finding creative and innovative solutions, such as creating a roster of counsellors or involving PSEA Coordinators where they are deployed.

Recommendations:

- A. Identify key points during the investigation where victim support should be embedded.
- B. Consider letting the victim choose a trusted person of their choice to attend the interview with investigators.
- C. Request PSEA Coordinators to identify appropriate referrals for victim support/assistance throughout the investigation in countries where they are deployed.

IV. Key performance indicators for measuring the integration of a VCA during investigations

This session dived into different ways to measure progress and assess impact for adopting a victim/survivor centered approach in SEAH investigations by considering the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) developed by the IASC Expert Panel on SEAH Investigations and the results framework from the Chief Executive Board (CEB) Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment. The aim of presenting these two approaches is to gain from the work of the CEB Task Force and identify areas for harmonization, noting that the KPIs focus on the investigations process and the CEB results framework applies more broadly to prevention and response efforts.

Ms. Christine Ash-Buechner, Head of PSEA and Safeguarding at the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Mr. Callum Weeks, Director of the Office of Inspections and Investigations, WFP and Chair of the IASC Expert Panel presented the KPIs that were developed by the Panel. The KPIs will enable investigation and PSEA professionals to measure whether an investigation has been conducted in accordance with the [IASC Definition and Principles of a Victim/Survivor Centered Approach](#). Although the KPIs are designed to be applied to an individual investigation, the data collected could be aggregated and reported annually to provide an overall indication as to whether investigations across the system are integrating a Victim/Survivor Centered Approach.

The KPIs follow the ten principles in the IASC VCA definition, namely: Safety, Security and Well-Being; Confidentiality; Dignity and Respect; Non-Discrimination and Inclusion; Ask, Listen and Engage; Transparency and Information; Informed Consent/Choice; Support and Assistance; Feedback, and Provisions for Child Victims/Survivors. Participants provided feedback on the KPIs which will be incorporated in the final version, with reference to corresponding standards being used in other sectors. For example, there are dignity and well-being measurements used by the Gender Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) which could feed into the KPIs for Dignity and Respect and Non-Discrimination and Inclusion. The KPI involving feedback from victims/survivors should allow for course corrections towards a more victim/survivor centered approach based on their experience. The CEB Task Force survey for sexual harassment victims could be repurposed for SEA victims/survivors with considerations on data handling. In some cases, feedback on investigations is not obtained through a post-investigation survey but through other means which should also be considered.

The principle of redress, to respect victim/survivor rights to seek remedies from perpetrators, will be included in the final version of the KPIs. However, it was noted that KPIs regarding disciplinary actions will not be incorporated as this is beyond the remit of investigations.

The timelines on communication with the victim included in the draft KPIs have been developed so they could reflect the framework for investigations in which both NGOs and the UN operate in. The KPIs do not include a definite timeline on the length of the investigation itself.

While retaliation is defined differently across the system, it is an important aspect to consider adding in the KPIs under Security.¹ Participants recommended that the final document should state the full IASC VCA principle in each KPI section for ease of comprehension. A survey was circulated to participants to provide detailed feedback on each of the KPIs; the input will be integrated into the next draft. The final version will be presented to the IASC for endorsement.

Following the presentation and feedback on the KPIs, Ms. Nicole Vareil, Chief a.i., Head Human Resources Staff Relations Branch, WFP, presented the CEB results framework which was developed by WFP on behalf of the CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment. The

¹ [UN Protection Against Retaliation Policy](#) for those who report misconduct:

1.4 Retaliation means any direct or indirect detrimental action that adversely affects the employment or working conditions of an individual, where such action has been recommended, threatened or taken for the purpose of punishing, intimidating or injuring an individual because that individual engaged in an activity protected by the present policy.

framework sets out concrete forward-thinking indicators of good practice in preventing and responding to sexual harassment to address the gaps that were identified following an analysis of the results of the Annual Survey of CEB entities. The framework comprises 19 indicators, among which 9 relate to a victim-centered approach. As part of its IASC PSEAH Championship, WFP will propose the framework for IASC endorsement.

Some of the results framework indicators overlap with the KPIs (e.g. Transparency and Information, Feedback, Support and Assistance.) In contrast to the timelines proposed in the KPIs, there are no specific timeline indicators (except for intake decisions, which should be within 1 month). Timelines are instead suggested as examples of good practice. The framework also includes indicative timelines for disciplinary actions.

Following a victim-centered approach in sexual harassment investigations, some organizations allow for conditional reporting where a victim/survivor is able to report allegations which will only be actioned for a potential investigation or informal process if other reports are made against the same alleged offender or if circumstances change, such as the victim and alleged perpetrator are no longer working in the same team.

WFP has clearly delineated roles and responsibilities in its SOPs for ensuring the need for protective measures is assessed. They have also a dedicated funding stream to meet the costs of protective or support measures for victims/survivors, including when they are not staff members. This has proven helpful for managers in the field to hire temporary staff to ensure there are no gaps in the provision of services while the alleged perpetrator is on administrative leave.

The framework also reflects additional ways to respond to lower-level sexual harassment allegations other than opening a formal investigation. Informal interventions can be undertaken by management, human resources, or a dedicated function. Victims can submit a complaint to Human Resources who can caution alleged perpetrators about their problematic behavior and recommend further training. Early targeting of inappropriate behaviors is a critical component to prevent sexual misconduct.

Recommendations:

- A. Submit the KPIs and the results framework from the Chief Executive Board (CEB) Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment to the IASC for endorsement.

V. Good practices and guidance for the integration of a VCA into sexual misconduct investigations

The session built on the previous day's discussions by considering ways to systematize the integration of a VCA into investigations of SEAH allegations. It provided an opportunity to review the development of SEA and SH investigation manuals and identify good practices to harmonize approaches.

Ms. Suzette Schultz, Director, United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) presented the challenges and successes in implementing the [CEB Investigator's Manual for Investigations of Sexual Harassment Complaints](#). The Manual was developed to standardize and improve the investigation of sexual harassment complaints within the UN. Aimed at providing clear guidelines and procedures for investigators, the Manual presents foundational investigation principles and protocols, provides detailed steps for conducting investigations and presents guidelines on confidentiality, evidence collection, and reporting.

Since its publication in 2021, the Manual helped create a standardized approach across UN Agencies, Funds, and Programmes and increased consistency in handling cases, leading to fairer outcomes. It has also been utilized in training programmes to enhance the skills and knowledge of investigators; increased awareness about sexual harassment; and led to the development of better support systems for victims and a greater emphasis on confidentiality and protection from retaliation. However, for better outcomes, there is a need for training on the Manual and addressing disparities in application across different UN offices. There are also resource constraints for investigations and barriers in navigating different cultural attitudes towards sexual harassment. Challenges also remain in ensuring comprehensive victim/survivor support, including protection during and after the investigation, maintaining confidentiality and preventing retaliation.

A case study was presented to illustrate how, for a Victim-Centered Approach to fully work, it is essential that parties involved at every stage from reporting through investigation to the disciplinary process, understand and fully embrace the principles of a victim-centered approach. A survivor who had been compelled to testify at an appeals tribunal had experienced this as being deeply harmful, stating that there was "little or no respect or consideration to [her] dignity or well-being." Noting that such an approach had significant potential to deter victims from coming forward, a joint initiative by several bodies, including OIOS, UN OVRA and the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the UN Response to SEA (OSCSEA), succeeded in attaining a procedural amendment that the Tribunals are responsible for a judicial review and not a merit review; whilst still allowing for witnesses to be called.

It was recommended that the CEB Manual for Investigations of Sexual Harassment Complaints be endorsed by the IASC to improve a survivor or victim's experience when they step forward to seek accountability for the wrong that has been done to them.

Ms. Irene Raciti, Consultant for the IASC Expert Panel on SEAH Investigations presented the outline of the draft Investigators' Manual for Investigations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Complaints to Integrate a Victim-Centered Approach, including good practices. This is a

companion to the CEB Manual for Investigations of Sexual Harassment Complaints. The background to the manual is the [IASC Vision and Strategy: Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment \(PSEAH\) 2022–2026](#) commitment to set guidelines for a victim-centered, trauma-informed, age-appropriate approach to investigations. In September 2022, the IASC established the Expert Panel on Standards for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment Investigations and tasked it to provide guidance on implementing a Victim-Centered Approach when conducting investigations of SEA, along with key performance indicators. The guidance and good practices outlined in the Manual are based on a review of existing standards and guidelines as well as recommendations and advice gathered through interviews with 48 experts and practitioners in diverse fields, including investigation, PSEAH, child protection and human rights. Indirect feedback from victims/survivors was gathered through interactions with UN OVRA, PSEAH and Victim Care Officers.

The Manual is intended to provide guidance to investigators but can also be used as reference for an assessment of the resources required to conduct an SEA investigation with a VCA. Good practices identified in the Manual fall under three main categories: Cooperation and sharing of information with other key actors; expertise, capacities and resources needed to conduct investigations with a VCA; and Victim-Investigator interactions. The Manual also includes risk assessments and detailed guidance for direct interaction between the investigator and victim, specifically during interviews. The annexes include five case studies to illustrate VCA challenges and good practices; and evidentiary standards and UN Tribunals review of disciplinary measures in relation to cases of SEA.

SEA investigations are one element of a larger approach requiring all parties to apply a VCA cohesively and transparently to ensure that the organization can deliver on its PSEAH commitments. Accordingly, while victim assistance and support lie outside the scope of an SEA investigation, SEA investigations should be conducted in a way that maximizes access to assistance, support, and justice for victims, while minimizing any negative impact the investigative process may have upon them. Ultimately, victim/survivor's protection and Do No Harm concerns should always remain paramount in deciding and shaping the techniques and methods employed.

Participants were provided with an opportunity to share good practice on different aspects of the manual; this will be incorporated into the next revision, which will be reviewed by the Advisory Group, chaired by the ASG of United Nations Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), and then proposed to the IASC for endorsement.

Recommendations:

- A. Submit the CEB Manual for Investigations of Sexual Harassment Complaints together with the finalised IASC Expert Panel Investigators' Manual for Investigations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Complaints to Integrate a Victim-Centered Approach to the IASC for endorsement.
- B. UNRIS, the Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the response to SEA (OSCSEA) and the Office of the Victims Rights Advocate (OVRA) to encourage the adoption and use of the finalised IASC Expert Panel Investigators' Manual by investigatory bodies.

VI. Augmenting investigation capacity through external expertise and capacity development

Panelists representing four organisations presented innovative approaches to addressing capacity gaps on quality victim-centered investigations.

Mr. Walter Brill, Director of Accountability Initiatives at the Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance (CHS Alliance), highlighted the important gaps between policy and practice on accountability for SEAH. Smaller NGOs face challenges in terms of their ability to investigate and address complaints, such as limited resources, limited capacity, lack of trust in investigation schemes run by the UN or supported by international donors. The Investigator Qualification Training Scheme (IQTS), implemented with funding from the US Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), aims to address this gap, including gender gap among investigators. IQTS is based on a four-tier system of incremental learning, including self-directed learning, online modules, a practical four-week course and continual professional development. Subsidies facilitate access for smaller NGOs from the global south. Beyond training and capacity building, the IQTS offers a community of practice to accompany newly trained investigators throughout their learning process; a mentorship programme; an investigator roster and an e-learning course for managers (to be set up in 2025).

Ms. Isabelle Ginet-Kauders, Head of Investigations at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) underlined the important successes IFRC was able to achieve through joint investigations with limited resources (only 5 Senior investigators globally). Joint investigations with National RC Societies constitute an important opportunity to build investigative capacity through focal points and to facilitate the National Societies' ownership of their own accountability processes. For this purpose, IFRC has established a roster of focal points from National Societies for fraud, corruption, and sexual misconduct investigations and enhances capacities and professional qualifications of roster members. While there are no limitations in terms of professional profiles for the selection of focal points, senior management is excluded, and motivation is assessed. Embedding focal points from local communities to join the investigations greatly facilitates dialogue with communities and the National Society, guarantees a more transparent process and the buy-in for any disciplinary process and eventual litigation. Several safeguards are foreseen, such as Terms of Reference and signed Non-Disclosure Agreements.

Ms. Laura Ragan, Senior Director of Safeguarding Investigations at Mercy Corps presented an approach based on the use of volunteers. Identified through an annual call open to all professional profiles (except senior Management), these volunteers, once selected, receive a week-long training. Due to their consequently heightened awareness of reporting and investigation practices, they can contribute to investigation and act as country-based "co-investigators". With the overall aim to expand Mercy Corps investigator capacity, this initiative has been gradually expanded - from one volunteer "investigator" in each country to one in each field location – and contributed to promoting accountability whilst also making it more accessible.

Ms. Colleen Striegel, Executive Director and Bethanie Saint Louis, Senior Associate from HumanitarianHR underlined the need for investigators to have a cultural understanding, be well-trained and swiftly available. External investigators were often called upon where there is fear of bias, lack of specialized capacity or cultural sensitivity. Calling on external investigators can be more cost-effective when compared to training and mentoring investigators from within the respective organization. However, building internal capacity remains an important part of every organization's overall responsibility. By combining internal capabilities with strategic external support, organizations can ensure that all investigations are conducted promptly, thoroughly, fairly, and credibly.

All initiatives constitute examples of innovative, cost-efficient solutions, with the additional benefit of enhancing local expertise and accountability.

Recommendations:

- A. Build on existing initiatives to harmonize guidance, training content, certification, and monitoring towards a joint capacity building mechanism under the IASC.
- B. Explore establishing standing capacity /investigator pool across IASC organizations, complementing existing rosters (ex: Justice Rapid Response, Investigation rosters like the one the Office of Human Resources Management keeps at the UN Secretariat).
- C. Outreach to partners to promote initiatives to implement a VCA. This should include provisions and obligations in contracts and agreements with partners on investigatory standards, certifications, and participation in joint investigations where appropriate.

VII. Evidentiary standards in sexual misconduct investigations

Panelists discussed how administrative tribunals consider evidence, focusing on the implications this has for sexual misconduct investigations.

Ms. Peri Lynne Johnson, Director of Legal Affairs, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), presented the results of a review of evidentiary standards, involving investigators and lawyers, with the subgroup comprising of representatives from the United Nations Appeals Tribunal (UNAT), Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization (ILOAT), and the World Bank tribunal. Both the World Bank and UNAT have used the standard of 'clear and convincing evidence', whereas ILOAT demands a standard of 'beyond reasonable doubt' for misconduct cases. According to the review, these differing evidentiary standards were not a clear reporting barrier, with most cases involving disciplinary standards for all three tribunals being upheld. The review found that the most common reasons why cases were rescinded include non-compliance with investigation procedures, issues during the investigation or disciplinary process, failure to bring a formal charge of misconduct, a disproportionate sanction, the decision maker lacking authority, and the failure to disclose a medical condition.

Ms. Phyllis Hwang, Senior Legal Officer in the UN Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), also affirmed that evidentiary standards do not pose an undue burden in defending disciplinary standards before UNAT. She highlighted that since 2010, 81% of disciplinary sanctions have not been challenged, and that 71% of United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) judgements over the same period that have addressed disciplinary sanctions and followed appeals have confirmed the original sanction. Beginning in 2022 there is a trend of UNAT judgements rescinding disciplinary standards because of an overreliance on OIOS reports by the UNDT, which they considered to be hearsay. Hearsay has evidentiary value but when a case relies solely on hearsay evidence, it is not clear and convincing. There is therefore rationale for changing submissions to tribunals, where underlying evidence should be referred to directly, not just through the OIOS report. Witness' testimony can be considered as hearsay if they do not check it is accurately transcribed or ascribe veracity to it beforehand. After a statute change in 2022, UNAT considers direct testimony as the best evidence, so witnesses should be called when feasible, although this is not always possible. Because UNAT is sending a clear message to investigators regarding what is reliable for witness statements, investigators need to adjust their practices accordingly.

Mr. David Sullivan, Deputy General Counsel, The World Bank Group, said that the Bank asked whether the current standard of evidence being used in investigatory misconduct and judicial investigations is the right one. He drew a dividing line between whether there was 'clear and convincing' evidence for sexual harassment and whether it was more likely than not that sexual harassment occurred in a particular case. The turning point for the World Bank was deciding not to defend a clear case of sexual harassment that was initially determined to be unbecoming conduct. There has now been a change in standards at the Bank to 'preponderance of evidence' due to the proactive approach of its board, bringing it into line with other International Financial Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This occurred in late 2022, and since then there has been a small uptick in cases coming forward, as previously junior staff said the higher standard of evidence was a deterrent to reporting. The new standards are included in the statute of the World Bank Tribunal, meaning that tribunal judges are bound to follow them.

Ms. Lucie Laplante, General Counsel, IFRC, focused upon how ILOAT standards of proof could be worked with to sanction perpetrators even when 'beyond reasonable doubt' was not fully met from a legal perspective. International IFRC staff are subject to ILOAT jurisdiction, while national staff are subject to national law and courts. ILOAT officially requires the highest standard of proof of 'beyond reasonable doubt'. This has led to challenges because the IFRC legal team has been telling investigators that their reports must meet this standard to be useful and admissible. However, in practice, 'beyond reasonable doubt' can be interpreted in a manner that is closer to 'clear and convincing', because without this flexibility, some terminations and disciplinary measures would not have been upheld. Two principles for successfully sanctioning perpetrators include deference to the investigatory body and organizational discretion.

Ms. Sigrid Kranawetters, Senior Advisor to the WHO Director-General, spoke about SEA allegations implicating the WHO during the 2021 Ebola response in DRC. As member states, donors and the public were primarily obtaining information about the cases through the media,

WHO had to act quickly to demonstrate swift and effective action. It was easier to take action in cases against contractors, as evidentiary standards for those cases do not depend on ILOAT as they would for staff. It was also challenging for WHO to support victims because they were predominantly from outside the organization. Like Ms. Laplante, she said that ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ cannot always be established for sexual misconduct but can be established in relation to the reputational and financial damage caused by the perpetrator to the organization. Investigations should be broad and in-depth, but also focus on aspects WHO can control. WHO has now adopted a comprehensive approach to SEAH, using the umbrella term sexual misconduct. When procedures are carried out correctly, 90 percent of disciplinary actions will stand at the tribunal stage.

Judge Sean Wallace, President of the United Nations Dispute Tribunals, said that when termination of employment is a possible outcome for a case heard in front of the UNDT or UNAT, misconduct must be established by ‘clear and convincing’ evidence. In other cases, ‘preponderance of evidence’ is the standard used. The Judge highlighted the difference in the approaches of UNDT and ILOAT, is that the former not only adjudicates but also takes on an inquisitorial role as to whether misconduct has been proven by clear and convincing evidence. Through an amendment in UNDT’s statute in 2023, the Tribunal can admit evidence beyond that presented by the Secretary General, to make an assessment about whether misconduct took place, whether the disciplinary measures imposed were proportionate to the offense, and whether the applicant’s due process rights were observed. OIOS investigative reports are important evidence, and recorded conversations showing SEAH are admissible and not a breach of the alleged perpetrator’s right to privacy. In addition, SEAH victims often do not come forward due to investigations taking too long, fear of retaliation, and concerns about confidentiality. The Judge highlighted that translation issues often contribute to delays in the process. As a solution, investigators should maintain contact with victims throughout the process and documents should be shared immediately with the UNDT while translation is requested.

The UN VRA highlighted initiatives for engaging with tribunal judges, including bringing them to see challenges in field contexts and their agreement to include training in VCA, for example by utilizing alternative approaches to testifying in court.

The ensuing discussion included questions about whether standards should be harmonized, how hearing cases at tribunals can become more victim-centered, and whether cases should be brought to tribunals when it appears SEAH occurred despite difficulty meeting evidentiary standards.

The differences between ILOAT’s paper-only system and UNDT/UNAT’s hearings with testimonies were highlighted. It was reaffirmed that hearsay is admissible before tribunals. Participants discussed whether the role of the victim ends at the investigation stage or at the tribunal. There was also debate about victim anonymity, and whether the perpetrator should know their identity for due process to occur. Accommodations can be made for victims who do not want to testify in front of their perpetrators. There have been cases of victims halting their involvement in proceedings after the investigation, after informal dispute resolution at the local level and before

the case is brought to the tribunal. In these cases, GBV and PSEA coordinators could testify in the victim's stead.

Recommendations

- A. Strengthen the quality of evidence presented to tribunals and avoid relying entirely on hearsay evidence.
- B. Adopt approaches to account for cases where it is more likely than not that SEAH offences occurred, including flexibility in applying 'clear and convincing' and 'beyond reasonable doubt'.
- C. Adopt a more holistic, victim-centered approach to evidentiary standards and the tribunal process, making accommodations if necessary to facilitate a victim testifying before a tribunal.

VIII. Management support for integrating a survivor centered approach in sexual misconduct investigations

Session moderator, Mr. Gareth Price-Jones, Executive Secretary of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), emphasized the importance of management's political and practical support in ensuring victim-centered investigations. He shared his own experiences managing cases of sexual misconduct and highlighted the critical connection between effective management action and the success of investigations.

Ms. Eileen Cronin, an Inspector with the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), discussed JIU's current review of UN system-wide policies and practices to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. The review focuses on policy frameworks, coordination mechanisms, and prevention and response efforts, including victims' assistance. She noted preliminary findings, such as a lack of coherence across the UN system on SEA policies and definitions, persistent misunderstanding of what constitutes sexual misconduct, and on the harmonization of data collection. She emphasized the importance of harmonizing policies to improve prevention and response efforts. Management must be held accountable, including middle management, to enforce these policies effectively. Ms. Cronin prospected the JIU report of the review for summer 2025.

Ms. Lucy Stoner, Director of Safeguarding and Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse at CARE, spoke about the necessity of clear processes and strong communication with managers to support safeguarding efforts. She underscored that the safeguarding response cannot be isolated but must be integrated into all levels of an organization, from human resources to program management. She stressed the importance of professionalizing investigations, ensuring adequate resources, and viewing safeguarding as a transformational change project that requires collective energy and top-down support. Ms. Stoner also highlighted the significance of focusing on prevention and risk mitigation, with an intentional effort to create a conducive organizational culture to stop sexual misconduct from happening, reducing the need for investigations.

Mr. Lance Bartholomeusz, General Counsel and Head of Legal Affairs at UNHCR, addressed practical measures management can take to support victim-centered investigations. He emphasized the importance of management providing support to victims/survivors before, during, and after investigations, including measures such as administrative leave for alleged perpetrators, resettlement prioritization for victims, discrete relocations, and victim care officers.

Mr. Bartholomeusz also discussed the need for a "handshake" between investigators and management to ensure effective communication and collaboration along the process. In this respect he highlighted the importance of management commitment to act on substantiated reports, the value of having a feedback loop to improve practices continuously, and the criticality of clear communication including to victims, bystanders, and personnel in the affected work workplace.

The ensuing discussion on management support for integrating a victim/survivor-centered approach in sexual misconduct investigations highlighted several critical issues and proposed actions to improve current practices.

The main factors preventing a victim-centered approach and how these could be mitigated were discussed. Acknowledging both visible and invisible victims in investigations was emphasized and the need for a collective approach to handling confidentiality and sharing investigation information to enable broader management responses. The use of data harmonization schemes to analyze trends and inform management could provide a more systemic approach to gather and use information from investigations.

Noting that current practices appear ad hoc and reliant on individual willingness and the tone at the top, rather than embedded in organisations, participants discussed how to ensure management responsibility. One measure proposed was to establish procedure laying out responsibilities of different services including HR, ethics offices, and investigations, and collaborative practices to ensure a consistent approach across agencies. It is important to engage managers and avoid working in silos. Safeguarding issues are often linked to program design, suggesting that involving managers in the early stages can prevent misconduct. Systematic measures to elevate issues to leadership was also highlighted.

Executive management should own and convey the importance of a victim-centered approach was further elaborated, as tone at the top significantly impacts an organization's culture and will trickle down to ensure operational effectiveness. Investigations should feed into systemic changes, with reports to management highlighting areas for improvement.

Concerns were raised about the current structure of disciplinary decision-making, noting that the integration of management into these decisions can lead to conflicts of interest. However, executive management should remain involved in decision-making to maintain accountability. Removing management from these processes could lead to a lack of responsibility and visibility of issues. A balanced approach was advocated where management remains involved but is held accountable through transparent and consistent practices.

The session concluded with reflections on the critical role of senior management in setting the tone, the need for clear communication of expectations, support for management to handle cases

properly, and the impact of high-profile cases driving change. Maintaining momentum and accountability in adopting a victim-centered approach is required.

Recommendations:

- A. Develop and embed common approaches across agencies to ensure consistency.
- B. Ensure executive management involvement and accountability and establish clear expectations for management at all levels. Provide training to support management in handling cases appropriately and gather and analyze investigation data to inform broader management responses.
- C. Set up collaborative practices involving human resources, ethics, investigations, and other relevant functions to foster trust and effective problem-solving.
- D. Create and maintain transparency in decision-making processes and ensure consistent practices to build and retain trust.
- E. Focus on maintaining the momentum for adopting a victim-centered approach, leveraging ongoing efforts to drive continuous improvement.

IX. Way forward for harmonized approaches

The conclusion of the two-day meeting focused on synthesizing the different sessions and charting a way forward for harmonized approaches.

Ms. Kelly T. Clements, Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, member of the IASC Deputies Committee, and former Chair of the CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment, advocated for a humble approach, and recalled the devastating impact sexual misconduct can have on people's lives. She reflected on the significant progress made since the last meeting of investigatory bodies in 2019, emphasizing the importance of linking the IASC and CEB communities to share learning, assess current status, and plan future actions. It was emphasized that harmonization was required since sexual misconduct did not impact only one agency, but the entire UN system and its partners.

Three key elements for improving outcomes were noted. First, the importance of strong leadership at all levels and collective responsibility to drive an organizational approach. Second, the need for organizations to invest resources to support the prevention, investigation, and response to sexual misconduct, even if no additional funding from Member States is lacking for these issues. Third, the requirement for harmonization, where different parts of the system learn from best practices, experiences of victims/survivors are captured and built into processes.

Progress made in applying a victim-centred approach was noted and the need for a continuous survivor-centered approach without compromising investigation integrity, focusing on protecting and supporting victims and witnesses. Ms. Clements identified effective communication, information sharing and coordination among entities as crucial points.

Ms. Marta Helena Lopez, ASG for Human Resources in the UN Secretariat Vice-Chair of the UN Executive Group emphasized the importance of rigorous, independent, and victim-centered investigations, in complex cases of sexual misconduct. She highlighted recent efforts of the Executive Group, such as the production of the Investigators' Manual for Sexual Harassment Investigations and the Principles for a Victim-centered Approach to Sexual Harassment and iterated the call for more frequent and harmonious collaboration among the IASC and CEB communities to build on each other's work.

Ms. Najla Nassif Palma, UN Victims' Rights Advocate, stressed the importance of the principle of "do no harm" permeating all stages of investigations. She advocated for the right of assistance and support for victims, highlighting that investigators should not take on victim care roles but should embed a victim-centered approach in their methodologies. She recalled best practices, such as providing psychological support and safe interview locations, which have improved the quality and timeliness of investigations. Ms. Nassif Palma called on organizations to rely more on dedicated specialists to support victims throughout the investigation process and announced plans to survey organizational approaches to improve resources for victim assistance.

Mr. Christian Saunders, Special Coordinator on Improving the UN Response to SEA highlighted the progress made but noted its fragility. He emphasized the need for investigations to be part of organizational DNA, also stressing the principle of "do no harm" and the importance of prevention. Mr. Saunders called for breaking down silos, reducing duplication, and fostering innovation and creativity, which were required, especially in the current financial climate. He stressed the need for predictable and sustainable resourcing for victim support, prevention, and investigations and offered the support of his office for advocacy and assistance.

In closing, Ms. Wendy Cue, Senior Coordinator for PSEAH at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) the moderator, announced the next steps to publish the meeting report and recommendations. The recommendations should be taken forward in the appropriate forums, including the IASC and the UN Executive Group.

Recommendations:

- A. Create a more harmonized, effective, and victim-centered approach across the system, ensuring that all entities are better equipped to handle cases of sexual misconduct and support survivors comprehensively.
- B. Leadership and resource investment: Ensure strong political support and resource investment from leadership and at all organizational levels.
- C. Communication and coordination: Organizations to drive collective responsibility and improve communication and coordination among entities to avoid working at cross purposes and to foster a culture of accountability and transparency

Annex I. List of participants

Abdoul Dieng, UNOPS
Alexandra Valerio, IOM
Alexandru Zegrea, WIPO
Alistair Morrison, WVI
Alon Plato, ICVA
Amanda Aikman, UNICEF
Anaïs Nau, IOM
Andrew Staines, WIPO
Aurélie Martin, UNHCR
Bernardin Assien, UNESCO
Blair Hussey, ICRC
Callum Weeks, WFP
Carly McCusker, Save the Children
Caroline Dulin-Brass, UNHCR
Charlotte Helletzgruber, OCHA
Christian Saunders, Special
Coordinator on Improving UN
Response to SEA
Christine Ash-Buechner, NRC
Coralie Colson-Schack, WHO
David Sullivan, WBG
Deborah Gbajumo, WHO
Deborah Orina, WIPO
Denise Hauser, OHCHR
Eileen Cronin, JIU
Elizabeth Pender, UNFPA
Eva Bolkart, WHO
Eva Modvig, FAO
Francesca Marotta, OHCHR
Gamu Mandangu Bakasa, UNOPS
Gareth Price-Jones, SCHR
Georg Paier, ITU
Halid Zewdu Feleke, OCHA
Heike Niebergall-Lackner, ICRC
Henrik Malmquist, UNHCR
Irene Raciti, UNFPA
Isabelle Ginet-Kauders, IFRC
Jane Boissonneault, OSCSEA
Jeremie Kreitz, UNESCO
Jessie Rose Mabutas, IOM
Joe Levy Brown, OCHA
Kamolmas Jaiyen, JIU
Katherine Kyriakopoulos, IMF
Kazumi Ogawa, UN-Habitat
Kelly Clements, UNHCR
Khaliunaa Garamgaibaatar, UNDP
Kirstie Farmer, OCHA
Lance Barhomeusz, UNHCR
Laura Ragan, MercyCorps
Laure Cohen, WHO
Leslie Haskell, IFRC
Luc Ferran, UNFPA
Lucie Laplante, IFRC
Lucy Stoner, CARE
Mardjaneh Khabiri-Herscu, ITU
Margaret Gichanga-Jensen, OIOS
Marie-Reine Bayiha Bamseck,
UNFPA
Mary Jones, WTO
Masha Bontje, The Global Fund
Mirko Fernandez, The Global Fund
Mykola Martynov, The Global Fund
Mylene Spence, WFP
Najla Nassif Palma, UN Victims'
Rights Advocate
Natalie Tabar, UNRWA
Nicole Vareil, WFP
Nina Lacroix, OCHA
Ntombifuthi Dennis, WHO
Oliver Stucke, WHO
Patrice Sam, IMF
Paul Manning, IAEA
Peri Lynne Johnson, IAEA
Regine Vilaire, FAO
Remo Lalli, CEB Secretariat
Saklaine Hedaraly, ICC
Sandra Baffoe-Bonnie, UNEP
Sara Callegari, WIPO
Sarah Bouaka, ILO
Sarah Ritch, The Global Fund
Sharon Kinsley, UNDP
Sigrid Kranawetters, WHO
Silvan Scheiwiller, CEB
Secretariat
Suzette Schultz, OIOS
Taren Spearman Nwozo, PAHO
Thouraya Benmokrane, UNIDO
Valeria Bove, OVRA
Vitalii Ierokhin, UNRWA
Walter Brill, CHS Alliance
Wendy Cue, OCHA
Yuichiro Ogino, IMO

Annex II. Agenda

Tuesday 11 June

Session 1: Setting the Scene – Towards harmonised and complementary approaches to investigations

- Provide updates since the 2018 conference and following the 2021 IASC External Review of PSEA, IASC PSEA Vision and Strategy (2022-2026) and the work of the CEB Task Force on Sexual Harassment.
- Reflect on opportunities to adopt a victim-centered approach through inter-agency coordination, harmonisation of approaches and stronger collaboration between senior management and investigations.

Session 2: What does a Victim/Survivor-Centered Approach to investigations entail

- Review how a victim/survivor centered approach (VCA) has been defined and integrated in different organisations; identify good practice.

Session 3: Operationalising a VCA through the provision of victim care

- Share the main challenges and learning for supporting victims and survivors during investigations.

Session 4: Key performance indicators for measuring the integration of a VCA into investigations

- Review KPIs for integration of a VCA from the IASC Expert Panel on SEAH Investigations
- Provide an overview of CEB results framework; indicators of good practice in preventing and responding to SH.

Session 5: Summary of discussions

- Panel moderators recap key points and recommendations from the day and identify issues to take forward.

Wednesday 12 June

Session 6: Good practices and guidance for the integration of a VCA into sexual misconduct investigations

- Present CEB Investigators' Manual – Investigations of Sexual Harassment Complaints: challenges and successes with its implementation
- Present draft IASC Investigators' Manual – Investigations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Complaints
- Identify good practice at different stages of sexual misconduct investigations.

Session 7: Augmenting investigation capacity through external expertise and capacity development

- Review approaches and models for organisational capacity for sexual misconduct investigations. Discuss challenges and recommendations for harmonised approach to the recruitment of investigators.
- Share experience with pooled capacity and joint investigations.

Session 8: Evidentiary standards in sexual misconduct investigations

- How administrative tribunals consider standards of proof and implications for investigations.

Session 9: Management support for integrating a victim/survivor centred approach in sexual misconduct investigations

- Reflect on roles and responsibilities for leadership and management support to ensure the effectiveness of organizations' SEA investigations.

Session 10: Way forward for harmonised approaches

- Panel moderators will recap key points and recommendations.
- Agree on action points for harmonised approaches, responsibilities, next steps.

Annex III. IASC UNEG Meeting of Investigatory Bodies Evaluation Summary

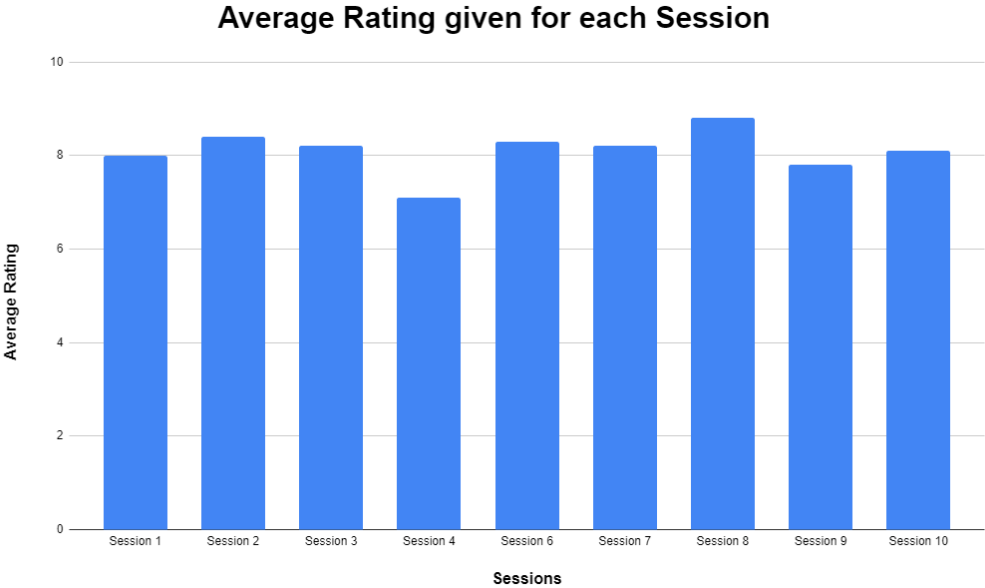
The IASC UNEG Meeting of Investigatory Bodies was held at WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, from 11 to 12 June 2024. It brought together experts with the common goal of improving and harmonising how investigations into SEA allegations are carried out across the humanitarian system. This evaluation report summarises responses provided by 15 participants to questions relating to the overall objectives, expectations, sessions, and recommendations for future iterations of the Meeting.

Meeting Objectives and Expectations (15 responses)

80% of respondents said that the Meeting met its stated objectives, with the remaining 20% saying it partially did so. There was an overwhelming sense among respondents that closer coordination between stakeholders was fostered during the Meeting. The discussion of tools in Sessions 4 and 6 was seen as helping to harmonise investigative practices, however some participants wanted more system-wide buy-in and clarity on the practicality of the KPIs discussed in Session 4. The V/SCA was at the forefront of three sessions on the Meeting’s first day and was brought up throughout the second day by panelists and in questions. Most respondents said that the Meeting met their expectations, calling it an overdue forum to engage in-person with a diverse group of sector partners. In addition, respondents learnt a lot from relevant sessions with high-quality speakers. However, several wanted more concrete recommendations and others would have preferred more small-group discussions, something which only occurred for a part of Session 6.

Sessions Feedback (15 responses)

Feedback given for all sessions was overwhelmingly positive, with the average score 8.1 out of 10. The highest rated session was Session 8, with an average score of 8.8, followed by Session 2 and Session 6. Please see the graph below for more detailed information.



Venue and Logistics (15 responses)

Logistical arrangements and the venue at WHO Headquarters received high ratings from all respondents, with an average score of 9.3 out of 10. The meeting room comfortably facilitated the attendance of all participants and panelists, both in-person and online and both in plenary and breakout groups. There was positive feedback about sessions running on time and on schedule, with sufficient time being given to each session and panelist.

Future Topics and Recommendations (8 responses)

Participants were open to future Meetings of Investigatory Bodies. In future, participants want more sessions on evidentiary standards. This is something that can also be seen through and helps explain the popularity of Session 8. Other future topics include victim care, coordination with stakeholders outside of the investigations process, more concrete information on training investigators, and how a V/SCA can be implemented at the disciplinary/appeal stages of a case. There was a clear demand among respondents for more small-group discussions, and therefore fewer panels, at the next Meeting. There was a further demand for more concrete recommendations to come out of future meetings, as well as information being provided about existing resources alongside the new resources being introduced and discussed at the Meeting.

Conclusion

Overall, participants gave positive feedback about the Meeting's structured methodology, engaging sessions, and valuable networking opportunities, saying that it created opportunities for learning and future collaboration, both within the community of investigators and with a wider network of PSEA colleagues.