



## USAID Action Alliance for Preventing Sexual Misconduct (AAPSM) Measuring Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian and Development Settings Workshop Summary

### Overview

On November 2, 2018 USAID's Action Alliance for Preventing Sexual Misconduct (AAPSM) hosted a workshop on innovative methods to identify and monitor sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in complex emergency and development settings.

Participants included donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including faith-based organizations, academics, and multilateral and private-sector organizations. Over the course of the day they reviewed the benefits and limitations of various approaches, including the use of list experiments, surveys designed for sensitive questions, and participatory qualitative research. The workshop built on international momentum from the previous month's Safeguarding Summit in London, where USAID and 21 other donors made political commitments to increase coordination and strengthen protections for international aid beneficiaries and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in aid programming.

### The Challenge

By its nature, sexual exploitation and abuse is exacerbated by power imbalances. Research is urgently needed to quantify and document its prevalence in the development and humanitarian aid sectors, and to identify other enabling factors, such as fear of reprisal or stigmatization and the lack of confidence in accountability mechanisms. Effective monitoring is particularly challenging given the asymmetrical access to power and resources inherent in international assistance, and the acute vulnerabilities of disaster survivors in particular.

To date, the most common methods for monitoring for SEA have been telephone hotline numbers and on-site physical "complaint boxes." These methods place the primary burden of reporting upon those who have already been victimized, and provide little confidentiality and even less assurance of follow-up. They have yielded few documented cases of SEA,<sup>1</sup> much less disciplinary action.

Developing effective and safe monitoring methods is the key to identifying and addressing the conditions that foster SEA, as well as developing effective ways to respond to and even prevent it. To this end, the workshop discussions centered on devising flexible and effective reporting mechanisms, including:

- Establishing broadly-accepted and consistent definitions for SEA;

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, the use of these monitoring methods by World Food Programme (WFP) resulted in their receiving and reporting zero (0) allegations of SEA during 2016 and only two (2) in all of 2017. Given widespread anecdotal evidence and the massive scope and scale of WFP's operations, it is unlikely that these reports reflect an accurate count of actual instances of SEA on the ground.

- Developing comparable indicators across divergent cultural and humanitarian settings;
- Debating how and when to use monitoring methods that capture presence and prevalence of SEA;
- Ensuring that monitoring methods capture variation in SEA rates across time and place; and,
- Building technical approaches to build safer, more reliable reporting systems and then interpret monitoring findings to address and prevent SEA.

### **Session Highlights**

- During the opening session, USAID/DCHA Senior Policy Advisor Anita Menghetti outlined USAID's leadership in raising awareness of SEA internally and externally. USAID Acting Deputy Administrator David Moore encouraged attendees to think creatively about new solutions by exploring synergies between academic research and practitioner experience. Moore stressed that addressing SEA is a long-term commitment that will require the pairing of appropriate policies and efforts to build the awareness and capacity of practitioners.
- Dr. Michelle Jurkovich (University of Massachusetts, Boston) offered definitions from the UN Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and emphasized that the workshop would focus specifically on monitoring for SEA between humanitarian and development workers and aid recipients. Dr. Jurkovich outlined methodological and practical challenges with the most common SEA monitoring methods, and encouraged participants to consider supplementary alternatives.
- In the first methods session, "Understanding and Measuring Variation in Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Challenges of Existing Data," Drs. Dara Kay Cohen (Harvard University) and Ragnhild Nordås (University of Michigan) described variations in the prevalence of sexual violence, key characteristics of SEA, and the challenge of ethically collecting accurate data. Their research shows that sexual violence rates vary widely across time and place, requiring methodologically sound monitoring methods and programming. Dr. Anjali Dayal (Fordham University) discussed lessons that humanitarian and development sectors can learn from UN Peacekeeping efforts to monitor SEA, and the importance of not only improving current SEA data collection methods but also triangulating the data to ensure resources are directed effectively.
- During the second methods session, "Using List Experiments to Measure the Prevalence of Sexual Violence," Drs. Sara Kijewski (University of Bern, Switzerland) and Richard Traummuller (Goethe University, Germany) introduced the list experiments method. Drawing on their research in Sri Lanka, Drs. Kijewski and Traummuller described the ability of list experiments to reveal behaviors and attitudes now typically underreported, in part by allowing respondents to indirectly flag SEA incidents via responses to a wide range of questions -- thereby reducing the perceived risk of retaliation. Another benefit they cited was the reduced risk of stigma, shaming, and breaches of confidentiality that have plagued traditional direct survey methods and direct reporting through complaint boxes. They noted that the list experiment method is particularly useful when interviewers, for whatever reason, cannot be trained properly on how to directly administrator sensitive

questions. However, they also noted that list experiments require particularly careful design on the front end.

- In the third session, “Survey Methods for Sensitive Questions: Learning from a Study Measuring Transactional Sex in Liberia,” Dr. Michael Gilligan (New York University) described a direct survey methodology that he and his co-authors developed to quantify the prevalence of incidents of transactional sex in Monrovia, Liberia. Technology, in the form of an iPod, allowed interviewees to input answers directly and anonymously, and illustrative pictures eliminated the requirement for literacy. Dr. Gilligan summarized the method’s benefits, including its ability to measure the prevalence of transactional sex in ways that do not require literacy. One downside, however, is that due to respondent anonymity, this method alone could not be used to identify perpetrators.
- During the practitioner’s panel, “Challenges of Monitoring and Measuring SEA in the Field and Using Focus Groups and Participatory Methods to Understand SEA,” Patricia McIlreavy, Vice President for Humanitarian Policy and Practice at InterAction, Colleen Striegel, founder and Executive Director of HumanitarianHR, and Maureen Murphy, Research Scientist for the Global Women’s Institute at George Washington University, described their experience with SEA monitoring, including their efforts to better understand the problem, support survivors, and prevent future incidents. Striegel described the #MeToo and #AidToo movements as catalysts for the founding of HumanitarianHR, whose focus is to help NGOs strengthen safeguarding practices. Murphy emphasized the power of participatory qualitative monitoring methods, such as focus groups and community mapping. While these methods do not measure prevalence of SEA, they can provide important context and details about affected populations, including perceptions of safety and access to SEA resources.

## **Conclusion**

- In the final session, workshop participants discussed how to expand the dialogue around SEA monitoring methodologies, and ways to connect with existing networks, including the InterAction SEA Working Group, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) PSEA Task Force, and IASC’s Senior Focal Points on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment. Participants agreed to continue the academic-practitioner exchange of information.

## **Additional Information**

For more information about USAID’s efforts to address and prevent sexual misconduct, please visit: [www.usaid.gov/PreventingSexualMisconduct](http://www.usaid.gov/PreventingSexualMisconduct).