UNICEF/United Nations response to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping forces

UNICEF EB Briefing

23 January 2017
Background: Timeline of events

• Spring/Summer 2014: Allegation of SEA of children by foreign troops to the UN system in CAR
• May 2015: Media query on the UN’s response to the allegation
• June 2015: UNSG established an independent panel (The CAR Panel) to review UN’s response
• December 2015: The CAR Panel report was released
Panel’s Conclusions & Recommendations

• Re **UNICEF**: Failure to monitor the local partners who had been designated to provide psycho-social and other support to the victims

UNICEF has now in place a set of internal alert and reporting protocols – primary focus is to support children’s needs; improve oversight of response at country, region and HQ levels; share information with UN in country and HQ
Panel’s Conclusions & Recommendations

• Recommendations to UN:
  – **More coherent policy framework on SEA** (SEA data reliability; improved UN coordination; harmonization of policies)
  – **Strengthened procedures for responding to allegations** (mandatory and immediate reporting; rapid, professional investigation; effective prosecution of perpetrators; strengthened accountability)
  – **Improved support to victims** (funding specialized services to victims)
UN System’s response to CAR Panel’s Report

• **High Level Steering Committee** established by the UN Secretary-General in 2016 to review the recommendations and to advise the UNSG on matters related to recommendations by the CAR Panel.

• **UN SEA Task Force** appointed by the new SG to develop a system-wide “game-changing” SEA strategy for inclusion in the upcoming SG’s Report on Special Measures for PSEA.
List of key actions taken by UNICEF

• UNICEF SEA prevention and response
  Notification Alert; Victim Assistance; Contractual Agreements and Recruitment procedures; Mandatory SEA Training; Contribution to Community-Based Complaints Mechanism (CBCM); Cooperation with Investigations; SEA Policy and Child Safeguarding Policy; Reporting SEA Allegations to the UN for SG report

• UNICEF inter-agency SEA contributions
  Engagement with: UN SEA Working Group; IASC Task Force for CBCM; UN SEA Task Force
SEA Notification Alert

- In place since Nov 2015

- Within 24 hours of receiving SEA allegation, UNICEF Representative reports to Regional Director using **Significant Incident Report (SIR)** for SEA and informs most-senior UN official in country.

- Within 12 hours of receiving SIR for SEA, Regional Director reviews and decides whether to inform NYHQ, using SIR for SEA.

- **Immediate victim assistance** is provided, including monitoring of response.
SEA Victim Assistance

- Strengthened **systematic response** to SEA, including medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, safety plan, access to school and cash assistance for immediate material needs.

- UNICEF and the Conduct and Discipline Unit (CDU/DPKO) have co-chaired the development of a **Uniform Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of SEA**.

- The Protocol strengthens coordination of assistance to victims and will be field tested in early 2017.
Contractual agreements

• **Vendor general conditions of contracts** require adherence with the UN code of conduct and zero tolerance policy on SEA (Secretary-General’s Bulletin ST/SGB/203/13).

• **Standard Programme Cooperation Agreement** requires compliance of all implementing partner employees with the UN code of conduct and zero tolerance policy on SEA (SG’s Bulletin ST/SGB/203/13).
Recruitment procedures

- All candidates **must disclose** if they have been investigated or disciplined for allegation of misconduct, including SEA.

- Candidates must provide a **detailed statement** on how any such allegation was resolved.

- **Confirmed allegation of SEA**, regardless of whether it resulted in criminal proceedings, will be grounds to **disqualify**.

- **Resignation initiated by the candidate** prior to the completion of an investigation into SEA will be grounds to **disqualify**.
UNICEF is finalizing a mandatory SEA online training for all staff, developed in a joint exercise with UNHCR, UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women to be rolled out in UNICEF in early 2017.

- Lesson 1: UN Standards of Conduct on SEA
- Lesson 2: Obligations of UN Personnel
- Lesson 3: Consequences
Strengthening investigations involving children

- UNICEF has developed guidance for safeguarding child victims and witnesses of SEA during the investigatory interview process to prevent secondary victimization of the child.

- UNICEF cooperates with the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services in UN investigations in CAR and elsewhere to strengthen the investigation process for allegations involving children.
UNICEF Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children was issued on 1 July 2016.

UNICEF Policy Preventing and Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse is pending final clearance.

Both policies apply to all staff, non-staff personnel, individual consultants and contractors.

Conduct prohibited under the policies may constitute grounds for contract termination or dismissal.
UNICEF SEA Reporting

- 3 SEA allegations involving UNICEF staff.
- 2 SEA allegations involving UNICEF partners.
- 264 SEA allegations reported by UNICEF involving UN peacekeepers or foreign military personnel with UN mandate:
  - Central African Republic: 235 total, including 173 children; DRC: 24 total, including 10 children; Somalia: 5 total, all children

- UNICEF and partners provided victim assistance in all cases.
Engagement with the UN SEA Working Group

• Finalizing the **Uniform policy on balancing the disclosure of information to national authorities with principles of confidentiality** (Rec 6 of the CAR Panel Report).

• UNICEF advocates for safeguarding the principle of **informed consent** to protect every child’s right to privacy, confidentiality, security and safety.

• Other engagements: Draft policy on a human rights-based approach to preventing SEA; Draft procedures to strengthen investigation procedures; Uniform Protocol on the Sharing of Information and Protection of Victims of SEA; SEA Incident Report Form (IRF) and Operational guidance; SEA Accountability framework; etc.
Engagement with IASC in prevention/response

- UNICEF has contributed to the **Community-Based Complaints Mechanism SOPs and Best Practice Guide prepared by IASC**, based on pilots carried out by UNHCR and Save the Children in Ethiopia and DRC.

- CBCM Best Practice Guide outlines steps to establish **community dialogue and feedback on SEA prevention and response**.

- UNICEF in DRC is using C4D community sensitization activities to prevent SEA, both to strengthen SEA reporting and reduce risks for children.
Engagement with the UN SEA Working Group

• UN SEA Task Force to develop a system-wide “game-changing” SEA strategy, to include in upcoming SG’s Report on Special Measures for PSEA.

• Strengthen member State accountability by establishing a credible and independent investigatory process.

• Operationalize CBCMs through UNCT PSEA Network.

• Increase selective vetting of peacekeeping troops and capacity building prior to deployment.
End of the presentation

• Thank you for your attention
• Questions and comments