

Inter Agency Group South Lebanon
DRAFT Commitment to
Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Humanitarian Personnel

We, the members (including observers) of the Inter Agency Group South Lebanon, affirm our determination to prevent future acts of sexual exploitation and abuse by our staff.

We recall the IASC six core principles relating to sexual exploitation and abuse and note that these principles have been incorporated into organization-specific codes of conduct, rules and regulations and are thereby binding on personnel. In particular, they are binding on United Nations staff and related personnel and outlined in the Secretary-General's Bulletin *Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse* (ST/SGB/2003/13).

We recall that these standards were promulgated to further protect the most vulnerable populations, especially refugee women, girls and boys, and recognize that displacement and the destruction of community structures due to conflict, increase the vulnerability of communities to sexual exploitation and abuse, including human trafficking, by our personnel and others.

We underline the importance of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and stress the need for swift, decisive action when such acts do occur. We note the specific duties of managers in this regard.

We re-affirm our goal of achieving full implementation of these principles as a matter of urgency and commit to:

- 1. Develop organization-specific strategies to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.** These would include time-bound, measurable indicators of progress to enable our organizations and others to monitor our performance.
- 2. Incorporate our standards on sexual exploitation and abuse in induction materials and training courses for our personnel.**
- 3. Prevent perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse from being (re-)hired or (re-)deployed.** This could include use of background and criminal reference checks.
- 4. Ensure that complaint mechanisms for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse are accessible and that focal points for receiving complaints understand how to discharge their duties.**
- 5. Take appropriate action to the best of our abilities to protect persons from retaliation where allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse are reported involving our personnel.**

6. Investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in a timely and professional manner. This includes the use of appropriate interviewing practice with complainants and witnesses, particularly with children.

7. Take swift and appropriate action against our personnel who commit sexual exploitation and abuse. This may include administrative or disciplinary action, and/or referral to the relevant authorities for appropriate action, including criminal prosecution.

8. Provide basic emergency assistance to complainants of sexual exploitation and abuse.

9. Regularly inform our personnel and communities on measures taken to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.

10. Engage the support of communities and governments to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse by our personnel.

Appendix: Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse¹

1. "Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.
2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) 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 sexual abuse or exploitation 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 sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of

¹ See Report of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises of 13 June 2002, Plan of Action, Section I.A.

their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.”