



PSEA partnerships study

GCPS CONSULTING

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Context and background

Decision by ICVA and SCHR to conduct research into how partnership relations influence responses to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by humanitarian workers



Terms of reference drawn up and GCPS Consulting commissioned to carry out study, overseen by reference group from ICVA, SCHR and UNHCR



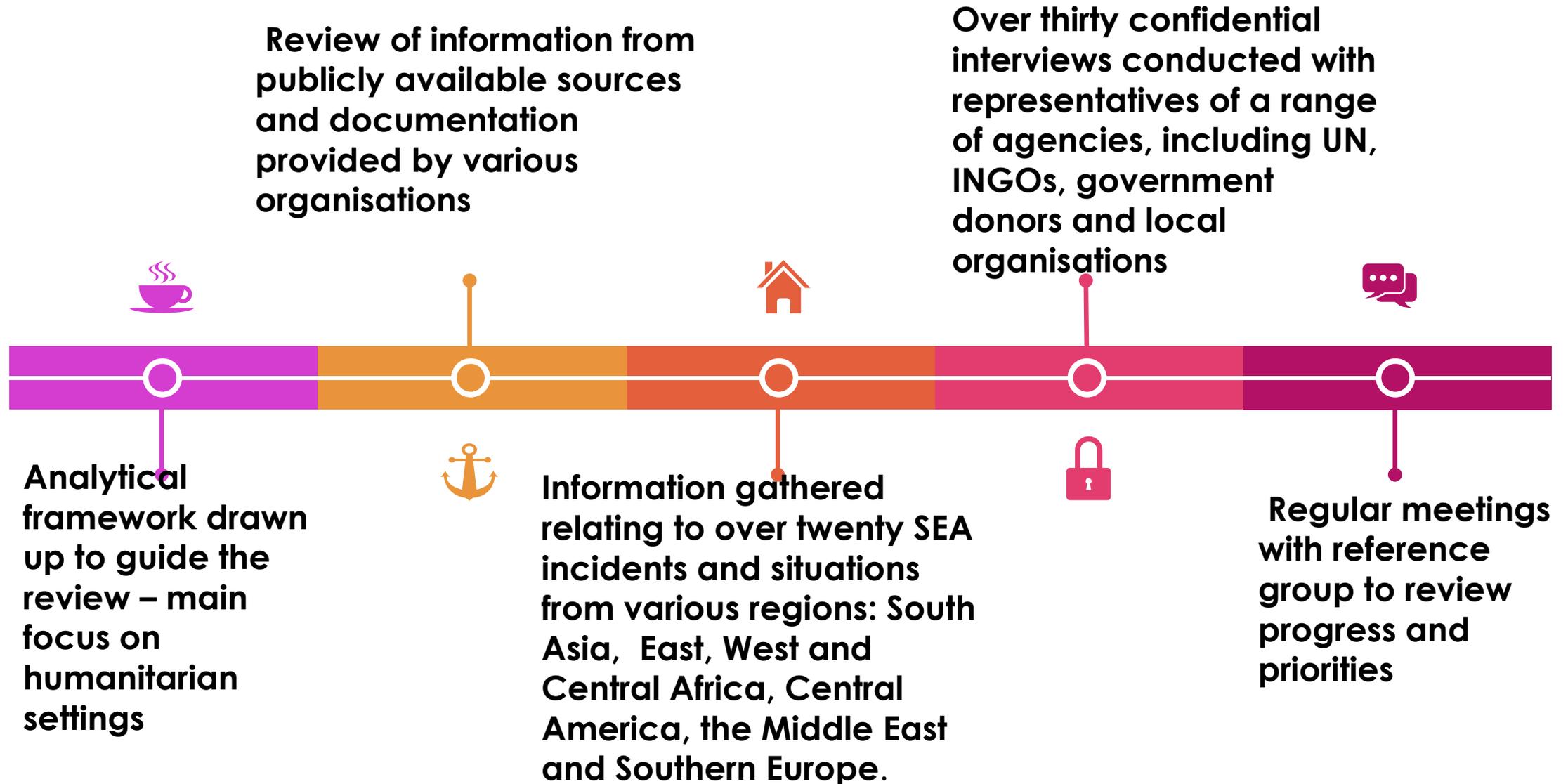
Focus to be on response of partners during the management of SEA allegations, not examination of individual SEA cases.

Objectives of study

- ▶ To examine in what ways the nature of relations between partner organisations (UN, NGOs, donors) has affected the quality of the response to allegations of SEA, in particular the impact on survivors, communities and programme continuity

- ▶ To identify and document good practices and learning in partnership response to SEA cases
- ▶ To provide findings to inform ongoing efforts by donor governments, UN Agencies and NGOs to collectively strengthen the framework for prevention of SEA.

Summary methodology



Positive examples of collaborative working

Working relationship based on trust

Guidance provided by UN agency

INGO taking responsibility for lack of support

Partners working together on survivor support

Team work and sharing resources

Division of labour between partners

Trust and open communications

Support for building PSEA capacity

Examples of less collaborative approaches

Lack of trust – time spent on ongoing queries

Inadequate understanding of the context

Poor communications and lack of feedback on decisions

Lack of understanding of risks

Weak consortium arrangements

Project discontinuation without proper consultation or mitigation of impact



Key learning points

Learning – partner support

Partnership agreements do not fully reflect UN protocol 2018

Partnerships between funding partners and NGO partners often struggle to support partners in meeting PSEA requirements prior to SEA incidents

Poor PSEA systems despite long-lasting partnerships

UN harmonized PSEA partner assessment tool was launched in September 2020 to have a consistent approach to addressing gaps

Learning – investigations

*Risk associated
with poor quality
investigations*

Trusting partners to conduct investigations is the appropriate overall approach and they have the local knowledge, but making the investigation primarily the obligation of the NGO partner, irrespective of their capacity, can expose victims to harm and compromise the quality of the investigation

Funding partners sometimes getting too involved in detail of cases, asking excessive questions without providing timely support

Investigations are mostly funded through core-funding – limited specific funding for PSEA

Learning – partnership course of action

The decisions by funding partners to fully suspend or terminate partner operations have not always been informed by an assessment of the risks for the affected communities and properly mitigated, leading to disruption of key life-saving services & activities

Importance of inclusive risk assessments, mapping of available services, and agreed mitigation plans to ensure continuity of services,

Partnerships agreements often do not set out in detail the conditions for terminating or restoring partnerships in the event of SEA incidents and these may not be clear to all parties.

Learning – mutual accountability

Partnerships often involve unequal power dynamics which mean that NGO partners feel they are expected to be more accountable than their funding partners

Importance of improving and prioritising communications

Some evidence of transferring the responsibility for mitigation of risks to partners and communities rather than this being seen as a joint role

Good intentions about supporting partners and building capacity and knowledge together, but need to recognise that this takes time and resources.

Other key learning points

PSEA networks

PSEA networks offer possible effective avenues for joint capacity building and sharing learning and knowledge, especially when all agencies work closely together and providing that all NGO partners become active/regular members

Survivor-centred approaches

Victim assistance has been given a high priority, but survivor-centred approaches throughout investigation and case resolution have probably not been consistent across organisations/partnerships

Global initiatives

Initiatives at global level from UN entities, INGOs and other funding partners to develop harmonised frameworks and tools can translate into positive results at country and field level.

Recommendations to improve PSEA through better partnerships

- ▶ **ALIGNING** partnership agreements with the UN protocol 2018
- ▶ **RESOURCING** to build capacity and enable partners to conduct safe, professional and confidential investigations
- ▶ **ENGAGING** with communities and partners to conduct risk assessments and secure life-saving activities before suspending or terminating partnerships
- ▶ **ENSURING** zero tolerance of inaction, without exposing victims and affected communities to further harm
- ▶ **WORKING** in ways which reflect a more equal approach to partnership and contribute to addressing the power imbalance between the UN/donors and NGO partners and promote mutual accountability