



CHAPTER TWO

RESPECT THE RULES OF WAR



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Photo on previous page:

Young students stand in the ruins of a former classroom of the Aal Okab school in Saada City, Yemen. It was destroyed during the conflict in June 2015. Students now attend lessons in UNICEF tents nearby.

OCHA/Giles Clarke

When conflict prevention and resolution efforts do not succeed, parties to armed conflict must minimize human suffering and protect civilians. Yet great numbers of civilians are injured, killed, and forced to flee their homes, and the laws of war are widely flouted. Parties to conflict target humanitarian workers, deny humanitarian access and routinely attack medical facilities. The Agenda for Humanity builds on decades of internationally agreed rules to limit human suffering in conflict. Core Responsibility Two calls on parties to conflict to respect international humanitarian and human rights law, and for all States and the wider international community to do more to ensure respect for the rules of war.

The Agenda for Humanity called for six transformations:

2A: In armed conflict, civilians and civilian objects, such as homes, schools and hospitals, are protected because all parties respect international humanitarian law.

2B: In war, human suffering is minimized because parties to conflict uphold their obligations to meet essential needs, care for the wounded and sick, facilitate access for impartial humanitarian relief operations, and respect and protect humanitarian and medical missions.

2C: Facts are established, violations are known, and trends are understood so corrective measures can be taken.

2D: Member States, the UN Security Council, and other leaders exert their influence to compel parties to armed conflict to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law. International crimes are systematically investigated and prosecuted because strong and capable national and international justice systems are in place.

2D: Women and girls are protected from gender-based violence because all States and the international community prioritize its eradication.

2E: The rules of war are widely known and respected thanks to a global awareness-raising and advocacy effort.



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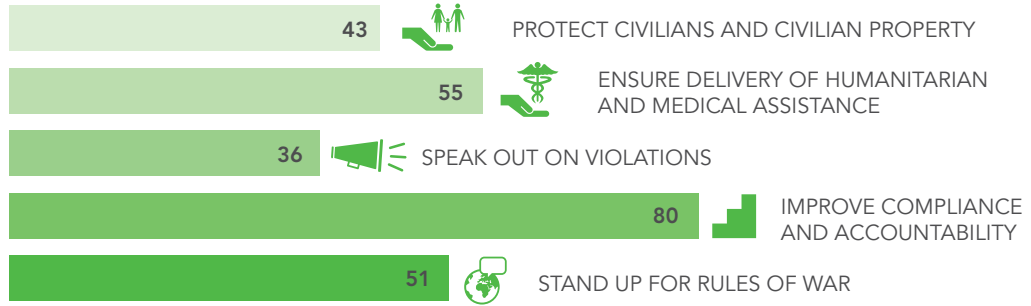


FIGURE 2.1 - BREAKDOWN OF REPORTING UNDER CORE RESPONSIBILITY TWO

Stakeholders

In 2017, 95 stakeholders reported on one or more of the five transformations under Core Responsibility Two: Uphold the Norms that Safeguard Humanity—as shown in Figure 2.1. below. Of these, 37 were Member States, 26 were international non-governmental organizations, and 13 were United Nations (UN) entities, with the remaining reports coming from academia, civil society and private sector organizations. Transformation 2D: Improve Compliance and Accountability (along with Transformation 4B) received reports from the second-highest number of stakeholders. This included 57 stakeholders who reported on commitments to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

Progress in 2017

Reporting demonstrated the efforts of a committed group of stakeholders to uphold the norms that safeguard humanity and improve the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. The majority of reports from Member States and civil society organizations provided accounts of advocacy efforts to remind parties to conflict of their obligations, and to call for accountability for violations. Stakeholders also highlighted efforts to better protect the most vulnerable, in particular children, to eliminate the threat of landmines and other explosive weapons, and to safeguard medical personnel and facilities. Practical measures to improve compliance included improving data collection, conducting research, sharing best practices, capacity-building and training.



A woman waits to pass through a checkpoint at the 'contact line' in Luhansk province, Ukraine. OCHA/M. Levin

Challenges and next steps

Widespread violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL), characterized by the lack of both accountability and political will to ensure compliance, remain major challenges for the international community. Insecurity and impediments to access hinder efforts to protect and assist civilians and provide medical care. Difficult field conditions obstruct data collection and analysis, posing a significant barrier to identifying and documenting violations and ensuring accountability, as well as to developing policy, designing programmes and evaluating progress. Developing national policy frameworks to protect civilians, taking practical steps to enhance respect for IHL and IHRL, and promoting compliance through advocacy and accountability are all required in order to improve the plight of civilians.

Progress in 2017

The five transformations in Core Responsibility Two are closely linked, allowing a cross-cutting analysis of reporting. This chapter is divided into two parts, the first covering political, policy and advocacy efforts to enhance respect for the rules of war—accounting for the bulk of reporting. The second focuses on practical means to improve compliance with the rules of war.

Political, policy and advocacy efforts to enhance respect for the rules of war

Recalling the importance of upholding the rules and mobilizing global support

Most reporting focused on advocacy to promote respect for IHL and IHRL. Many Member States used multilateral settings, such as the UN Security Council (UNSC) open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, to reiterate the importance of upholding the rules of war. A number of Member States, including Austria, Belgium, Canada and Mexico, advocated for implementation of treaties, including the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Arms Trade Treaty and the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Stakeholders took other individual and collective actions to remind parties to conflict of their obligations. Greece and the

“Ensuring the effective implementation of international humanitarian and human rights law is of paramount importance. The targeting of or failure to protect civilians cannot go unchallenged.”

– UN Secretary-General’s report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2018/462).

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) co-organized a conference on ‘The reaffirmation and development of international humanitarian law, 40 years later’. Finally, some stakeholders reiterated the rules by disseminating information on IHL and IHRL. For example, the European Union (EU) funded IHL dissemination and engagement in contexts where violations of IHL occur, targeting a wide range of stakeholders including armed non-state actors.

Stakeholders also continued efforts to mobilize global public support for IHL and IHRL. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) conducted a digital campaign under the theme ‘Not A Target’ to advocate for protection of civilians, and Oxfam International led the ‘Stand As One’ regional campaign in Europe, calling on world leaders to uphold IHL and support refugees. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) ran a global campaign on IHRL entitled ‘Stand up for someone’s rights today’.

Speaking out on violations

Stakeholders used multilateral diplomacy and public advocacy to speak out about violations and to call on parties to specific conflicts to respect the rules of war. Many Member States delivered statements or co-sponsored resolutions at the UN to condemn violations and express support for fact-finding missions and other efforts to document violations of IHL. Stakeholders also spoke out through public statements, reports and the media. For example, OHCHR issued 26 public reports and 153 press releases on critical human rights issues and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the

Near East (UNRWA) issued press statements on the rights of Palestinian refugees. Save the Children published four reports highlighting the devastating psychological and social impact that conflict and war has on children.

Improving compliance and accountability

Stakeholders also used their influence to advocate for improved compliance and accountability. Many made statements at the UN Human Rights Council, and Italy and Sweden used their positions as non-permanent members of the UNSC to call for compliance with IHL. Member States supported and engaged in the ongoing Intergovernmental Process on Strengthening Respect for International Humanitarian Law, co-facilitated by Switzerland and the ICRC. Efforts to promote political accountability through the UN included advocacy by Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Spain for the 'Code of Conduct regarding UN Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes'. Finally, many stakeholders expressed support for international justice mechanisms. Australia, Japan and the United Kingdom were among those reporting on technical and financial support to the International Criminal Court (ICC), and Ireland and Estonia were among those who contributed to the court's Trust Fund for Victims. France and Senegal co-hosted a conference to strengthen cooperation between the ICC and its States Parties on the recovery of assets, leading to the adoption of a declaration to that effect in December 2017.¹

Enhancing the protection of children in armed conflict

Nearly a quarter of reports under Core Responsibility Two included efforts to enhance protection of children in conflict. Several focused on child soldiers, including Canada's report on launching the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers—which was endorsed by over 60 Member States. The 'Children, Not Soldiers' campaign run by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG CAAC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) concluded in 2017, resulting in eight countries² signing action plans to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children in conflicts. Geneva Call reported efforts to aid the release of



Conflict takes a high toll on children, like this boy from South Sudan. UNICEF/Everett

approximately 290 children by non-state armed groups in Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo between September 2016 and December 2017.

Measures to safeguard the civilian character of schools in armed conflicts included the Second International Conference on Safe Schools held

Mine action and advocacy on explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA)

Thirteen Member States reported on their support for mine action. Austria, Belgium and Canada emphasized the importance of political advocacy for making the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention universal. Many Member States, including Australia, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Norway and Switzerland, provided funding or technical assistance for demining, as well as supporting education, awareness-raising and victim support. Thailand's Mine Action Center demined approximately 2,200 km² of contaminated land—which leaves around 400 km² still to be cleared.

Meanwhile, Austria, Ireland and Humanity and Inclusion (HI) drew attention to civilian harm caused by EWIPA. HI organized a regional meeting in Maputo, Mozambique where representatives from 19 African States issued an action-oriented communiqué supporting the diplomatic process towards a political declaration on the topic.

¹ Resolution ICC-ASP/16/Res.2, annex I

² Afghanistan, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen.



A man checks for mines and unexploded ordnance outside Aden, Yemen. OCHA/Matteo Minasi

in Argentina in March 2017. Belgium, Canada and Slovenia were among 15 Member States that endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in 2017. Save the Children reported providing advice to NATO on integrating the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict into NATO policy. Geneva Call conducted two training sessions with seven non-state armed groups on the protection of schools from military use and attacks.

Advocacy for protecting the medical mission

Stakeholders continued efforts to enhance the protection of medical staff and facilities. Member States reported efforts to further the implementation of Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) condemning attacks on medical facilities and personnel in conflict situations—for example, through multilateral forums and bilateral political dialogues. In October 2017, France organized a ministerial event in New York

resulting in 13 UN Member States endorsing a political declaration committing to stronger national laws and practices to protect health care in armed conflict. Australia and Norway also supported the ICRC's Health Care In Danger initiative.

Practical measures to improve compliance with the rules of war

Translating the advocacy and commitments covered in the first half of this chapter into concrete outcomes for civilians requires practical measures. A limited number of stakeholders reported on practical means to improve compliance with the rules of war, including better data collection, research and guidance, capacity-strengthening and training.³

Improving data collection and tracking violations

Stakeholders took practical steps to improve the quality of data collected on protection of civilians, gather data to assess compliance with

³ For a more thorough overview of these measures, please refer to the Analytical Paper produced by OCHA, which is available at: https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2018/Aug/Analytical%20Paper_Core%20Responsibility%202_Final_17%20August.pdf

the rules of war, and improve data management. Most of these stakeholders reported collecting data on violations, such as OHCHR's engagement in commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions and other investigative bodies, in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. OHCHR also finalized a report documenting violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the Central African Republic between 2003 and 2015.⁴ Austria reported that during its Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, it mandated (for the first time) the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission,⁵ with support from Switzerland. France supported projects to document crimes by ISIL against ethnic minorities in Iraq.

Stakeholders also gathered data to monitor compliance with the rules of war. The UN SRSG CAAC conducted visits to assess child protection measures included in the Colombian Peace Agreements, and Geneva Call conducted field monitoring visits to assess Deed of Commitment adherence by non-state armed groups. The NGO Act for Human Rights assessed observed practices in Lebanon against international human rights commitments. Finally, several stakeholders made efforts to strengthen data and information management capacities. Norway supported the development of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Surveillance System of Attacks on Health Care, and OHCHR adapted its Human Rights Case Database to include reporting on migrants, persons with disabilities in humanitarian contexts, health-care workers and facilities, and the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas.

Research, guidance and best practices

In addition to data collection, stakeholders conducted research on specific topics and produced best practice guidelines and recommendations to inform policy on the protection of civilians. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) studied the operational challenges and dilemmas of the Protection of Civilians Site model in South Sudan, while the Overseas

Development Institute (ODI) researched the implications of counter-terrorism measures on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. OCHA, NRC and the Jindal School of International Affairs carried out a joint study, *Presence and Proximity*, that provided recommendations on humanitarian action in insecure contexts. The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) developed and piloted the first-ever guide to evaluating humanitarian protection.⁶ To promote best practices, Save the Children produced guidance on community and national actions to mitigate the impact of attacks on education, and InterAction published recommendations on measures to mitigate harm to civilians in military operations and security partnerships. OCHA included best practices in the Secretary-General's report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict and compiled good practices to reduce civilian harm from explosive weapons in populated areas.

Strengthening national or organizational capacities

Stakeholders also made practical efforts to build national or organizational capacities to enhance the protection of civilians. A number of States focused on building internal legal and institutional capacities. For example, Belgium amended the Flemish Arms Trade Act to increase attention to IHL and human rights criteria for arms exports. Two Member States created new mechanisms to improve compliance with the rules of war: Portugal's National Commission for IHL, and Ukraine's Intergovernmental Commission on the Application and Implementation of IHL. Mexico organized the 8th Annual Specialized Course on International Humanitarian Law for more than 200 participants from the public administration and civil society. NGOs also engaged in internal capacity-strengthening, focusing predominantly on humanitarian principles. For example, Caritas Internationalis, Concern, Cordaid, Medair and Norwegian Church Aid integrated humanitarian principles into their codes of conduct and staff inductions.

⁴ In collaboration with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

⁵ In the first use of the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Team mechanism under Article 90 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention, an ad hoc team was deployed for the External Independent Forensic Investigation of the death of a member of the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine.

⁶ The Evaluation of Protection in Humanitarian Action guide will be published in 2018.

Technical assistance

Member States and international organizations provided advice and technical assistance to strengthen national capacities to meet obligations under international law. The EU offered political and technical support to countries developing national legislation on IHL obligations. OHCHR trained over 350 state officials from 135 countries on treaty reporting and provided assistance to help establish or strengthen some 70 national human rights institutions. Other technical assistance aimed to improve compliance with international treaties. New Zealand developed a Model Law to help Pacific States implement the Arms Trade Treaty, while Belgium provided expertise for legal workshops and training as part of EU outreach on the treaty.

Training

Many Member States, including Belgium, Chile, Malta, Ireland, New Zealand and Spain, developed guidance and trained their security forces on IHL, IHRL and protection of civilians. Member States also trained foreign military forces, with France conducting training

courses on IHL to the armed forces of States contributing to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, the G5 Sahel task force, and as part of EU Training Missions. Austria conducted the 9th Vienna Course on International Law for Military Legal Advisors, which has trained more than 200 legal advisers in the Armed Forces or the Ministries of Defence from 30 European States. A small number of stakeholders also trained non-state armed groups, such as Geneva Call, which trained non-state armed groups on humanitarian norms in six countries. A number of NGOs developed training and guidance for their staff on IHL and protection. For example, CARE International developed a toolkit for responding to attacks on humanitarians and civilian targets and rolled it out to their country teams. NRC developed and rolled out a Humanitarian Mediation Course to staff deployed to the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali, aimed at improving protection of civilians.

A soldier walks through the ruins of Sinjar, Iraq. Fierce fighting left much of the city destroyed. Getty Images/Giles Clarke



Achieving the transformation

There is an urgent need for practical action to increase compliance with IHL and IHRL, and to translate these norms into improved protection for civilians. Unfortunately, most reporting reflected political and advocacy efforts, with fewer reports on practical action or initiatives. In addition, more reporting from stakeholders affected by conflict would provide valuable experiences and learning opportunities and should be promoted.

Stakeholders reported that the greatest obstacle to collective progress on the protection of civilians is a lack of compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law. They attributed this failure to a number of factors, most notably a lack of accountability for violations of IHL and IHRL. Several mentioned pervasive impunity for violations of IHL and UNSC resolutions, as well as the need for a monitoring mechanism on compliance. Stakeholders highlighted the need to strengthen existing accountability mechanisms, including by ensuring adequate resources for the ICC and other international tribunals, and by strengthening national judicial systems. Stakeholders also noted the lack of political will by parties to conflict to comply with the rules of war.

Stakeholders described the challenges to improving the protection of civilians in specific contexts. After lack of compliance with IHL, the most commonly reported challenges were difficult field conditions, impediments to access, and threats to humanitarian and medical workers. Lack of human resources, non-application of standards and principles, and inadequate funding for humanitarian organizations were also among the top challenges reported. The lack of quality data was another significant barrier to identifying and documenting violations of IHL and IHRL, improving accountability, developing policies and programmes, and assessing progress.

As reflected in the focus of reporting in the first part of this chapter, there is a vital need for a global effort to raise public awareness of the human cost of armed conflict, and to demand that parties to conflict respect international law and that world leaders ensure that they do so.

However, to effectively uphold the norms that safeguard humanity, a focus on practical action is needed, including through the following steps:

- **Develop national policy frameworks on the protection of civilians:** Member States should develop national policy frameworks that build upon good practice, establishing clear institutional authorities and responsibilities for the protection of civilians and civilian objects in the conduct of hostilities.

- **Enhance compliance by non-state armed groups:** Efforts to improve the behaviour of non-state armed groups should include training and developing codes of conduct, unilateral declarations and special agreements through which groups commit to comply with their obligations and even go beyond what is required by the law. These undertakings could include specific civilian harm mitigation measures.

- **Promote compliance through improved accountability:** More attention is urgently required to ensure accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Member States should undertake credible and effective investigations into allegations of serious violations and hold perpetrators to account, with the support of the United Nations as necessary. Where national action is lacking, international mechanisms and resources should be made available.

“Impunity for violations, ongoing disregard for humanitarian law and normative standards continue to impede humanitarian action and a rights-based approach to humanitarian aid.”

– World Vision International, self-report 2D

- **Strengthen data collection:** There is a clear need for better data collection, disaggregated by sex and age, to enable a better understanding of the human cost of armed conflict, to help develop more effective measures for enhancing the protection of civilians, and to ensure more systematic accountability for violations.

Addressing gender-based violence in emergencies and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse

Two years on from the World Humanitarian Summit, stakeholders continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in emergencies. In 2017, 72 stakeholders reported on efforts—across different transformations of the Agenda for Humanity—to combat GBV, and 20 stakeholders reported measures to strengthen their capacities for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).

Progress in 2017⁷

Policy and advocacy work to prevent gender-based violence

Stakeholders demonstrated strong political commitment to end GBV, especially violence against women and girls, and to provide safe, comprehensive services to those affected. The multi-stakeholder Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies provided the impetus for transforming the way GBV is addressed in humanitarian crises, particularly in improving coordination and accountability. Many stakeholders reported engaging in global advocacy efforts to end GBV, with some also campaigning on related issues, including ending child marriage and human trafficking. While most reporting focused on women and girls, some stakeholders, such as Austria, ActionAid, Concern and the World Food Programme (WFP), also emphasized efforts to engage men and boys.

On a national level, Member States, including Cyprus, Malta, Romania and Ukraine, adopted new laws or policies, or ratified international conventions, to strengthen prevention of and response to GBV and domestic violence. Turkey amended legislation to strengthen refugee women's access to national services, including women's shelters. On an organizational level, stakeholders adopted or refined internal policies on GBV in humanitarian crises, developing new guidance and tools, and training staff in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) GBV Guidelines and the new IASC Policy (and

Accountability Framework) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, endorsed in December 2017.

Finally, a number of stakeholders reported on efforts to influence policy through research or events to share best practices. For example, the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves partnered with Plan International Spain and John Hopkins University to research the impact of cooking interventions on mitigating the risk of GBV in refugee camps, and Interaction held an event for US and international policymakers on the prevalence of GBV among elderly populations.

Programming and capacity-building to strengthen prevention and response

Many stakeholders reported funding or implementing programmes to prevent or respond to GBV, provide services to survivors and those at risk, and raise awareness of and advocate for the rights of affected people, particularly women and girls. Stakeholders also worked to strengthen local, national and international capacities to address GBV in emergencies. Tearfund trained faith leaders in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on speaking out and responding to GBV, and Save the Children's advocacy contributed to changing the legal age of marriage in Malawi, El Salvador and Guatemala. New Zealand supported police capacity to respond to domestic violence in the Pacific, Japan supported an initiative to strengthen Somalia's response to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) assisted Sri Lanka in initiating consultations on reparations for victims of CRSV. Ireland supported the creation of an International Summer School on Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies through the University College Dublin. Several stakeholders focused on improving data collection capacity, including the International Organization for Migration

⁷ For a more detailed analysis of reporting on GBV, see UNPFA, Analytical Paper on WHS self-reporting on Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies available at: https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2018/Jul/Analytical%20Paper_2D_GB_V_Final_26%20July.pdf



A woman in North Kivu province, DRC. The ongoing conflict there is characterized by gross human rights violations, including targeted attacks against civilians and a high prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence. OCHA/Eve Sabbagh

(IOM), which strengthened integration of GBV indicators in data collection on displacement, and UNICEF, which gathered data on ending violence against girls as part of its U-Report platform.⁸

Preventing sexual exploitation and abuse

In 2017, the UN Secretary-General adopted a strategy to improve the UN's system-wide approach to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse (A/71/818). The strategy focuses on four areas: prioritizing victims' rights; ending impunity through increased transparency, reporting and investigations; engaging Member States, civil society and other relevant actors; and reorienting strategic communications to address stigma and discrimination. The UN appointed a Victim's Rights advocate and extended the mandate of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. To help humanitarian organizations implement the IASC Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA, in 2017 the IASC Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and PSEA finalized and disseminated a best practice guide for setting up and maintaining Community Based Complaints Mechanisms, with global standard operating procedures.

Reflecting this political momentum, 20 stakeholders—predominantly INGOs and international organizations—reported strengthening internal policies, tools and reporting mechanisms for PSEA. GOAL, for example, revised its PSEA Policy and Code of Conduct in line with best practices in the sector, ensured that all country programmes have a dedicated protection focal point, and appointed a PSEA focal point on the Board of Directors. Care International introduced a hotline for PSEA reporting. UNICEF noted efforts to develop a UN-wide system to vet all incoming personnel for records of past sexual exploitation and abuse allegations, and OHCHR contributed to the Secretary-General's strategy for PSEA and supported the development of the Voluntary Compact on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Many stakeholders reported training staff; UNDP, for example, launched a mandatory e-course on PSEA with other UN entities.

⁸ U-Report is a free community feedback tool that uses mobile technology to gather the opinions and ideas of young people. The U-Report poll on Ending Violence Against Girls (EVAG) was created in partnership with Plan International, CARE, UN Women and the Girl Guides.

Achieving the transformation

Stakeholders reported the challenges in turning political commitments into tangible change on the ground. Most reported lack of funding as their biggest constraint, impacting not only programme delivery, but also the training and capacity-building needed to mainstream GBV prevention and response. Stakeholders pointed out discrepancies between top-level commitments, such as to the Call to Action, and managerial accountability for GBV and PSEA in humanitarian programming. Stakeholders also highlighted the challenges of protecting vulnerable people, especially women and girls, in conflicts and insecure contexts, where humanitarian access is limited and where sexual and gender-based violence are used as weapons of war. Finally, a number of stakeholders pointed out that GBV is not caused by disasters or conflicts, but by unequal gender relations and, as such, requires coordinated action across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors.

In light of these challenges, stakeholders made the following recommendations for achieving collective progress:

- **Strengthen leadership and accountability:** Dedicated leadership is required to prioritize prevention of GBV and PSEA from the outset of emergencies and to ensure efforts are adequately resourced. Many called for heads of organizations and other leaders, including the Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators, to be held accountable for ensuring that GBV and PSEA policies are translated into practice. Stakeholders

stressed the need for leaders to implement a whole-of-organization approach to protection, ensuring that all staff across all sectors take responsibility for preventing GBV and SEA.

- **Provide adequate, longer-term funding:** Stakeholders called on donors, UN entities and NGOs to ensure dedicated funding for GBV programmes over longer periods of time. This shift requires policy change, committed leadership, multi-year funding and programming that crosses the humanitarian-development divide, in combination with other efforts to empower women and girls and increase their participation.

- **Build local capacity to deliver programmes and services:** Given the long-term nature of combating gender inequality, stakeholders emphasized the need for local and national leadership, and called on humanitarian actors to build the capacity of local actors to deliver high-quality programmes and services. Some stakeholders also emphasized the importance of strengthening justice systems to hold perpetrators to account.

- **Focus on practical steps to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse:** Stakeholders emphasized the need to focus on practical steps for PSEA, such as coordination, inter-agency collaboration, raising awareness and developing easy-to-use reporting mechanisms that safeguard reporters and victims.



Three members of the Association for the Progress and Development of Women (APDF) in Mopti, Mali, a women-led organization that provides support and livelihoods training to victims of violence or abuse. OCHA/Unknown