Learning Review - Strengthening Partners in Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse through Protection Mainstreaming (SPSEA)

FUNDED BY THE USAID BUREAU FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

INTRODUCTION

The Strengthening Partners in Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SPSEA) project was a 3-year, BHA-funded, pilot project that provided direct capacity building support to 38 national organizations in the disaster-prone countries of Indonesia, Philippines, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The project supported partners to operationalize policies, systems and structures needed to effectively prevent and address issues of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) within the organizations and the communities they serve. Specifically, partners received support to:

- Develop policies and procedures to mitigate, identify and respond to allegations of SEA from staff and affected community members.
- Implement protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, or PSEA, in their recruitment and orientation practices for staff and volunteers.
- Establish safe, accessible PSEA-responsive feedback, complaints, and response mechanisms in disaster-prone communities.
- Establish referral pathways for SEA-related services in their local areas.

The project started in three countries (Haiti, Indonesia, and the Philippines) on 1 October 2018 and DRC joined the project in October 2019. Each country received support in a 2-year cycle from CRS, with an additional 2 months of support added for DRC, Indonesia, and the Philippines due to implementation challenges caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

During the 3-year timeframe, CRS and partners have achieved significant success across project objectives. At the time of writing[1], key achievements include:
- 235 policies and procedures were developed or strengthened, of a target of 60.

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[1] This document was drafted in December 2021, prior to the completion of the project endline in DRC. As such, these figures are not inclusive of all DRC partner successes.

- 763 partner staff of a target of 430, were trained on PSEA and related topics, with 78% of participants scoring above 70% in retention tests.
- The average score of partner capacity assessments rose from 51% to 83% over the course of the project.
- 87% of participant organizations have established a feedback, complaints, and response mechanism, each of which included communication plans and standard operating procedures.
- 20 organizations created referral pathways for protection services in their local areas.

WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT FOR?

This document is a learning companion to the SPSEA Toolkit, a comprehensive set of tools and resources to support local and national NGOs to mainstream PSEA in practice. The guide includes training tools and program and implementation tools for usage by local and national NGOs. The most recent version also includes a summary of learnings and recommendations for organizations working with local partners to enhance PSEA in their work, as well as useful PSEA capacity strengthening tools.

This document expands on the learning and recommendations in the toolkit, providing further recommendations and a nuanced reflection on the successes and challenges when working on strengthening PSEA at the organizational and programmatic levels. It also provides examples of partner successes and good practices that may serve as guidance, and case studies for others working in this area.

This document uses data from baseline, mid-term, endline reviews and an ex-post evaluation carried out a year after the close of the project. It also incorporates reflections from a Global Learning Workshop, held in January 2020, and data collected for case studies on partner successes. All project tools and resources can be found on the CRS Emergency Field Operations Management site, in the subheading on Safeguarding and PSEA, under the Safe and Dignified Programming section.

SPSEA LEARNINGS AND REFLECTIONS

STAFFING AND OTHER RESOURCES

Working with local partners and actors on PSEA requires an intentional investment of staff time and other resources on the behalf of both the local, and supporting, NGO. While this should not come as a surprise, as programmatic and institutional work have costs, this is often overlooked when setting goals, objectives, and roles and responsibilities. Costs reported by partners include travel and transportation for community engagement and consultations, developing IEC materials for sensitization, and FCRM running costs (set up and operating costs for hotlines, transportation for face to face etc.). However, the most significant cost reported by partners is staff time, for the time of PSEA Focal Points in particular, but not limited to this function only.

As PSEA is a cross-organizational commitment and objective, staff time from human resources, program teams and senior leadership at a minimum, is required to ensure policies and procedures are updated, and most importantly, applied. Many SPSEA partners have

multiple offices and require input from senior and field level staff at all levels for buy in, application and comprehension across the organization. This requires strong communication plans across and within organizations, which takes time and effort to plan and rollout. All of these activities have costs associated with them, costs that local organizations, who in most cases have less access to unrestricted funding, can struggle to cover.

Competing priorities for staff assigned as PSEA Focal Points or to take the lead on other PSEA actions must also be considered when working to support local actors. Partners faced multiple competing priorities during project implementation. As is common in the humanitarian sector, partner staff were managing large portfolios of work and often struggled to find time to move forward on PSEA commitments. During SPSEA, new and ongoing emergency responses, including COVID-19 responses, had to take precedence during the timeframe of the project, and interrupted some planned activities. When interviewed at endline, PSEA focal points expressed concerns about the level of effort required from them in relation to their expectations earlier in the project. One respondent in the Philippines said about their role that "it's a lot of work…it's more than you think and really it could have been more of my time." In many cases, staff were not dedicated full time to their focal point role, which made implementation and progress challenging. Availability of senior leadership was also a challenge, as they juggled multiple priorities that did not always allow for active engagement.

SPSEA teams in all countries supported partners to recover costs associated with the objectives of the project, up to a maximum of USD 10,000 over the course of the two-year implementation period. In Indonesia and the Philippines, this worked particularly well as recouping of costs was linked to project deliverables. In this model, deliverables were agreed and documented, and a percentage of funds released to partners at the start of the process. The remaining funds were disbursed when all final deliverables were submitted to CRS to allow partners to be reimbursed for expenses generated by PSEA-strengthening activities. This model also allowed partners to allocate these funds to recoup the most pressing costs based on their individual circumstances. Some examples of deliverables include Board-approved Code of Conduct and Safeguarding/PSEA Policy; PSEA trainings rolled out to all staff; final safe recruitment procedures documented and approved; community consultations on communication needs, preferences, and barriers; community-informed FCRMs approved and in place; and referral pathways for key protection services documented.

Participants in the ex-post evaluation reported that despite some turnover in staff, because of COVID19, organizational restructuring, or simply organic staff renewal, one year after the end of the PSEA project, they continue to have the required human resources with the right capacity to implement PSEA policies and procedures. Most organizations stressed that in cases of staff turnover they had ensured a proper handover and where necessary the appointment of new focal points. In terms of financial capacity, most organizations reported that they have the required resources available. Most streamlined funding for PSEA activities such as training sessions into project budgets, while one organization has budget for PSEA allocated in their annual organizational budget.

It is important to note, that the ex-post evaluation took place in Philippines and Indonesia only and surveyed 11 partners out of 38 project partners in total. As such, while these

findings are encouraging, they cannot be seen as representative across all project partners or local operational contexts, norms and conditions.

DURATION OF SUPPORT

Though the SPSEA project itself was three years in total, participating partners received support during a 2-year cycle. When asked their opinion on project duration, more than half of SPSEA partner participants felt that the project should be at least one year longer. In interviews, partner staff consistently expressed that they felt they did not have enough time to fully bring the project on board or that they needed more time to absorb the content that they were learning. While the reasons varied in different countries, the request for additional time for direct support was consistent.

Several partner participants mentioned that the concepts introduced in this project were new to them and that internalizing them would take more time. This sentiment was echoed by most other participants in the endline process. In interviews with staff from Haiti, the focus was more on the need to go deeper and more slowly to fully grasp the new concepts and apply the new knowledge and skills, rather than go broader and focus on dissemination of knowledge and skills to more staff.

While in Haiti, partners focused on the novelty of the concepts as being the biggest impediment, partners in Indonesia and the Philippines focused more on the challenges of limited face-to-face interactions and the chance to put theory into practice. In the Philippines, the desire for more time focused more on applying the concepts. One respondent put it that "It took us a long time to [become] proficient in what we were doing so that the board would ratify [the policies]." Others felt concerns about actually putting the work into practice once the project has ended, and despite feeling that they had developed good products, they knew there was a lot to learn in implementation.

We need more work and reflection for us…internally. It's deep reflection for us. We need more intense assistance to internalize the PSEA in partners…we need more practice to implement at the community level…it's theory vs. practice. (Indonesia partner staff member)

The ex-post evaluation one year after the end of the project noted that all organizations continue to use the policies and procedures and have further integrated PSEA in their institutions. While the cultural change that is also necessary hasn't fully occurred yet, participating organizations have basic requirements in place to prevent and address SEA in their organizations and projects.

SUPPORTING NGO SKILLS, RESOURCES AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING METHODS

SPSEA used a variety of methods to strengthen capacity and support partners to develop policies and procedures for PSEA, focused on training, writeshops/workshops, accompaniment/on-the-job support, coaching and mentoring, and a PSEA simulation exercise. Structured accompaniment, linked to key deliverables, has produced good results. Accompaniment sessions were centered around a key area, usually following a learning event on the topic. Each session has a documented area of focus and is linked to a given output. After each accompaniment, CRS documents the progress, challenges and follow-up required in an accompaniment report that is shared with the partner.

Depending on the topic, accompaniment sessions were conducted with partners individually or in clusters. The individual sessions ensured that there is enough one-on-one support for each partner and that more confidential information such as assessment outcomes can be discussed in a safe environment. However, if the topic allows, the clustered accompaniment sessions have proven to be very motivating for partners as it capitalizes on their existing experience and encourages the exchange of successes, challenges and progress, while also creating healthy competition between peer organizations.

Though the original project approach favored face-to-face accompaniment, this was difficult to maintain due to COVID-19 restrictions, and the frequently uncertain security situation in Haiti. The alternative method of remote and virtual support was received with mixed results from partners, with under 50% deeming remote accompaniment helpful, and over 50% feeling it was one of the least helpful methods. The simulation exercise (SIMEX) was the most favored support method (39 respondents) followed by coaching and on-the-job support (30 respondents). The SIMEX was deemed extremely helpful to put the acquired knowledge and skills in practice. One respondent in Haiti put it in the following way.

Developing the feedback mechanism was difficult because we stress[ed] that it needs to be inclusive and that's very important. How to use it also became a challenge. The SIMEX was the most important thing in making that a functional reality. It was very helpful to understand what to actually do with feedback that comes in.

The CRS approach was rated highly by partners, and CRS staff's technical expertise, ability to understand learning needs and strong communication skills were highlighted. Several partner staff surveyed mentioned their appreciation for the attitude of the CRS team and the equitable partnership. The participatory approach and the flexibility of the CRS team while continuously consulting partners was reported as a key element for the success of the project.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Corporate culture and leadership present opportunities and barriers to strengthening PSEA in any organization. The organizational culture toward issues of gender, human rights for diverse groups, child protection and accountability to communities affected by crisis can enhance or impede PSEA goals. Power dynamics within an organization will also play a role. Active leadership is a huge factor: modelling behaviors, linking PSEA to organizational values, and making time to engage in PSEA efforts can demonstrate organizational and leadership commitment.

During the project endline, it was widely noted that attitudes to protection against SEA had changed significantly. The project has raised awareness within partner organizations, both at the leadership and staff level. At the staff level, it was reported that staff are now "paying more attention"; there is a new vocabulary around PSEA in the offices and the subject of PSEA is less of a taboo. 97% of respondents in the endline survey reported that their attitude to PSEA had changed as a result of the project's activities. Examples of changes given include change in behavior towards colleagues, as well as daring to call out inappropriate behavior of colleagues.

[I am] much more careful in my actions with work colleagues.

Before the SPSEA [project], I would not report a colleague who commits
an act of sexual exploitation or abuse, now I would denounce it.

However, though the project design focused on changing attitudes of leadership, project activities did not specifically target the leadership, except at the start of the project to get their buy-in. Partner leadership did participate in some of the project activities but not all activities were relevant to them. In smaller organizations, especially in the Philippines and Indonesia, staff in leadership positions were more likely to fulfill other organization roles, potentially increasing their participation in the project activities. To address this issue, DRC conducted a follow up leadership workshop which was attended by partners' senior leadership as well as two Bishops from partner dioceses. The bishops presented on the Vatican directives related to PSEA, and the CRS and partner teams presented on the Caritas Internationalis Management Standard on Safeguarding and the SPSEA project, toolkit, and approach. The participation of bishops alongside the leadership of partners and CRS helped partners push PSEA forward (for instance in getting the Safeguarding policy and CoC approved by the partner's board).

When asked about what led to the change in leadership attitude one respondent from Indonesia said that it was a combination of a carrot and a stick – by giving leadership examples of why PSEA is serious and the potential consequences of not taking it seriously enough. Leadership can be encouraged to act because it is the right thing to do, and because it increases external funding opportunities. It's unclear whether the carrot or the stick is a stronger motivator for changing attitudes or behaviors around SEA. In Haiti especially, several key informants focused on the importance of the institutional changes and the potential disciplinary measures because of the new policies and procedures while others felt that there was a change of culture and mindset that would continue to exist regardless of the threat of repercussions in case of SEA.

However, maintaining PSEA as a priority issue is an ongoing challenge. In the ex-post evaluation, the most common issue mentioned is the fear or the actual situation that SEA is not seen as a problem by staff. Three organizations in Indonesia state that sexist jokes persist, even though they have gotten less. Raising awareness internally, particularly among elders and religious leaders, has been difficult as they see SEA as a gender issue or a problem that only women face. One organization reported that many staff didn't think the organization had a problem with SEA and initially didn't take the training seriously. However, this has changed as reports of SEA started coming in.

Several participating organizations highlighted the importance of senior management and board support to continue pushing for PSEA. While many report to having this support, some reported that turnover and high workload at the senior management level have challenged attention to PSEA. In Indonesia some of the partner organizations that are affiliated with a larger network will soon have the re-election of the executive board which may result in restructuring of the organization and its priorities. While this may affect the commitment to PSEA, organizations reported having prepared for this. Some have trained and oriented as many as possible in the organization and others have prepared a handover document with recommendations and guidance for PSEA. One organization in the Philippines reported that they have a new executive director and that they need to revisit and introduce PSEA to them.

One organization reported that while they still had the same staff that were trained during the SPSEA program, most of them were trained through the step-down training by their own colleagues which is causing some issues with levels and uniformity of understanding. Other barriers to the full acceptance and use of PSEA policies, procedures and practices that were reported include staff turnover, fear of victims for repercussion and stigma, historically quick recruitment practices which still led to some difficulties with existing staff or volunteers, and a lack of funding to procure IEC material. Leadership commitment and buy in can address most, if not all, of these issues.

EXTERNAL FACTORS OF INFLUENCE

It is important to acknowledge that working on PSEA as any organization, does not happen in a vacuum. Strengthening and improving PSEA practices and policies is situated within legal, cultural and social norms, that can hasten or hinder progress. In the first quarter of SPSEA, CRS contracted local legal consultants to conduct a review of the local and national legislation related to PSEA in each country (i.e., legislation related to child protection, gender-based violence, workplace harassment, local labor law etc.). These reports highlighted that culture and customary laws play a pivotal role in the prevalence and reporting of cases involving sexual exploitation and abuse. Addressing and responding to issues of SEA, is also situated within the local cultural and legal context, with adherence to cultural norms often shaping the response (for example, in indigenous and Islamic communities in the Philippines).

Though there are often laws in place to protect people (predominantly women and children) from SEA, there remain many barriers to reporting and addressing SEA. For example, in the Philippines, social stigma in discussing these issues acts as deterrent for reporting sensitive cases to proper authorities or organizations. Addressing SEA is also a challenge according to some existing laws, for example in the Philippines where the legal age of sexual consent is 12 years old. Proving a lack of consent for children over 12 or for adults falls to the survivor and is challenging according to the current legislation. National laws can also influence disciplinary measures that can be taken by organizations, including termination of employment. In Indonesia, though termination is legally allowed for 'immoral acts' including SEA, it can be difficult to prove instances of SEA, as employees must be either caught in the act, confess to the act, or share "other evidence in the form of an incident report made by an authorized person in the company concerned, and substantiated by no less than 2 (two) witnesses". As there are often no witnesses to cases of SEA, this is quite a high threshold to meet for legal dismissal, without which organizations may be exposed to potential litigation from employees that can be costly. For smaller locally operating organizations, reliant on volunteers and public donations, this type of litigation can threaten their very existence. High prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence in the local culture is also a risk factor for SEA in the humanitarian sphere.

However, there can be mitigating factors to negative legal, cultural, and social norms. For many Caritas/Catholic church partners, the influence from the Vatican loomed large. In the first year of the project, the Vatican issued a directive requiring all church institutions to put in place policies to address PSEA[3]. In Haiti, the weight of this was used to present SEA to the Bishops Conference in a different light. Placing the project in the global context, highlighting that SEA is seen by church authorities as an issue that must be addressed, has helped shift the attitudes of partners and increased their participation.

[…] We had problems at the start. It was something new, so the sensitization was important. The fact that this came from Caritas, that this came from the Vatican, that gave it weight. It was signed and official and that gave it weight.

SUSTAINABILITY

One year after the end of the SPSEA programs' activities, all organizations that participated in the ex-post evaluation report that they have continued to use the PSEA policies and procedures that were developed during the program period. The safe recruitment process continues to be used by all organizations in the study. As noted by one respondent, "PSEA is now integrated from start to end", beginning with PSEA-sensitive vacancy announcements and job descriptions as well as vetting of candidates and induction on PSEA as part of the new staff orientation process. The Code of Conduct (COC) developed during the program is signed by all staff, including all new hires. Several organizations reported extending the orientation and signing of the COC to volunteers, vendors, service providers, and partners.

Partner organizations have also continued to improve staff knowledge and awareness on PSEA internally. Organizations have been particularly good at integrating PSEA in existing activities and documents. One Indonesian partner for example regularly discusses PSEA topics during their bi-weekly learning meeting. Many organizations have also continued providing refresher training internally to ensure that all departments have staff trained on PSEA. Some organizations mentioned that they had planned to conduct more training and awareness raising but were not able to due to restrictions related to the COVID19 pandemic. Several organizations reported integrating PSEA in documents such as the Indonesian organization that added PSEA to their project implementation guidelines.

All organizations maintained their Feedback, Complaints and Response Mechanisms (FCRM) and some put new ones in place for projects in new areas over the last year. FCRMs are one of the few PSEA tools that respondents noted making changes to in the last year: SOPs have been adjusted on a project-by-project basis to update reporting lines for sensitive and programmatic feedback, and feedback channels were modified depending on communities' preferences. In Indonesia, for example, one partner organization changed from requiring written feedback to encouraging the use of drawings or symbols as not everyone in the communities is literate.

The most mentioned opportunities to apply the PSEA policies and procedures were new projects. Many respondents stated that they integrated PSEA not just in the projects during the design and implementation phases for example by budgeting for PSEA and instituting an FCRM but also by requiring all new staff and volunteers to sign the COC and undergo orientation. The new projects mentioned included several emergency responses to COVID-19 and typhoons but almost all organizations mentioned that PSEA was incorporated in development projects too. Respondents highlighted several cases where their organizations use knowledge and skills learned during the SPSEA program and apply them in other areas, for instance an Indonesian partner used the learning on internal reporting and investigation systems (IRIS) in a suspected fraud case.

Almost all respondents mentioned that they had shared knowledge or resources with others outside the organization. Many shared with their peers and local partners, through coordination platforms or directly. An Indonesian organization reported using YouTube videos for documenting and sharing knowledge and resources on PSEA. In the Philippines, many organizations also highlighted sharing PSEA resources with local communities and local government representatives. Several organizations in Indonesia and the Philippines are accompanying local civil society organizations in the development of their own PSEA policies and procedures, while one organization in the Philippines shared that they had planned, upon the request of the bishop, to orient the clergy. However, this was postponed due to COVID19.

In addition, there was some noteworthy (plans for) sharing with non-traditional partners. Respondents in the Philippines mentioned plans to share experiences with the local police and schools and one Indonesian organization shared their knowledge with a transportation company who ended up establishing a hotline to report SEA related cases. Some organizations in Indonesia are part of a network with both non-profit and for-profit affiliates and several of these have been trained and were reported to have replicated PSEA policies and procedures. Several organizations also mentioned sharing their new knowledge and documents with donors and although this was not for the purpose of replication, it did earn them appreciation and potentially also raised awareness on the topic, as some organizations access non-traditional donors where PSEA may or may not be on the agenda yet.

The level of ownership of the outcomes of the SPSEA program among the respondents is high as can be seen in how the policies and procedures are used. Partner organizations reported implementing policies, procedures and practices in a way that is adjusted to them, making changes as necessary, for example by adjusting case studies to make training more context specific. Interestingly, there were some examples of unexpected use of PSEA tools, for instance with organizations encouraging their own staff to use the FCRM and using IRIS for non-PSEA related cases such as fraud. In the Philippines, one organization even trained Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) officers and communities on IRIS so they could do investigations themselves as the VAWC officers are appointed but not trained. The level of ownership also become clear through the initiative of organizations to share their knowledge on PSEA with non-traditional partners such as the police, companies, and schools.

Despite these successes, several organizations in Indonesia also report that it has been difficult to disseminate information and train staff across the (often large) organization. Some of the organizations have many offices across the country. In part because of COVID and in part because of cultural differences between regions, it has been difficult to ensure that the understanding and application of policies and procedures have been consistent across the branch offices because new staff orientation and training has taken place online. One organization has addressed this by adjusting the case studies in the CRS PSEA toolkit to make them more context specific, aiming to increase the understanding of PSEA across regions.

Organizations in the Philippines operate locally only and did not have the same barriers. Also, they seem to have focused more on PSEA in the communities and projects than in the workplace like Indonesia. Organizations in the Philippines reported having difficulties with receiving feedback due to COVID as connections were poor and because of the restrictions people could not change location for better network reception. Communities were also

economically affected which resulted in some people not being able to recharge phone credit to call the hot line. The movement restrictions also meant that organizations could not travel to their project areas to receive face-to-face feedback. Organizations tried to address this by distributing newsletters, broadcasting messages through radio, alerting communities to other means of providing feedback and having small group meetings whenever possible to solicit feedback from communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING LOCAL ACTORS TO STRENGTHEN PSEA

1. Introduce PSEA to all levels of the organizations. Introduce the PSEA capacity strengthening approach and maintain communication at all levels of the participating organizations to ensure awareness, buy-in and ownership. The engagement of relevant departments—such as human resources (HR) and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL)—across NGO and partners in PSEA-related training and accompaniment activities throughout the project ensures high-quality integration of PSEA in the organizations' policies and procedures.

   In Indonesia, partner PSEA focal points came from diverse departments: senior management (secretary of directors, board of ethics, etc.), operational team (HR and legal, finance, etc.), and programmatic (program managers, MEAL, gender and/or protection point person). The intention was not only mitigating staff turnover but also engaging all levels of their organization in promoting and reinforcing PSEA principles.

2. Invest greater effort to inform leadership attitudes on PSEA. Although attitudes changed, partner staff expressed concern that the change was superficial, and that further work was needed to engage leaders by focusing on moral reasons for PSEA as well as to secure funding. It is also recommended that activities are targeted and tailored to partner leadership and staff separately considering the sensitivity of the topics and different needs in terms of learning and applying PSEA policies and procedures. Findings also showed that staff were uncomfortable discussing SEA in front of leadership.

   Experience in the DRC and Haiti shows that a context-specific and culturally sensitive approach is required to get partner leadership on board. Initial introductions of the project to senior partner leadership by senior staff, such as the country representative, were well-received in all countries and helped to raise awareness of the importance of PSEA. This increases the awareness of PSEA at the senior level of the partner organization and shows the wider partner staff that PSEA is taken seriously by their leadership.

3. At least three to five years of support is needed for project learning, and for outcomes to be applied and sustainable. Additional time allows for more in-depth learning and implementation of project objectives. Partners consistently expressed in interviews that they did not have enough time to fully roll out the project, or that they needed more time to absorb the content of what they were learning[2].

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[2] Although partners in the ex-post continue to apply the learning from SPSEA, this sample is not representative as only partners in Indonesia and Philippines participated, representing very different contexts to Haiti and DRC.

LEARNING REVIEW - STRENGTHENING PARTNERS IN PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE THROUGH PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING (SPSEA)

4. Plan for and resource dedicated staff time of both partner focal points and NGO staff. One full level of effort (LOE) NGO staff member is recommended to support three to five partners, depending on their size, structure, and existing capacity. Factor in costs for partners to apply the learning, as most do not have flexible funding sources.

    Many of the focal points interviewed expressed concerns about the level of effort required from them in relation to their expectations earlier in the project. One respondent in the Philippines said of their role that "it's a lot of work … it's more than you think."

5. Conduct consistent and targeted accompaniment. Accompaniment sessions can focus on a specific topic for which partners receive support to develop their outputs. Document the progress, challenges and required follow-up in a report for the partner. Outputs can also be linked to a small disbursal of funds upon completion of project deliverables.

    CRS' accompaniment activities in the Philippines were structured around the project's intermediate results (IR) and tailored to partners based on the outcomes of their individual SEA capacity assessment. Each accompaniment activity had a clear purpose, linked to the project's IRs, that was documented and shared with the partners ahead of the session.

6. Cluster partner accompaniment sessions to encourage cross-organizational learning and motivation. Clustered accompaniment sessions encourage the exchange of successes, challenges and progress, while creating healthy competition between peer organizations.

    Clustering was done geographically in the Philippines, which was efficient for the CRS team considering the resource limitations of this project. Three clusters were formed, which significantly reduced the time and costs for travel to partners. It was also appreciated by partners as they were clustered with organizations that work in the same context, speak the same language, and have similar cultures. In Indonesia, clustering was based on the type and level of experience of the organization.

7. NGO participatory approach and equitable partner relationships facilitated learning and efficiency in application. Partners expressed appreciation for the team's technical skills, communication style and flexibility, and reported that the approach to capacity building was key to the project's success.

CASE STUDIES

Bina Swadaya

BINA SWADAYA BEFORE SPSEA

The participation of Bina Swadaya initially began when CRS announced the start of the SPSEA project and reached Bina Swadaya Konsultan (BSK), the community empowerment division of Bina Swadaya. There was mutual understanding in the initial discussion with BSK to get involved in the project and it was a great initiative if the participation is upscaled for the whole Bina Swadaya foundation. Bina Swadaya, a big and rooted social enterprise foundation, began its journey to empower local farmers and the agricultural sector since 1967. They have seven fields of activities ranging from community empowerment to agribusiness development and humanitarian response. The organization previously focused largely on a different set of challenges as the characteristics of its foundation falls primarily into a development setting rather a humanitarian one. The SPSEA project helped them to develop new techniques and approaches to apply to a wider range of responses.

SHFTING FOCUS

Before joining the SPSEA project, BSK, as a division of the Bina Swadaya division, received trainings in litigation of lands rights and workers' rights. BSK once conducted research on farmers' land ownership and labor unions as part of their community empowerment activities. However, the introduction of PSEA was considered interesting because it encouraged BSK to not respond directly to cases but also to develop regulations, report cases, conduct investigations, and develop victim referral support systems. These changes went beyond just empowerment, but incorporated mitigation actions, and processes for how to respond to a case.

Leadership commitment in Bina Swadaya was demonstrated in how the Boards of Directors and managers were able to take the changes to the Code of Conduct and apply them into the company regulation. Their strategy was to incorporate the PSEA principles into the safety and security regulation when there is potential of workplace harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation between Bina Swadaya staff and the beneficiaries, customers, or other third parties. Another company regulation was also been drafted to include PSEA principles into chapter about prohibitions, warnings, and Social security. These regulations are set to be finalized at the national level and will apply for all Bina Swadaya staff and partners. As of this writing, the regulations are pending final inputs from the Board of Director and Managers.

> "Before joining SPSEA project, we had a case that involved one of Bina Swadaya's directors and they had processed the case according to the proper law. At that time, TBS has not familiar with the term PSEA. We also receive a report of harassment between employees, and it was considered as an immoral behavior. The case was considered un-professional and disturbing the working atmosphere. Disciplinary actions were given to the employee." (Agus Suswanto, Bina Swadaya Konsultan staff)

EARLY RESULTS

The timing of these changes was apropos, as it came shortly after the West Java flood response and before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. CRS and Bina Swadaya held a face-to-face meeting about Code of Conduct accompaniment in Bina Swadaya office. Bina Swadaya planned to use the newly improved draft of their Code of Conduct along with the integrity pact to be signed by the humanitarian response team and volunteers. Emergency Response Bina Swadaya (ERBS), now Social and Humanitarian

Emergency Response (SHER) Bina Swadaya, had their first PSEA sensitization on the Code of Conduct, signing the integrity pact, preparation of community feedback mechanism consultation, and creating their IEC material in this flood response. The volunteers raised questions about PSEA because this was a new thing for them, yet they still socialized PSEA when distributing aid for the community as part of their commitment of being a humanitarian volunteer.

The first community consultation on PSEA and FRM faced challenge on the issue of sensitivity and not much could be gained. This was attributed to the fact that the participants were mostly women and the Bina Swadaya staff who facilitated the meeting was a male staff. The team then prepared the second community consultation by arranging better facilitation team, strategy, and IEC material along with the aid distribution for the affected community. They have successfully gained engagement from the participant, which still mostly comprise women, by combining the issue and strategy. In respond to it, Bina Swadaya also put some PSEA related questions while conducting its post-distribution monitoring activities to acquire knowledge of the community.

> *"It was the on-the-job accompaniment post training, mainly when documenting and writing regulations/procedures was the event that has the most impact for us. We implement it directly when developing the code of conduct and integrity pact to be used for the response team at Cigudeg, Jawa Barat." (Anang Arifin, Bina Swadaya PSEA Focal Point)*

> *"PSEA also has been considered as enhancing the quality of relationship between Bina Swadaya and their contractor, partners, vendors, etc." (Otok S. Pamuji, Bina Swadaya PSEA Focal Point)*

Some of documentation has been created by Bina Swadaya to show their commitment in PSEA. First, they documented their humanitarian responses in West Java flood from the Code of Conduct sensitization and integrity pack signing up to their aid distribution and PSEA community consultation. The video then shared in their biweekly public discussion, Bincang-bincang Wisma Hijau, to promote and socialize the PSEA principles in their humanitarian response in March 2020. During their involvement in PSEA Networking and Raising Awareness event in December 2020, Bina Swadaya created another promotional video on PSEA that featured the chairman of Bina Swadaya foundation as form of commitment. The two videos are available for display at any time in each floor in their headquarter.

The efforts of Bina Swadaya to integrate in all field of activities shown how applicative and adaptive the SPSEA project to improve the capacity of an organization in all setting. It is important for CRS to engage with the partner organization staff or focal point in discussing the advancement of their policy that suit best for them. Initial discussion, trainings, and on-the-job accompaniment provide not only capacity improvement but also ownership of partner.

The Human Initiative

INITIAL TREPIDATION

The Human Initiative is a national organization in Indonesia which transitioned from a national zakat institution in 1999 into humanitarian organization in 2016. Their Islamic values became the core in their work in improving the quality of life and wellbeing the people they serve. As a long-term partner of CRS Indonesia, they have been a solid partner in responding to emergency situations in country and have participated regularly in emergency response capacity strengthening and institutional strengthening activities.

In 2018, CRS Indonesia introduce the SPSEA project to strengthen one of the critical principles of the organization, namely, to improve their institutional capacity, particularly during emergency response. At first, this project received negative reception from the Board of Directors and Management. They were unsure whether there would be contradicting values between PSEA and Human Initiative and whether it would merely promote some "western culture" movement. Some initial concerns were raised as to whether promoting PSEA principles would necessarily advocate ideological movements at odds with Islamic values. The terms and concepts of PSEA were new to many staff and there was initial resistance to the "western terminology".

CLARIFICATION AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

The initial discussion and setup of PSEA support for partners were held individually for each partner organization. This included coming to a clear mutual understanding of all parties as to the intended outcomes of the collaboration, and the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. As a long-term partner, Human Initiative then invited the CRS project staff to give sensitization in PSEA to Human Initiative's Board of Directors and Management.

> "We want our Directors and Managers to hear it from CRS themselves that PSEA project is not going to contradict to our organizational values and also to help the focal point gaining support and leadership commitment." (Bobby Cahyono, Human Initiative PSEA Focal Point)

ENGAGING LEADERSHIP

Further leadership buy-in was achieved through a critical strategy adopted by the SPSEA project. CRS made a point of always inviting senior management staff and a focal point representative to attend trainings. The PSEA Introduction Workshop and Feedback, Complaints, and Response Mechanism (FCRM) training were the first two trainings that successfully engaged and secured commitment from senior management staff. By introducing how important it was to make the voices of people we serve heard through preferred feedback channels encouraged partner staff to reflect and improve their existing feedback mechanism. CRS then linked the principles of developing PSEA-sensitive FCRM into the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) principles and Sphere standards to ensure the impartiality, confidentiality, and non-discrimination were uphold when setting up the FCRM.

> "It was just perfect timing because our MEAL division was just formed two years ago, so the development of the FCRM documents went along the development of the MEAL division. However, it was quite challenging to finalize FCRM document at first because we have a lot of program area to cover. But working together with MEAL division made it possible because MEAL division has become the front line in receiving feedbacks." (Bobby Cahyono, Human Initiative PSEA Focal Point)

Fortunately, along with Human Initiative participation and the revision of the PSEA-sensitive Code of Conduct, the Human Initiative also initiated the development of the Child Safeguarding Policy. This was

because children were identified as one of their primary target groups in the Education and Health sectors. However, the signing of the policy took more time than anticipated for the Board of Directors because they needed to update both the Code of Conduct and produce the Child Safeguarding Policy in harmony with one other. But in the end, there was a ceremonial inauguration held for the official appointment of the Focal Point decree and the signing of the Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Policy.

> *"One of our strategies to raise awareness of our staff is to create a PSEA T-shirt for the Board of Directors and Focal Points. This has successfully raised some positive questions asking about what is PSEA and they want to hear more about it. In every morning greeting internal broadcast, the Board of Directors often remind and socialize the safeguarding policy packages including PSEA and Child Safeguarding Policy." (Bobby Cahyono, Human Initiative PSEA Focal Point)*

As a part of strengthening their human capital and resources, Human Initiative has their internal capacity development division called Human Initiative Institute (HI Institute). HI Institute tries to compile and transform all Human Initiative experiences and knowledge they have been receiving from various resources into their internal learning and capacity development. The Handout Module, one of the PSEA training tools in SPSEA Toolkit, has been used and adapted to an online self-paced mandatory training. It has post-test scoring with a certain passing grade score and was mandatory to all staff, along with other basic emergency training. Along with that, the step-down training was held gradually to cover every program manager and branch leader ensuring their commitment, knowledge, and attitude are in line with the organizational Code of Conduct.

NEXT STEPS

CRS believes that modality of support in the SPSEA project has fully contributed to the development of institutional capacity strengthening in broader aspects. On the job support, accompaniment, and mentoring have given the partners some ownership in developing PSEA-related policies and procedures. Human Initiative's ownership in PSEA is not limited only to developing the policies but also to setting higher standards for a national humanitarian organization. Partners also gain unexpected outcomes when they are expected to have safeguarding policies by another international donor and excelled in the first assessment.

> *"Better time management was needed in managing the project and consider of having mitigations plan if there were obstacles occurred. For example, the turnover of the focal point and investigation team. HI had tried to have refreshment trainings or Training of Trainers." (Bobby Cahyono, Human Initiative PSEA Focal Point)*

> *"PSEA could be replicated in other organisations because its values and outcomes are quite universal so it could be accepted by other NGOs. The initial strategy is how to convince the NGOs about the outputs that could be achieved. Other than that, sharing best practices and positive actions taken or currently going on, such as the organizational branding if the organization have PSEA and safeguarding policies." (Bobby Cahyono, Human Initiative PSEA Focal Point)*

Integrating Human Resource Process in Humanitarian Work

CRUCIAL STEPS IN SAC LEGAZPI'S PSEA JOURNEY

In 2018, the Social Action Center of Legazpi had to answer questions on how they as the church frontline humanitarian organization understand about Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and how it is translated into their work as a whole. Their answers reflected how much of what they knew and what they didn't know about the issue of PSEA. Little did they know that after two years, things would dramatically change in the way that they run the SAC precisely because of incorporating PSEA into their system.

For many years, SAC Legazpi has been doing work guided by its Manual of Operations, which follows the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Philippine Constitution, and the Basic Principles of Church Law and Statutes. It has implemented projects for child protection; emergency response; and recently, for extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances. But despite this, the organization recognized that it lacked many aspects of PSEA.

CHALLENGES WITHIN

One of the major issues that the organization realized is ensuring that all personnel, new or otherwise, are committed to non-violation of protection issues. Not having a standing policy on PSEA for human resources was identified by the SAC and CRS during the baseline data gathering. This was the first problem. Ideally, a commitment to PSEA should start with the hiring process, and in doing so will benefit not only the SAC in the long term but also its partner organizations, communities, and other stakeholders.

The yearly occurrence of destructive typhoons and intermittent volcanic activity led the organization to frequently activate emergency response operation requiring additional staff and engaging volunteers from various level. During the frenzied relief operation and fast paced human resource mobilization undesirable characters may breach the organization's tenet negating the basic principles of treating all people with dignity and respect, actively prevent harassment, zero tolerance to abuse and exploitation, human trafficking everywhere at all times. Moreover, HR officer oftentimes assume emergency response roles stretching its function from personnel, partner, donor engagements and board of trustees matters to assisting major relief distributions leaving important PSEA or safeguarding issues unattended. Fortunately for SAC Legazpi no major incident or cases occurred during its 48 years existence, but this does not stop the organization to seriously address PSEA concern as the power imbalance between aid workers and the affected beneficiaries remains.

Lastly, SAC identified that there was no focal person for PSEA within the organization. While there were other minor issues identified during this period, the team found that these stemmed from the aforementioned problems.

TAKING THE FIRST STEP

After carefully reviewing the result of the baseline data, the SPSEA Project kickstarted a series of activities with CRS and SAC Legazpi. Using the accompaniment approach, one of the first crucial step in mainstreaming PSEA emphasized on improving the Personnel Manual in recruitment and vetting procedures since there were no provisions on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. SAC Legazpi was able to update and incorporate in its Operations Manual the job description of staff involved in the implementation of PSEA within the organization-the Executive Director, a PSEA Focal Person, the Admin and HR Officer, an Internal Reporting and Investigation Officer, and the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) staff. Roles and responsibilities of each staff for an effective implementation of PSEA is determined and incorporated in the Manual.

Photo: HR officer(right) and PSEA focal officer (middle) during interview of newly hired Community Development Worker for the organization's Nutrition Program and Protection Program

For the hiring and vetting process, SAC Legazpi updated its operations manual following industry principles and best practices that are PSEA responsive. These updates included: adopting a Personnel Requisition Form, job advertisement, and posting of the organization's adherence to PSEA principles .
Their process of getting people before do follow the regular HR process but they admitted that after incorporating PSEA, personnel hiring became more systematized, transparent and veracious. The Personnel Requisition Form helped in terms of monitoring and tracking of people to be hired, while job advertisements ensured equal opportunities for interested parties within and outside of the SAC's network. And since adherence to PSEA is part of the advertisement, it gives the aspiring applicant an awareness of PSEA itself.

In particular, the job application process was also revised by having applicants take a written examination which includes the SAC Legazpi Application Form, and several PSEA related knock-out questions as the basis to be considered for an interview. During interviews, the HR Officer and the PSEA Focal Person (also one of the major achievements in the process of the project) compose the panel interview will include sets of questions relating to organization's PSEA policy and Code of Conduct and Ethics. The Administrative/Human Resource Officer then conducts a background check on any successful applicant. For safeguarding purposes, the background check will include PSEA queries after securing a written consent from the applicant. If the application is successfully, but before onboarding, the recruited staff sign an employment contract which include PSEA and the organization's code of conduct after she/he underwent an orientation.

SAC Legazpi continues to require its staff to treat all people with dignity and respect, actively prevent harassment, to maintain a zero-tolerance attitude to abuse and exploitation, human trafficking everywhere at all times. Their deeper understanding of PSEA has allowed them to be more direct in achieving these aims.

All these improvement in the human resource process were well-documented in written form and submitted for approval to the Board to ensure the sustainability of PSEA practices not just during the project implementation but as a permanent part of SAC Legazpi's system. Coincidingly, the PSEA project was rolled-out to selected partner areas for knowledge transfer and actual testing of practices to be adopted by the community. The engagement was a success on its own for reaching actual people's perception of what PSEA is on the ground even without emergencies.

BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED

From the start of the project, there were no written guidelines for specific for PSEA within the Operations Manual since most policies are broad in nature tackling human rights. With this follows the lack of a specific

focal person for PSEA who can address protection issues from within the organization up to partner communities and stakeholders. Another barrier is the problem of sustaining good practices on protection from previous projects. Though the SAC is aware in the general scope of protection, it is not able to use and sustain good practices from previous projects. Another challenge is the process of having the approval from the Board of Trustees takes a long time compounded by Covid 19 travel and gathering restrictions.

LEARNING POINTS

The cluster level accompaniment session allowed broad interaction and exchange of lessons gained and best practices observed. CRS invited its Human Resource Officer to co-facilitate who can best provide technical expertise on human resource processes to the partners. The CRS HR Officer presented the eleven steps essential to hiring and vetting, and eventual onboarding of the staff, highlighting PSEA responsive measures in the process. Partners are made to identify which among the steps they need to adopt in context to their organizations' needs.

Finally, the key message delivered is on the importance of putting a PSEA responsive human resource system as a form of preventive mechanism against sexual exploitation and abuse. Acknowledging the context of the diocesan strategy on volunteer mobilization, partners came to realize how HR processes can further enhance effectiveness of their humanitarian work and protect their organizations against PSEA issues.

An accompaniment track log guided partners to identify the HR gaps, reviewed which steps they can adopt and incorporated the PSEA measures into their HR systems and processes. SAC Legazpi including other local partners drafted HR process following recommendations.

CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE: THE IMPACT OF PSEA AND THE FUTURE

The improvement of systems brought about by the SPSEA project in SAC Legazpi created an environment of awareness on PSEA not just in the organization but up to the individual as well. Understanding and self-awareness came hand in hand with each staff. They also realized that learning without application is useless, so they made sure that these provisions are written and approved by the Board to ensure the institutionalization of PSEA in the coming years.