BRIEFING NOTE

In April 2022, an Interagency PSEA Task Force (TF) was established in order to advance PSEA across the humanitarian community in Hungary prioritizing: 1) Community engagement and awareness on PSEA; 2) capacity training of all actors involved in the response on PSEA; 3) Strengthening organization level policies and practices to prevent and respond to SEA. Membership is open to UN agencies, INGOs, national NGOs, refugee organizations and government. The PSEA TF is chaired by UNHCR and the INGO VOICE. A PSEA Action Plan was established in August 2022.

RISKS OF SEA IN HUNGARY

Manifestations of solidarity have soared, with multiple actors becoming a vital part of the response. Several organizations have grown very quickly, other volunteer groups have organized themselves. These processes have not been matched with the systematic embedding of safeguarding systems and policies. The **influx and turnover of aid workers and volunteers** as well as the **informality** of volunteerism heighten the risk of incidents: some individuals may pose as volunteers trying to help; others may abuse their position when offering food, transportation, jobs and so on.

In Hungary, no procedure has been established at central or municipal level to identify and vet individuals offering private accommodations or transportation to people fleeing Ukraine. The registration of volunteers is a practice which is seldom adopted by organizations. The lack of vetting and training of volunteers and staff on PSEA and safeguarding is still an area of great concern for organizations to prevent the hiring/re-hiring of SEA perpetrators.

The growing spectrum of frontline responders, whether UN, INGOs, local NGOs, government partners, contractors is also faced with **varying levels of staff capacity and technical skills**. Significant gaps exist in terms of capacity to safely handle GBV disclosures, preserve confidentiality and more generally, create a safe and enabling space for survivors to come forward and seek help.

This is compounded by pervasive **gender inequalities** and patriarchal norms that persist.

Partners report obstacles for victims of sexual violence to effectively access sexual and reproductive health rights, protection, and judicial remedies. Underestimating the importance of training all staff on survivor-centered approaches before they come in direct contact with affected populations may entail a re-traumatization of survivors and further discourage trust and SEA reporting.

TF Members have observed **accommodation arrangements** lacking privacy and gender sensitiveness: oftentimes, shelters' staff were noted to be preponderantly males. Control of who can access collective shelters has been also reported as an issue by a few Members. This stresses the importance of working closely with shelters' managers and municipalities' social workers to enforce more robust safety measures and to strengthen their capacities on broader protection and GBV and SEA prevention and response.

Discriminatory treatment continues to be reported against ethnic Roma groups which impacts their ability to access accommodation, health, employment, and humanitarian assistance.

Options for **reporting SEA** by volunteers and staff are not always available. Some improvements have been made as organizations start to set up their own reporting systems, but many challenges remain including the need to gather the views of affected people (and notably women, girls and community-based organizations) themselves to design complaint and feedback channels they would feel confident using.

Specific risks have been identified in relation to the proliferation of **online channels and communities** connecting Ukrainians seeking assistance, accommodation, transportation, jobs, sponsorships, to advertisements and the misuse of such online platforms. Ukrainians rely heavily on digital channels, yet investment in comprehensive content moderation that includes effective regulation and timely removal of harmful content are scant, creating opportunities for harassment, exploitation, trafficking and GBV facilitated by technology.

Against this backdrop, the vulnerability of people forced to flee to SEA and to other types of exploitative situations including exchange of sex for food or other resources, to cover their and their families' basic needs, increases. **At-risk groups** (women, children, adolescent girls, older persons, ethnic minorities, persons with diverse SOGIESC[1]) represent a large part of the displaced population and

[1] Sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

separation from other family members is widespread[2], leaving women to have to provide for the family. There are inherent power disparities at play with aid workers controlling access to aid. Moreover, the protracted economic crisis and limited job opportunities for refugees[3] have exacerbated poverty issues (e.g. for Roma groups) and made affordable long-term housing hard to secure for Ukrainians, while the demand for food, hygiene products, clothing has increased -this has become particularly visible at the onset of the winter.

DEVELOPMENTS AND PRIORITY NEEDS

Organizational culture is key to make sure strong policies and procedures on PSEA are implemented, and incidents acted upon. The number of actors involved in the aid response has increased, leading to increased safeguarding risks. Vetting processes and systematic training of all personnel, regardless of contract status and skills or qualifications, on international humanitarian safeguarding and PSEA standards are required to strengthen protection of beneficiaries, communities, and staff. As **PSEA is a collective responsibility of humanitarian actors** engaged in the response, managers should lead on reiterating the importance of PSEA across teams and organizations should designate and train PSEA focal points.

There is still very minimal **PSEA mainstreaming** in distributions operated by humanitarian actors, which do not systematically carry out thorough protection risk analyses and mitigation strategies. Cash and voucher distributions require for instance greater transparency over eligibility determination, PSEA training for all staff involved in cash or voucher provision, and visibility of PSEA and complaint and feedback channels at distribution.

Information on prohibited conduct among humanitarian actors **and on** established **channels to safely report incidents** is still limited and needs to be made accessible at locations where people arrive and receive assistance and online. Helping organizations in establishing mechanisms to report misconduct while ensuring confidentiality is a major learning gap/need.

PSEA TF members have intensified efforts to address risks of SEA in their partners and programs since the beginning and will strengthen initiatives to develop training and visibility materials and make them available in relevant languages in 2023. The TF provides continuous technical support and good practice-sharing to members to enhance their PSEA capacities and create the internal frameworks to efficiently collect and respond to SEA and claims; to actively engage with communities to communicate information on SEA and how to report concerns or suspicions of SEA; and to advocate for prevent further harm that may come to displaced people through stronger safeguards, including on personnel vetting.

2022 MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

1 dedicated session and **1** package of documents in Hungarian to enhance safe recruitment practices (Code of Conduct; Volunteers/staff undertaking, volunteers' registration form)

476 personnel trained on PSEA

11 Key Safeguarding Messages in Hungarian

14 partners assessed based on UN Implementing Partner PSEA Capacity Assessment

1 contextualized *Stay Safe* campaign rolled out

1 GBV-PSEA Safety Assessment ongoing

2,769 children and adults engaged through awareness-raising activities and community mobilization interventions on PSEA

1 Dos and Don'ts leaflet for Volunteers

9 TF members joined UNHCR regional training on Investigating SEA allegations

[2] 85% are women and 78% have been separated from one or more family members [UNHCR Regional Protection Profiling and Monitoring].

[3] 3 out of 10 refugees interviewed in the Multi Sector Needs Assessment were employed in 2022.