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LESSONS IN MULTILATERAL EFFECTIVENESS

Progress on PSEAH? From Words to Deeds

BRIEF

MOPAN

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The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) comprises 22 members[1] sharing a common interest in improving the effectiveness of the multilateral system. MOPAN commissioned this analytical study to build upon its well-established performance assessments, adding value by offering a contribution to system-level learning about Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment (SEAH). This study is part of the series, "Lessons in Multilateral Performance" being conducted by MOPAN on a range of salient topics related to the multilateral system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cara Yakush, Camille Hewitt and Anastasiya Sindyukova oversaw the production; Deborah Glassman proofread the report and Alex Bilodeau provided design and layout.

This study draws on the MOPAN assessments of International Labour Organization (ILO), Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The team is grateful for the generous time of interviewees from management and staff of the multilateral organisations who provided valuable substantive inputs at the time of the assessments.

1 MOPAN members as of 01 January 2023: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. MOPAN works closely in collaboration with the European Union and the Republic of Türkiye as an observer.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Lessons from MOPAN's recent assessments on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment 5

What are MOPAN's benchmarks on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment? 5

Emerging performance patterns on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment 7

Common patterns for sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment 7

Patterns specific to sexual exploitation and abuse 7

Patterns specific to sexual harassment 7

TABLES & FIGURES

Table 1: MOPAN indicator coverage for preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment 6

Figure 1: Issues and common patterns for protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment 6

Figure 2: Average performance rating for the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse 8

Figure 3: Average performance rating for the prevention of and response to sexual harassment 8

ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ILO	International Labour Organization
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSEAH	Protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
SEA	Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
SH	Sexual harassment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services

Lessons from MOPAN's recent assessments on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

In 2020, the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) introduced a new component to its organisational performance framework by incorporating specific benchmarks measuring organisations' performance in protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH).[2] This brief provides some highlights of MOPAN's ongoing work on PSEAH.

MOPAN's work in this area contributes to international efforts to monitor progress in the commitment to do no harm and protect the vulnerable in development and humanitarian work. By introducing explicit indicators of performance, MOPAN helps bring about consistency and transparency in these efforts.

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) refers to sexual misconduct by agency personnel directed towards community members. Sexual harassment (SH) refers to sexual misconduct directed towards personnel within the organisation itself. MOPAN's PSEAH benchmarks draw on international norms and good practices, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Six Core Principles and Minimum Operating Standards and the OECD's Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance.

What are MOPAN's benchmarks on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment?

MOPAN's sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment benchmarks focus on the presence and application of policy rather than results. These benchmarks were applied for the first time in the assessments of six UN programmes, funds and agencies in 2020-21: International Labour Organization (ILO), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). A synthesis analysis of the results of these first PSEAH assessments (MOPAN, *forthcoming*[3]) aims to provide an overview of how far organisations have come in tackling PSEAH, understand what their challenges are, and identify good practice. An ongoing parallel study aims to understand how PSEAH is being addressed by multilateral development banks, vertical funds and financing mechanisms, taking into account the specific business models of these types of institutions. Once concluded, this work will help to further fine-tune MOPAN's PSEAH benchmarks in 2023. It will also allow adapting benchmarks to organisations' different business models.

2 The development of these benchmarks took place 2019-20 and included wide consultations with expert groups across the UN, member states and civil society, and other entities.

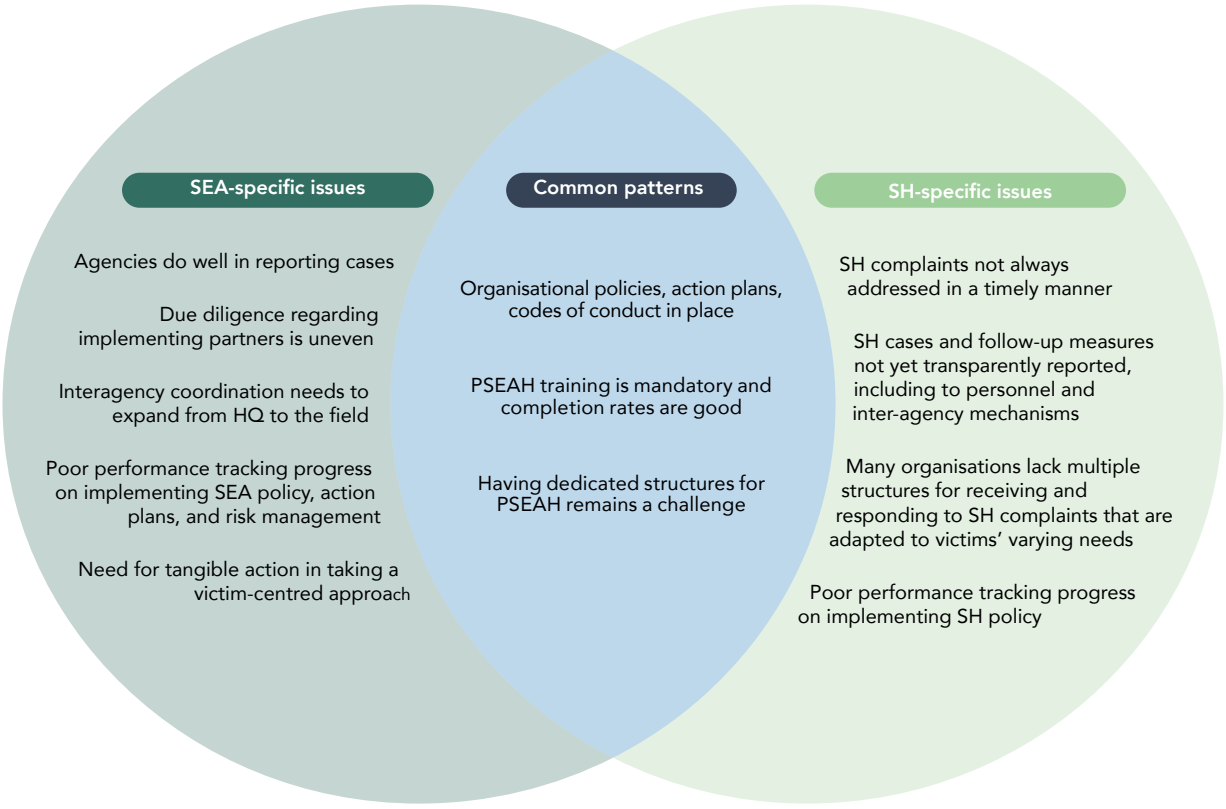
3 The full study will be published in January 2023.

Table 1: MOPAN indicator coverage for preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

Coverage on sexual exploitation and abuse	Coverage on sexual harassment
Policy statement (policy, strategy, action, plan, code of conduct)	Policy statement (action plan is good practice, code of conduct)
Mechanisms to track implementation	Tracking implementation, e.g. reporting to board
Dedicated resources and structures (capacity)	Clearly identifiable roles, structure, and resources
Awareness raising/training (culture)	Multiple mechanisms for victims/survivors to report/seek advice
Implementing partners have clear standards/due diligence	Timely and effective response
Contribution to inter-agency efforts	Transparent reporting to boards and interagency
Action and transparent reporting on SEA allegations	
Victim-centred approach and victim support	
Intervention design and analyses of SEA risk	

Note: Adapted from MOPAN methodology, Micro-indicators 4.7, 4.8 and element 5.4.5.
Source: MOPAN Metholodogy 3.1

Figure 1: Issues and common patterns for protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment



Note: Summary of findings

Emerging performance patterns on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

Common patterns for sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

- ✓ All of the six assessed organisations meet the criterion of **organisational policies, action plan or code of conduct** on PSEAH;
- ✓ All have **mandatory training** in place for both SEA and SH as preventive measures, with good evidence of completion rates.
- ! Having **dedicated resources and structures**, especially at field level, is a difficulty in both areas. Only two of the agencies had some dedicated resources at both HQ and field levels.

Patterns specific to sexual exploitation and abuse

- ✓ Agencies do well in **transparently reporting** allegations every year. This is due to the common system instituted by the UN Secretary-General's annual reporting on special measures to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse.
- ! There are large differences in organisations' **due diligence** in vetting implementing partners and building their capacity to protect from SEA; but some good practice is emerging.
- ! The requirement to **co-ordinate among agencies** applies to both areas of concern but is particularly highlighted for SEA. In practice, the involvement in such initiatives is linked to organisations' mandates and obligations, and to common systems such as UN Clear Check or UN Secretary-General's annual reporting on SEA. Organisations tend to engage more easily in inter-agency initiatives at headquarters rather than field level. Such inter-agency co-operation and synergies are however crucial in light of the nature of SEA, and of resource constraints.
- ! A major weakness across all assessed organisations is **tracking the implementation of their sexual exploitation and abuse policies** as well as **risk management**. While all track the number of and response to allegations, they do little to monitor the actual progress against organisational policies and action plans.
- ! Adopting a **victim-centred approach** remains an area of challenge. Aside from commitments, most organisations were unable to demonstrate tangible action. This dovetails with the findings of the IASC evaluation (2021).

Patterns specific to sexual harassment

- ! Ensuring that complaints of sexual harassment are handled in a **timely** manner is an area of attention with only one or two organisations leading the way. This requires significant investment to be able to better respond to misconduct.
- ! While public reporting on sexual exploitation and abuse is advanced in the UN system, **public reporting on** sexual harassment is poorly co-ordinated, which means that organisations fare differently. Some take it upon themselves to report publicly whereas others choose to keep matters internal.
- ! Progress across the board is needed on benchmarks relating to the responsibility of organisations to set up multiple structures to directly **receive and respond to complaints of sexual harassment**.
- ! More effort is also needed to **regularly track the implementation of policy, especially at field level**.

Cross-organisational performance ratings against MOPAN's performance criteria are depicted below. The specific areas that merit attention are where performance ratings are, on average, unsatisfactory. But even areas deemed satisfactory will continue to deserve close attention given the highly sensitive issues at play. As organisations mature it will be essential to for them to improve beyond the mere presence of PSEAH policies to their application, and to measuring tangible change.

Figure 2: Average performance rating for the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse

1. Organisation-specific dedicated policy statement(s), action plan and/or code of conduct that address SEA are available, aligned to international standards, and applicable to all categories of personnel

2. Mechanisms are in place to regularly track the status of implementation of the SEA policy at HQ and at field levels

3. Dedicated resources and structures are in place to support implementation of policy and/or action plan at HQ and in programmes (covering safe reporting channels, and procedures for access to sexual and gender-based violence services)

4. Quality training of personnel / awareness-raising on SEA policies is conducted with adequate frequency

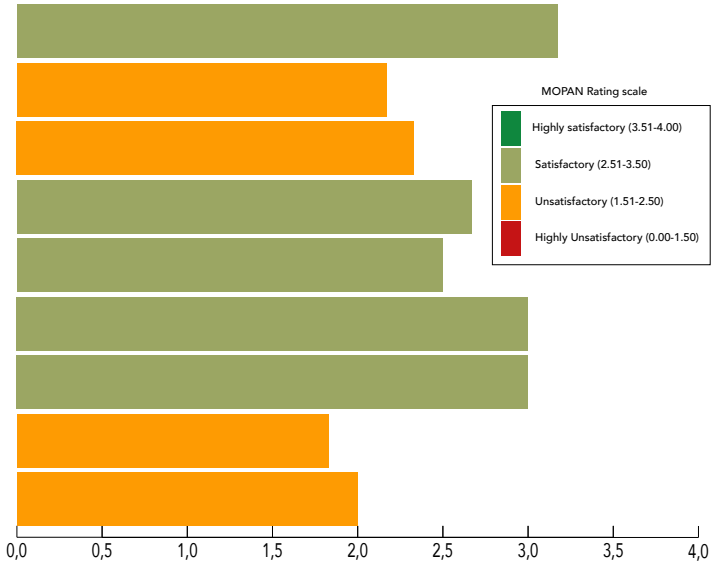
5. The organisation has clear standards and due diligence processes in place to ensure that implementing partners prevent and respond to SEA

6. The organisation can demonstrate its contribution to interagency efforts to prevent and respond to SEA at field level, and SEA policy/best practice coordination fora at HQ

7. Actions taken on SEA allegations are timely and their number related to basic information and actions taken / reported publicly

8. The MO adopts a victim-centred approach to SEA and has a victim support function in place (stand-alone or part of existing structures) in line with its exposure/risk of SEA

9. Intervention design is based on contextual analysis including of potential risks of sexual abuse and other misconduct with respect to host populations. (element 5.4.5)



Note: As noted in the section 1.3 on Limitations, all scores must be read bearing several caveats in mind. As these were the first six assessments with the PSEAH component, MOPAN's benchmarks were not applied entirely consistently.
Source: MOPAN 2021 Assessments

Figure 3: Average performance rating for the prevention of and response to sexual harassment

1.Organisation-specific dedicated policy statements and/or codes of conduct that address SH available, aligned to international standards and applicable to all categories of personnel

2. Mechanisms are in place to regularly track the status of implementation of the policy on SH at HQ and at field levels

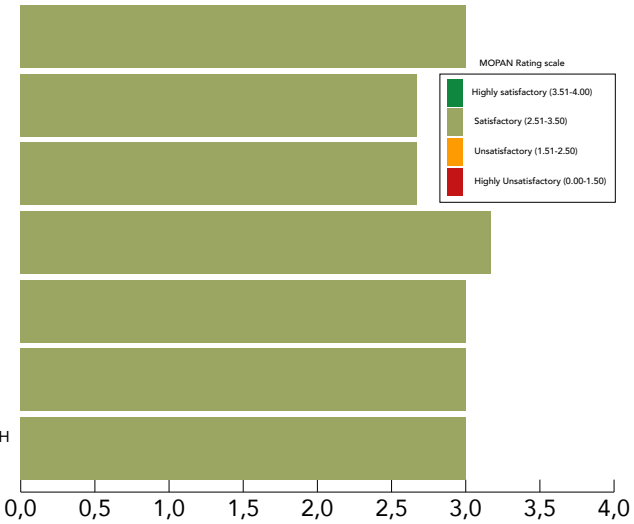
3. The MO has clearly identifiable roles, structures, and resources in place for implementing its policy/guidelines on SH at HQ and in the field: support channel for victims, a body coordinating the response, and clear responsibilities for following up with victims

4. All managers have undergone training on preventing and responding to SH, and all staff have been trained to set behavioural expectations (including with respect to SH)

5. Multiple mechanisms can be accessed to seek advice, pursue informal resolution, or formally report SH allegations

6. The organisation ensures that it acts in a timely manner on formal complaints of SH allegations

7. The organisation transparently reports the number and nature of actions taken in response to SH in annual reporting and feeds into inter-agency HR mechanisms.



Note: As noted in the section 1.3 on Limitations, all scores must be read bearing several caveats in mind. As these were the first six assessments with the PSEAH component, MOPAN's benchmarks were not applied entirely consistently.
Source: MOPAN 2021 Assessments

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