

# PSEA Self-Assessment Case Study

## Overview

National Societies looking to strengthen prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) should start by conducting a PSEA self-assessment. This is an internal assessment which looks at different criteria to evaluate whether people within the organisation feel safe, respected and have the confidence and knowledge to report misconduct.

The most effective way to run a self-assessment is to involve staff and volunteers working in different capacities who also vary in age, gender and include people with health conditions or impairments. Gathering different perspectives allows for a thorough understanding of the current issues and helps to identify practical next steps.

The IFRC country-cluster delegation in Southern Africa conducted self-assessments for Lesotho Red Cross Society, Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross, Botswana Red Cross Society and South African Red Cross. This case study illustrates how the self-assessments were conducted.

## Background

The intended outcome from the self-assessment is a PSEA Action Plan, which all four National Societies have developed or are still in the early stages of developing. The exercise should identify key actions that can improve the position of all National Societies' position on PSEA, including the development of a PSEA policy.

The self-assessments were conducted by the Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) and Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) Assistant. Child safeguarding was incorporated in the self-assessment for South African Red Cross and Botswana Red Cross Society.

## Steps taken

The intended outcome from the self-assessment is a PSEA Action Plan, which all The self-assessment consisted of an online survey and key informant interviews. The survey was carried out online, featured 9-10 open-ended questions, was open to staff and volunteers and was anonymous to encourage honest and candid responses. The self-assessments were signed off by the PGI focal points of each National Society.

The survey explored four key areas: participants' level of knowledge of existing procedures, participants' confidence in the efficacy and safety of procedures, participants' own sense of safety in terms of PSEA and sexual harassment, and participants' views on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and child safeguarding.

The questions included: are you aware of your National Society's Code of Conduct? do you know how to report an SEA concern? Do you think SEA will be responded to timely and safely? These questions were sourced from the PGI Minimum Standards in Emergencies, PGI toolkit and CEA toolkit.

For the key informant interviews, the interviewees were selected at the discretion of each National Society, but certain key members were recommended, such as, board members, senior management, legal, HR, volunteers or those in the position of volunteer management, focal points from the Forecast-based Financing programme (as it is one of the priority programmes in Southern Africa).

As the survey was anonymous, it is difficult to determine precisely who was involved but it was clear that both staff and volunteers at headquarters and branch levels had responded and that they varied in age, gender and ethnic backgrounds.

The response rates for the online survey were quite low (around ten) for most of the National Societies, however, the feedback gathered was informative and came from diverse respondents. The feedback from the self-assessment highlighted the need for further training, development of policies and work on improving whistleblower protection.

After the self-assessment was completed, a report was drawn by the PGI and CEA Assistant. The National Society also produced a report on the assessment. Then, the PGI and CEA Assistant developed a synthesis report based on the first two reports that included key recommendations which can be translated into an action plan.

The IFRC PSEA Manual was also consulted in the creation of PSEA policies after the self-assessments were completed.

### Successes and challenges

Some of the National Societies had conducted brief organisational PSEA self-assessment prior to the intervention from the IFRC. Yet most did not have the institutional capacity to carry out these assessments without the involvement of the IFRC.

The main challenge was the low response rate to the online survey, however, in one case that was overcome through asking the PGI focal point in one National Society to set quotas for responses from different branches.

Although it was guaranteed that the survey responses would be anonymous, there may have been some hesitation in the responses, especially when it came to questions regarding perceptions of the respondents' own safety within their National Society.

The key successes were gathering perceptions of risks from staff and volunteers which otherwise would have remained unknown. Another success was gaining a perspective on the role of law enforcement and the judiciary in the handling of SEA cases in the different countries of the National Societies. This insight helped determine whether engaging with the police and judiciary is appropriate in dealing with SEA cases in each area.

Also, through this process, it became clear that there is a strong commitment to safeguarding women and children across all National Societies which is a positive for ongoing PSEA initiatives.

### Key learning

Top tips for conducting a PSEA self-assessment include making sure that it is understood that the assessment is anonymised in order to get honest feedback. It is useful to have open-ended questions to gain wider and more detailed feedback and, finally, when questions are drafted, they should be checked to ensure that they are written clearly and unambiguously.