

# PSEA Engagement with Nigerian Red Cross Society

## Overview

Over the course of a just over a year, the British Red Cross (BRC) partnered with the Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) to develop Prevention and response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) activities both for the organisation and by incorporating it as an approach in the Disaster Management (DM) programme. This case study outlines the role people, policy and activities played in addressing PSEA.

## Background

A PSEA assessment of NRCS was completed from which an action plan was developed. The action plan was approved by the leadership of the National Society. The action plan included meeting the IASC Minimum Operating Standards for PSEA (IASC MOS-PSEA) for the DM programme. This was part of a broader approach to safe and inclusive programming including community engagement and accountability (CEA) and protection, gender and inclusion (PGI).

## Steps Taken

First, four PSEA focal points were identified in HQ and the three branches involved in the programme. Local female lawyer Red Cross volunteers were designated as a good fit for the role. The focal points, together with the four CEA focal points, underwent a train-the-trainer programme delivered by the British Red Cross, covering PSEA, PGI and CEA. The focal points then delivered step-down trainings for volunteers in delivering PSEA activities. During the step-down training, all programme staff and volunteers in the branches were asked to sign or re-sign the NRCS staff Code of Conduct which includes clauses on PSEA.

A safe and inclusive working group was formed consisting of the eight PSEA and CEA focal points. Through this working group, the focal points monitor the potential risks, including sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) risks, to the community and follow up with mitigating actions to address those risks.

To meet the IASC MOS-PSEA, a PSEA policy was developed. This included a legal analysis produced by the PSEA focal points. The development of this policy was supported by the British Red Cross PSEA Adviser and was approved by the leadership of NRCS. In addition, the IFRC Senior PSEA Officer confirmed the policy to ensure that it aligned with IFRC standards.

A PSEA clause was included in the contracts with consultants, confirming that consultants will abide by NRCS PSEA policy and standards.

Awareness-raising activities on PSEA were conducted with communities. The messaging of these activities has been arrived at after consultations with religious leaders, traditional leaders, women leaders, school leadership, children and teachers. The community sensitisation was carried out by PSEA and CEA focal points with the help of translators when needed. Communication materials such as posters and a jingle were developed.

A community-based feedback and complaints mechanism was established to deal with all complaints including SEA. The mechanism was designed based on analysis of disaggregated data from community consultations. Reports can be made to PSEA and CEA focal points, through home visits for people living with a disability, and via an email address managed centrally in HQ. The branch focal points developed referral pathways to service survivors of SEA. These referrals include law enforcement, child protection, sexual and reproductive health services, counselling services and legal aid.

Complaints are received by the PSEA committee which consists of PSEA focal points, member of HR or finance, CEA focal points and an independent member who is either a PSEA or Protection Gender and Inclusion (PGI) adviser

from the British Red Cross or IFRC. The PSEA committee handles preliminary assessment taking the lead from the PSEA focal point who then handles any referrals.

Investigations are carried out by an independent investigator. The investigation report is then submitted to the HR director who takes the disciplinary measures against the accused if necessary. If a disciplinary measure will be taken, the Secretary General is informed and makes the final decision.

New measures were added to the recruitment of new staff and volunteers. All new recruits to the DM programme receive a training in PSEA and must sign the NRCS staff Code of Conduct. Staff also received a pocket-sized booklet which includes information on the PSEA Policy, expected standards of behaviour and a quick reference guide on how to recognise, respond and report concerns as they arise. As a way of raising awareness internally with staff, a poster relaying the obligation to recognise, respond and report SEA was displayed in NRCS offices.

### Successes and challenges

One of the successes was using the safe and inclusive framework for the DM programme. The safe and inclusive framework combines PSEA, PGI and CEA to ensure all minimum standards are met. A Safe and Inclusive Working Group was formed with the PSEA and CEA focal points. The working group meetings brought issues to light such as the challenge of including vulnerable members of the community in the programme, and it is through the collaborative work of the group that they were able to come up with solutions. As a result, more community members from vulnerable groups were included throughout the programme.

The safe and inclusive working group could support other programmes in the future, not just the DM programme, through a train-the-trainer approach to PSEA training for other focal points and peer learning.

Based on the safe and inclusive work, safe spaces for women were created in the community where they can come together and learn from one another and share their issues and challenges. This helped immensely with reporting SEA concerns. The focal points also got better understanding of the needs of the communities within which they work with through the inclusion of vulnerable people.

Some activities proved to be challenging like the establishment of referral pathways and a complaints hotline. These more complex undertakings require more training and outside assistance from partner National Societies or the IFRC especially in creating a hotline. Specialist support may be needed for such activities.

Another issue that arose was with the resourcing of the focal points. The PSEA focal points in NRCS are all female lawyers who volunteer their time to the National Society. As they are volunteers with a very demanding full-time job, they were pulled away and caused scheduling difficulties for the programme activities. The PSEA and CEA focal points often felt overwhelmed with the number of responsibilities they had within their volunteering capacity.

All in all, the partnership between BRC and NRCS has proved fruitful. With the overall success of these activities, the hope is that the same safe and inclusive approach to the adoption of PSEA will be used in other programmes by NRCS in the future.

## Key learning

Forming Safe and Inclusive Working Group helped bring key issues to light and through collaboration, solutions can be arrived at. The PSEA and CEA focal points are critical but the issue of how their work will be resourced will need to be addressed.