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LESSONS IN MULTILATERAL EFFECTIVENESS

Progress on PSEAH? From words to deeds

BRIEF

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The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) is an independent network of 22 members[1] sharing a common interest in improving the effectiveness of the multilateral system. MOPAN commissioned this brief to build upon its PSEAH Note for Practitioner's, providing some highlights on MOPAN's ongoing work on PSEAH. This brief is part of the study 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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1   As of 1 November, 2022 MOPAN members are: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The Network operates in close co-operation with the European Union and Spain; the Republic of Türkiye participates as an Observer.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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

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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.

SEA	SH
• Policy statement (policy, strategy, action, plan, code of conduct) • Mechanisms to track implementation • Dedicated resources and structures (capacity) • Awareness raising/training (culture) • Implementing partners: clear standards/Due Diligence • Contribution to inter-agency efforts • Action on, and transparent reporting on SEA allegations • Victim-centered approach and victim support • Intervention design and analyses SEA risk	• Policy statement (action plan is good practice, code of conduct) • Tracking implementation: reporting to Board • Clearly identifiable roles, structure and resources • Multiple mechanisms for victims/survivors to report/seek advice • Timely and effective response • Transparent reporting to Boards and Inter-Agency

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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.

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**.

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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.
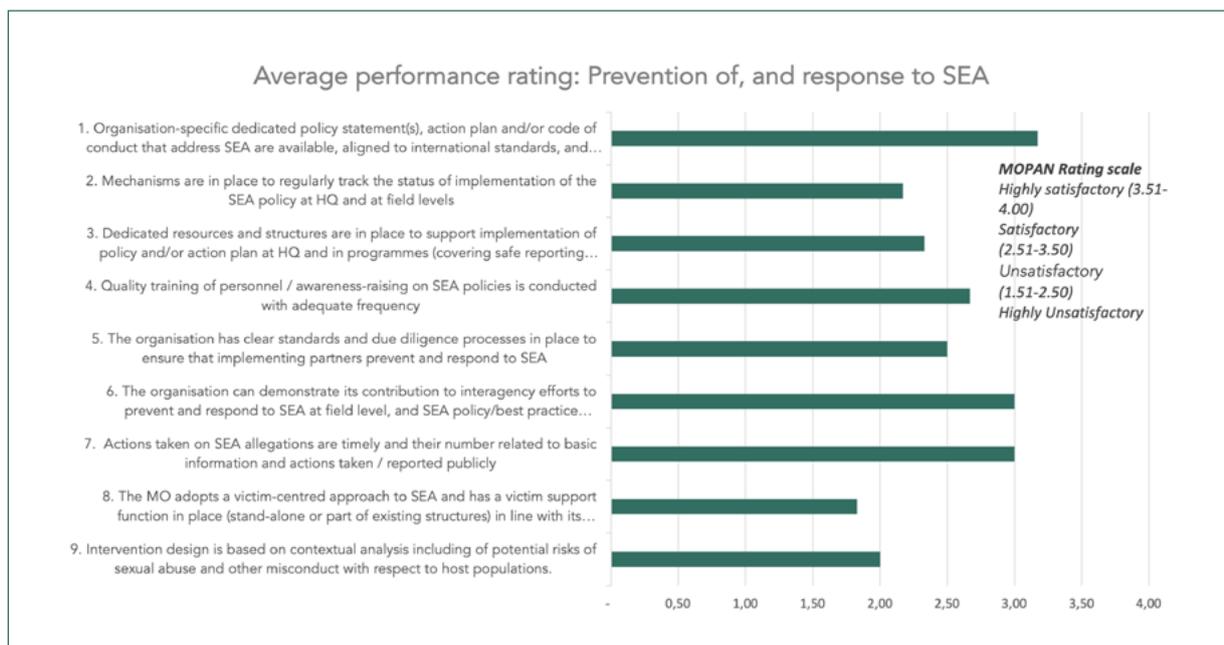
Source: Progress on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment? From words to deeds (working title, MOPAN, forthcoming) title, MOPAN, forthcoming)
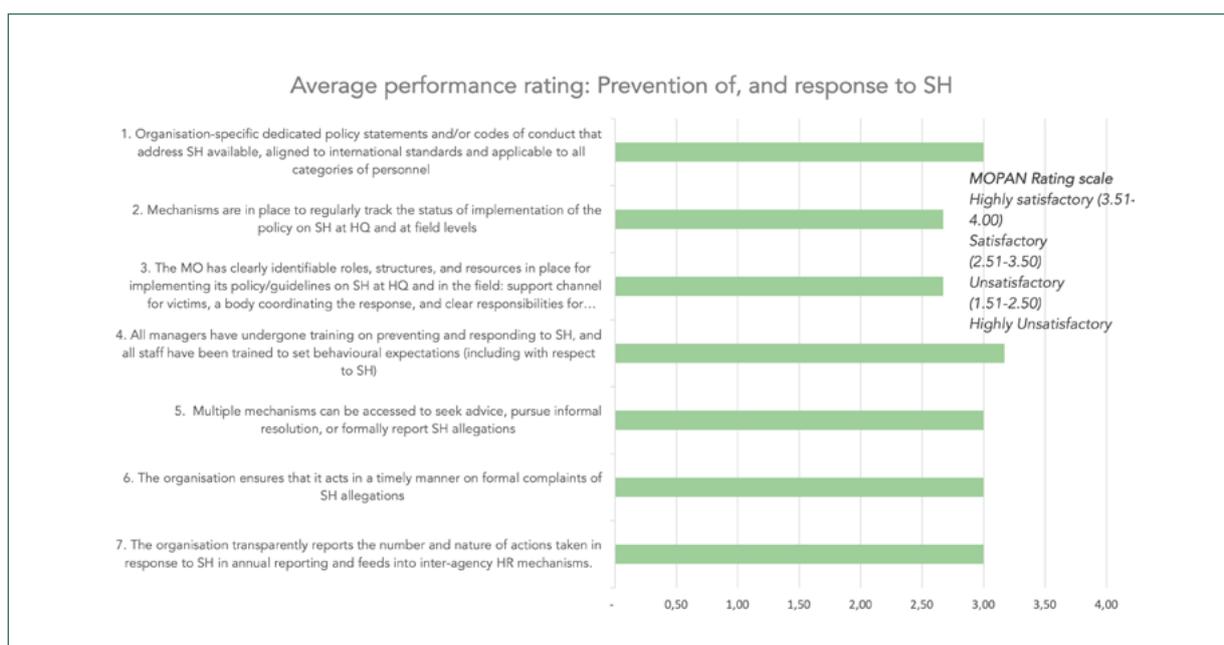
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