

### **Typhoon Haiyan Humanitarian Response Code of Conduct**

All responding organisations and entities, including members of the UN system, international and national NGOs, military personnel, government authorities, civil society and private contractors have a duty of care to people affected by Typhoon Haiyan. This duty of care includes a responsibility to ensure that each individual, regardless of sex, age and ability, is treated with dignity and respect, receives assistance equally and safely, and that proper standards of behaviour and accountability are observed.

The women, men, girls and boys affected by this typhoon are the primary stakeholders of the humanitarian response and have a basic right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives, receive the information they need to make informed decisions and to complain if they feel the help they receive is not adequate or has unwelcomed consequences.

Sexual exploitation and abuse<sup>1</sup> (SEA) of those we seek to assist constitute the most serious breach of accountability towards the victims of the typhoon. It erodes the confidence and trust of affected communities and the host country in all those providing assistance. This damages our collective image and integrity.

All responders to this emergency are bound by the legal frameworks of their respective governing institutions. For example, the UN's Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse<sup>2</sup> prohibits certain behaviours. These standards are widely accepted as non-negotiable by the humanitarian community, including the NGO community:

- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) regardless of the age of majority or consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence
- Sexual favours exchanged for any form of assistance, including food or non-food items
- Use of children or adults to procure sexual services for others
- Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex with prostitutes or any other member of the local population, visits to brothels or places which are declared off-limits

Further:

- Sexual relationships between staff and those receiving assistance are strongly discouraged
- Any suspicions of SEA by a fellow worker of the same or another agency must be reported via established reporting mechanisms
- Staff are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents SEA, and managers are particularly charged with developing systems that enable this.

Section 13 of the Government of the Philippines' Magna Carta of Women specifies that, in reference to women affected by disasters, "the State shall... ensure their full protection from sexual exploitation and other gender-based violence committed against them". Military personnel are also governed by such rules.

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<sup>1</sup> Sexual exploitation means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Sexual abuse means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13

Any violation of this Code of Conduct constitutes serious misconduct. SEA will be investigated and may lead to drastic disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal, suspension, immediate repatriation, and in the case of contractual partners, termination of the contract. Immunity, when it exists, will be waived by the Secretary-General should such immunity impede the course of justice.



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