



## EDITORIAL:

### Not (just) another newsletter

**W**e know. It's standard fare: you join a working group / committee / network and – before you can say “awareness raising” – a string of updates is filling your inbox, mocking you with those terrible black letters: **UNREAD**.

So, we at BSO Head Quarters are publishing this new quarterly bulletin as “a newsletter with a difference”. For one thing, as far as we know, it is the only regular publication on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian staff (“SEA” for short). Also, its goal is not just to tell you what we have done and what we will be doing, but to allow you to share your views about good practices on the issue of SEA with each other.

The differences do not end there: to “encourage” contributions, BSO is offering a **USD 1,000.00 prize** to the organisation that submits the feature article for our next issue.

The rules are simple: articles must be no more than 1,000 words, written by someone in your organisation on an issue relating to SEA prevention, response or advocacy and received at [intern@icva.ch](mailto:intern@icva.ch) by 1 March 2007. Further, the prize money must be used towards travel expenses to participate in a BSO activity in your region.

It is in this spirit of innovation, collaboration and (yes – we admit it!) solicitation, that we at BSO HQ present you the inaugural issue of The Investigator. ■

## BSO NEWS

### Are there any more of us yet?

If you share our frustration with overflowing inboxes, you probably also know what it's like to wish that you could duplicate, or even triplicate, yourself. Life would be so much easier if there were, say, three extra “yous”: one to join the teleconferences, another to answer email and a third to worry about loftier things (like programmatic reports and Excel).

We at BSO have that same wish and are, moreover, committed to turning it into reality. Massive demand for our Learning Programmes after the pilots in 2005-6, led to an ambitious schedule of events for 2007. In the first half of 2007 alone, BSO will hold a total of 13 workshops in 6 regions (*see schedule on following page*).

To cope with the demand, BSO is both expanding its HQ team and creating a new pool of independent facilitators trained in the BSO materials. In Geneva, Joan Connors joins us as a trainer, bringing to BSO years of experience as an investigator and ombudsperson (nationally and internationally). You will meet Joan next at our workshops in Liberia – just look for the calmest person in the room with the most colourful scarf! Noor Kurdi then joins us from the University of Cali-

fornia, Los Angeles, as our new intern and volunteer. Noor has a background in social sciences and battery of language skills, including fluent Arabic. Both Joan and Noor have been great assets to the team already and will doubtless provide more invaluable support in the months come.

Yet, a project cannot grow from HQ alone. To meet demand at the field level, BSO is developing a new system to train trainers. The BSO “Training of Trainers” workshops (“ToTs”) are designed to train up to 15 former LP participants to facilitate BSO programmes for their organisations and other NGOs in the field. Held over three days, the ToTs give participants maximum opportunity to practice their facilitation skills and provide each other feedback. In fact, we take the floor only four times!

The first ToT was piloted with great success in Geneva in December 2006. Participants valued the interactive, participant-driven and participatory approach and, though time was an issue, learned both more about facilitation and issues around SEA. Probably the best evidence of the workshop's success is that, by the time this newsletter goes to print, five ToT participants will have facilitated their first BSO learning programme! ■

## SCHEDULE UNTIL JULY 2007

### Monrovia, Liberia

Management workshop ..... 12–14 February 2007  
Investigations workshop ..... 12–16 February 2007

### Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Training of Trainers workshop ..... 13–15 March 2007  
Regional Network meeting ..... 16 March 2007  
Management workshop ..... 19–21 March 2007  
Investigations workshop ..... 19–23 March 2007

### Washington (DC), USA

Management workshop (TBC)..... April 2007  
Regional Network meeting (TBC) .. April 2007

### Nairobi, Kenya

Training of Trainers workshop ..... 15–17 May 2007  
Regional Network meeting ..... 18 May 2007  
Investigations workshop ..... 21–25 May 2007

### Geneva, Switzerland

Investigations workshop ..... 11–15 June 2007

## **FEATURE ARTICLE:** **Working up the levels** **– UN High Level** **Meeting on SEA –** **New York,** **December 2006**

It's a problem that starts far away from wood panelled meeting rooms, plush carpet and chandeliers. It is the stuff of detail, individual perpetrators, individual victims, pieces of evidence and face-to-face interviews, as such inherently "working level". And yet, as we all know, management decisions about systems, structures and resources can and do contribute to whether an organisation effectively prevents and responds to SEA. The issue is: how can we build a sense of personal responsibility in leaders of humanitarian organisations who are so far removed from the wrong-doing and response at the working level?

In an attempt to address this issue, DPKO, OCHA, UNDP and UNICEF recently hosted a high level meeting on eliminating SEA by UN and non-UN personnel. Held in New York and attended by 20 heads of UN agencies, NGOs and national missions, it was a significant opportunity for working-level practitioners to engage senior leaders with the issue

of SEA by staff. Its purpose was to address to two questions as posed by Secretary General Kofi Annan in his opening remarks: 1) What is the role of senior leadership in preventing future cases of SEA? 2) What is the role of senior leadership in responding effectively to SEA when it does occur?

The first response came from HRH Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husseini, himself the SG's Advisor on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN Peacekeeping Personnel. The Prince portrayed SEA as a risk for all humanitarian organisations, inherent (as it is) in the power imbalances, violence and legal impunity present in many humanitarian situations. Therefore, he said, all humanitarian leaders must take steps to ensure that their organisations address SEA in ways that consider the needs of victims before any organisational imperatives.

After HRH Prince Zeid, Ms Jasmine Whitbread (CEO, Save the Children, UK) took the floor. Ms Whitbread framed her response to the SG's questions explicitly in terms of individual responsibility. As people with the power to affect the culture of humanitarian organisations, she said, managers have a personal duty to prevent and respond to SEA. That

duty is owed to victims and potential victims and is not discharged until consideration of the risk of SEA is incorporated into decisions (including financial decisions) at the highest levels.

In presentations developed with BSO, two leaders from the South discussed the content of this managerial responsibility. Managers, it was said, must do more than simply implement their understanding of "prevention" and "response". As Dr Jemilah Mahmood (Vice Chair of ICVA and Chair of ADRRN) told the audience, they need to ensure their organisations consider the views of individual beneficiaries when designing and implementing complaints mechanisms. Likewise, in her address, Ms Etweda "Sugars" Cooper (President, Liberian Women's Initiative) reiterated that responses could only be considered effective if survivors and communities are appropriately informed about the outcomes of complaints once resolved.

Beyond this, the conference demonstrated the diversity of views at the senior level about the "real" causes and "correct" responses to SEA. It was therefore a mark of the meeting's success that it produced a "Statement of Commitment on Eliminating Sexual Exploitation

and Abuse by UN and non-UN Personnel”. Developed by a cross-section of working-level practitioners from the NGO community and UN agencies, the statement captures the consensus on the causes of SEA, the progress to date and the ten key steps for preventing and responding to SEA by staff. The full text is below.

BSO was heavily involved in negotiating and drafting the Statement and did its best to include your views and interests as you expressed them at our workshops. We hope that you can use the Statement to assess the adequacy of your organisations’ responses and to improve where you find gaps. And, to help ensure that the Statement becomes a standard for others, we encourage you to endorse the Statement for your organisation as well. Simply send an official e-mail to the general e-mail account <[UN-NGO-HighLevelConference@un.org](mailto:UN-NGO-HighLevelConference@un.org)> with your organisation’s official endorsement, the subject line “Endorsement of the Statement of Commitment”, your organisation’s full name and acronym in brackets e.g. “International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)”. It will then be added to Appendix 1 later this year.

## [FULL TEXT]

### Statement of Commitment on Eliminating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN and Non-UN Personnel

**W**e, UN and non-UN entities, re-affirm our determination to prevent future acts of sexual exploitation and abuse by our personnel.

We note the issuance of this Statement at the High-level Conference on Eliminating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN and NGO Personnel on 4 December 2006 in New York, USA and welcome future endorsement of this Statement by others.

We recall the six core principles relating to sexual exploitation and

abuse adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group in July 2002 . We note that these principles have been incorporated into organization-specific codes of conduct, rules and regulations and are thereby binding on personnel. In particular, they are binding on United Nations staff and related personnel and outlined in the Secretary-General’s Bulletin Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13).

We recall that these standards were promulgated to further protect the most vulnerable populations, especially women, girls and boys, and recognize that in countries where we operate, conditions such as poverty, weak rule of law and displacement and the destruction of community structures due to conflict, increase the vulnerability of communities to sexual exploitation and abuse, including human trafficking, by our personnel and others.

We further recall that creating and maintaining a living and working environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse is both an individual and organizational responsibility. We note that the management culture of an organization, the equal representation of women and men at all levels of the organization and the adequacy of the living and working environment all contribute to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

We underline the importance of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and stress the need for swift, decisive action when such acts do occur. We note the specific duties of managers and commanders in this regard, outlined for the United Nations in section 4 of the Bulletin.

We recognize that significant progress has been made to-date to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse by our personnel, and note that we are at different stages of implementing the IASC six core principles on sexual exploitation and abuse.

We re-affirm our goal of achieving full implementation of these prin-

ciples as a matter of urgency and commit to:

- 1. Develop organization-specific strategies to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.** These would include time-bound, measurable indicators of progress to enable our organizations and others to monitor our performance.
- 2. Incorporate our standards on sexual exploitation and abuse in induction materials and training courses for our personnel.**
- 3. Prevent perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse from being (re-)hired or (re-)deployed.** This could include use of background and criminal reference checks.
- 4. Ensure that complaint mechanisms for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse are accessible and that focal points for receiving complaints understand how to discharge their duties.**
- 5. Take appropriate action to the best of our abilities to protect persons from retaliation where allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse are reported involving our personnel.**
- 6. Investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in a timely and professional manner.** This includes the use of appropriate interviewing practice with complainants and witnesses, particularly with children.
- 7. Take swift and appropriate action against our personnel who commit sexual exploitation and abuse.** This may include administrative or disciplinary action, and/or referral to the relevant authorities for appropriate action, including criminal prosecution.
- 8. Provide basic emergency assistance to complainants of sexual exploitation and abuse.**
- 9. Regularly inform our personnel and communities on**

measures taken to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. Such information should be developed and disseminated in-country in cooperation with other relevant agencies and should include details on complaints mechanisms, the status and outcome of investigations in general terms, feedback on actions taken against perpetrators and follow-up measures taken as well as assistance available to complainants and victims.

**10. Engage the support of communities and governments to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse by our personnel. ■**

*[Appendices 1 and 2 intentionally omitted]*

**SNEAK PEAK:**  
**The Investigator, issue 2**

In the next issue, The Investigator will discuss the Regional Networks being established by BSO to organise workshops and foster interagency dialogue on the problem of SEA by humanitarian workers. It will also tell you more about BSO's relocation to HAP-I (The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International) – a move which will enable BSO to continue to meet your on-going needs for training and support over the long term. ■

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

*BSO's activities are financed by the United States Department of State under the authority of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962 (as amended), as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development, Oak Foundation, and the Australian Agency for Overseas Assistance (AusAID). We thank all our donors for their generous support.*



# AVAILABLE NOW



The Handbook (392p) & the Guidelines (40p), with CD and DVD included.

Available at our office or by mail order.  
Simply contact BSO at:

c/- ICVA | Avenue Giuseppe Motta 26-28  
1202 Geneva | Switzerland

or

[intern@icva.ch](mailto:intern@icva.ch)