

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

PSEA

WHAT IS PSEA?

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) is a term used by the UN and NGO community to refer to measures taken to protect vulnerable people from sexual exploitation and abuse by their staff and associated personnel. And, to ensure adequate response when abuses occur.

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is a form of gender-based violence that is an abuse of power by aid workers against the affected population. SEA can happen in any setting against anyone but the risks of SEA increase in humanitarian settings.¹

IASC SIX CORE PRINCIPLES RELATING TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION & ABUSE

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PSEA relates to certain responsibilities of international humanitarian, development and peacekeeping actors. These responsibilities include preventing incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse **committed by United Nations, NGO, inter-governmental organization (IGO) personnel and other actors involved in the delivery of aid, against the affected population**; setting up confidential reporting mechanisms; and taking safe and ethical action as quickly as possible when incidents do occur.²

At country level, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) has a leadership role on PSEA, supported by a PSEA Network and/or PSEA Coordinator.

PSEA AND CCCM RESPONSE

Like any other humanitarian actor, CCCM actors have organizational responsibilities to have internal PSEA mechanisms in place. For almost all agencies, the reporting of sexual exploitation or abuse (SEA) is mandatory and aimed at ensuring standards for accountability for all. Organizational measures include:

- Human resources policies and measures, including PSEA commitments in an organizational Code of Conduct that all personnel (including interns, incentive workers, volunteers, etc) sign
- PSEA training of all personnel, partners, contractors, committees, volunteers, community workers, etc.
- Include PSEA clauses and commitments in contracts with partners, contractors, suppliers, etc.
- Internal confidential report-handling and investigation system
- Community engagement, including awareness-raising of affected communities on PSEA (e.g. what SEA is, their rights and entitlements and how to access services, standards of behaviour expected of humanitarian workers, how community members can report concerns regarding SEA)
- Procedures for affected community members to make complaints to the organization that are safe and accessible to diverse groups within the community

As well as having their own internal mechanisms in place to receive and respond to SEA complaints, CCCM actors must include PSEA requirements in CCCM activities delivery as a core component of accountability to affected people. For example, having a procedure in place for handling of SEA complaints within the Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms set up by a CCCM actor and maintaining the necessary coordination with relevant

¹ <https://gbvguidelines.org/cctopic/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/>

² IASC & Global Protection Cluster (2015) *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Camp Coordination and Camp Management*

GBV actors to ensure victims of SEA are channelled through the necessary referral pathways for access to services. See Related Resources below for resources.

ACTIONS FOR CCCM ACTORS

- ✓ Ensure that all site management staff and persons working on behalf of the site residents are trained on and sign Codes of Conduct. This should include PSEA training and awareness for all staff, in particular those in direct contact with the camp population, as well as volunteers, community workers, committees and structures working on CCCM or within sites
- ✓ Inform site population about existing complaint mechanisms and how they can be used
- ✓ Work with the UN, the inter-agency PSEA Coordinator, PSEA focal points and others to ensure confidential complaint mechanisms and clear protocols for referral and for investigation of reported incidents are in place.
- ✓ Designate and train a PSEA focal point within the camp management agency
- ✓ Ensure that the roles and affiliations of personnel and volunteers working in sites supported by CCCM partners are clearly identified and visible to affected communities (e.g. visibility gear, badges, etc.)
- ✓ Ensure that victims / survivors who report sexual exploitation or abuse are referred to GBV service providers for further follow-up and support based on their informed consent

[Camp Management Toolkit](#) (2015) Chapter 10 Gender-Based Violence – PSEA

PSEA REQUIREMENTS IN THE MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR CAMP MANAGEMENT

- Standard 1.1: Mandate, policies and presence - Affected populations have equitable access to protection and assistance through a mandated site management agency for as long as necessary.
 - **Key Action:** *The SMA must have humanitarian policies (including preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)) and strategies as well as leadership and organisational systems that guide and encourage site management teams to work in principled ways.*
- Standard 1.3: SMA and site management team capacity – Site management teams have the operational and technical capacity to manage the site.
 - **Key Action:** *Coach and train site management team staff in humanitarian principles and the Code of Conduct. Ensure they understand the reporting significance and have signed a Code of Conduct in an appropriate language. Include PSEA.*
- Standard 2.3: Feedback and complaints - Site populations, both displaced and host, have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle feedback and complaints to service providers.
 - *Make sure a PSEA reporting channel(s) and response mechanism is in place.*
 - *Raise awareness among the site population, both displaced and host, of PSEA and how to report incidents*

PSEA AND THE CLUSTER

Direct responsibilities for PSEA sit with operational humanitarian agencies, and at a leadership level with the HC. As a Cluster coordination team, you should promote and support PSEA measures as appropriate to the context and in collaboration with the PSEA Network/Coordinator and other clusters to ensure PSEA is mainstreamed during planning, policy development and programming. This could include, for example, to:

- ✓ Ensure site-wide complaints and feedback mechanisms established as part of CCCM activities are informed by community preferences and include mechanisms for the appropriate handling of SEA complaints
- ✓ Promote PSEA training opportunities to CCCM partners and all personnel working in sites supported by CCCM partners

- ✓ Ensure you know about the PSEA Network / PSEA Coordinator in country, and can promote and share any guidance, tools, or training materials they produce with CCCM partners
- ✓ Assess SEA risks that people living in displacement sites might face and the factors that may exacerbate them, and take measures to mitigate such risks
- ✓ Coordinate consultation (or collaborate to coordinate consultation) with affected communities and the delivery of key messages on PSEA and encourage integration of PSEA messages in community outreach by CCCM actors, through modalities and formats that are adapted to the affected community (e.g. posters, radio, visual and audio materials, community outreach volunteers, etc).
- ✓ Include PSEA in CCCM trainings (seek support for this, as needed)
- ✓ Promote trainings on PSEA to new CCCM actors, especially local and national actors new to CCCM response. Be aware that having Code of Conduct and PSEA policies can be a requirement of international donors, including country-based pooled funds. Seek out in-country resources through the PSEA Network / Coordinator, and share relevant Minimum Standards for Camp Management.
- ✓ Promote gender balance among CCCM staff working in sites and community representation structures and committees
- ✓ Ensure all CCCM partners are adequately capacitated to prevent, mitigate risks of, and respond to SEA

RELATED RESOURCES

Title	Type	Language	Date
PSEA Field Prevention & Mitigation Checklist NW Syria	Example	English	2020

References and further reading

- CRS (2021) [Communicating with Communities on PSEA – Toolkit](#)
- CRS (2021) [Strengthening Partners in Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A Toolkit For Local and National Organizations](#)
- “PSEA at the Frontline” information materials for humanitarian workers on PSEA in 22 languages
- IASC (2016) [Best Practice Guide Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms](#) –operational guidance on how to set up and run an inter-agency community-based complaint mechanism to handle reports of sexual abuse and exploitation by aid workers.
- IASC [Accountability and Inclusion Resources Portal](#)
- IASC, [Guidelines for integrating Gender Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, Thematic Area Guide for CCCM](#), 2015
- IASC [Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#), 2019
- [IASC Six Core Principles](#) in plain language and in over 100 languages by Translators Without Borders
- IRC (2008) [PSEA Mainstreaming Checklist](#)
- [Sectoral Checklist for Preventing SEA \(Approaching Sectors\)](#), IASC / PSEA
- UNHCR [Emergency Handbook – Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#)