

Nigeria. UN Strategy for Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH)

January 2021

Introduction

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) is a term used to describe inappropriate sexual conduct perpetrated by aid workers against recipients of assistance and other members of vulnerable communities. While sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment may occur in the workplace or in connection with work¹. Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment “offends the principles of what we stand for as an organisation and undermines our core values and our work”².

Development and humanitarian interventions, can compound existing risks, increasing power imbalances between men and women and exacerbate Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH). The key drivers include social norms that legitimate violence against women, lack of laws and policies to protect women and children from violence, weak or ineffective protection and response systems, among others. Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment constitutes intolerable violations of fundamental human rights and represents a true betrayal of the fundamental values of the UN system based on compassion, respect, integrity, trust and responsibility and, therefore, cannot be tolerated.

The UN in Nigeria commits to implement and monitor in a coordinated and coherent manner, a strategy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) as a reflection of our full accountability to our staff, donors and the populations we are committed to serve, with dignity and respect.

Taking Stock

Under the leadership of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), a PSEA Network was established for the humanitarian response, comprising of UN and INGO PSEA Focal Points, with an inter-agency coordination mechanism implementing an annual action plan. In February 2020 the HCT endorsed PSEA Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) outlining key PSEA roles and responsibilities, the terms of reference for the inter-agency PSEA Network, mechanisms for receiving and reporting SEA cases, including an Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) to guide inter agency SEA data sharing and management among partners for the humanitarian response.

In mid-2020, it became a requirement for all UN Country Teams, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator (RC), to develop an action plan on PSEA. To compliment the HCT PSEA action plan 2020, the Nigeria UNCT PSEA action plan was developed through consultation with agencies and guided by a checklist of minimum actions³.

¹ New Uniform Definition of Sexual Harassment. UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment

² <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2018-05-04/note-correspondents-recent-chief-executives-boards-session>

³ The HCT/UNCT Inter Agency PSEA Report provides more detailed information on the implementation of the PSEA action plan in 2020



As efforts to prevent and combat all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian operations remain as vital as ever, the UN PSEAH strategy adopts a countrywide approach, moving beyond the humanitarian response.

Priorities and Focus

The UN Strategy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) defines the vision, objectives and values that the United Nations and its partners in Nigeria promote, and the concrete actions they take. It aims to promote a countrywide coherent and harmonized approach to the prevention and response to SEAH. There is a close linkage between sexual harassment in the UN workplace and sexual exploitation and abuse in the field and UN staff must be aware that this constitutes breach of professional ethics and can-do irreparable harm to the faith and trust in our collective integrity.

PSEAH is a collective responsibility of the UN under a common policy and a common set of guidelines. Each UN entity is responsible for maintaining and mainstreaming its own internal mechanisms and procedures in its programmatic, operational and human resource management activities. The RCO will actively reinforce collective responsibility and coordinate the UN wide actions while the Heads of Agencies should reinforce similar actions within their agencies. Agencies are held accountable through regular reporting on prevention and mitigation actions taken at agency level.

The ultimate goal is to establish an in-country system to prevent and respond to SEAH as well as to ensure accessible holistic care services to victims/survivors. Under the four PSEA pillars, namely 1. Management and Coordination, 2. Prevention, 3. Response and 4. Engagement with and support of local communities and stakeholders; the following will comprise the strategic direction for our systemwide approach;

- Preventing incidents of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment is our priority through ensuring appropriate safety nets into all our interventions. This involves engagement with and support of local communities, aid workers, implementing partners and stakeholders.
- Strengthening mechanisms to receive and refer all SEAH incidents through appropriate channels for immediate action. Central to this is communication with staff and communities on their rights, expectations and the ways to report concerns.
- Enhancing quality victim/survivor assistance including protection, medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, reintegration as well as child support and paternity claims where relevant.
- Facilitating accountability and investigations in a prompt, safe, and survivor-centred way.
- Promoting effective inter-agency collaboration and coordination.

PSEAH Nigeria Structure

- The Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator has overall leadership responsibility for the PSEAH framework. The Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) hosts the inter-agency PSEA Coordinator, supports the system wide coordination of PSEA and ensures adequate resources with the support of UN Agencies/UN PSEAH Co-chairs.



- Two Co-chairs (for the humanitarian response and for development interventions) of the UN PSEAH framework, nominated by the UNCT will support the RC in implementation of the UN countrywide strategy. The Co-chairs perform strategic-level roles such as developing and overseeing the high-level PSEAH Strategies, chair network meetings and provide support to technical level responsibilities in the absence of a PSEA Coordinator.
- The UNCT is the senior level body, comprising of Heads of Agencies, holding the primary accountability, decision making and oversight authority for PSEAH activities at country level. The UNCT will have a standing agenda to provide regular updates on PSEAH. The HCT⁴ is the senior level accountability and oversight authority for PSEA in the humanitarian response.
- The UN PSEAH Network comprises of the PSEA Focal Points appointed by the Heads of Agencies that will report to the UNCT. PSEA focal persons should be at management level with easy access to the head of agency for purposes of accountability. To facilitate technical implementation of PSEAH systemwide accountabilities, the network will have close linkages to the key UNCT thematic groups.
- The PSEA Network for humanitarian response, comprising of UN and INGO PSEA Focal Points, will continue to operate as a sub national component of the UN PSEAH network and report to the HCT in line with the IASC PSEA guidelines and best practice tools⁵. Supported by the PSEA Coordinator, the implementation of the annual PSEA action plan components relating to the humanitarian response will be incorporated into the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), integrate PSEA trainings into training packages in the humanitarian context, engage with relevant sectors and regularly update the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) and the Operational Humanitarian Country Team (OHCT).
- The PSEA Network will meet at least monthly for the humanitarian response, quarterly only for the UN PSEA FPs and organize adhoc meetings and sessions as required.
- The UN PSEAH Network will review the existing PSEA SOPs and inter agency SEA information sharing procedures, adopt them as relevant for the development contexts and establish a community centred complaints mechanism that will incorporate GBV and Child Protection referral pathways.
- The community (affected and/or receiving assistance) are integral partners to the PSEA framework. They should input to the PSEA programme, so that it is culturally relevant and needs based, decide appropriate complaint and feedback channels and inform prioritisation of work plan activities.

Agency Level Actions

- In addition to supporting agencywide PSEA actions, PSEA focal points⁶, including at field office level, are integral to an inter-agency community-based complaint mechanism (CBCM). They are

⁴ The HCT is composed of organizations that undertake humanitarian action in-country and that commit to participate in coordination arrangements (Standard Terms of Reference for Humanitarian Country Teams, 2017).

⁵ IASC plan for accelerating Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) in humanitarian response at country-level, 2018; The Best Practice Guide to Establish Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms, 2016.

⁶One of the standards for agency compliance with the Minimum Operating Standards for PSEA (MOS-PSEA) under the pillar1 - Management and coordination is the requirement to have a dedicated department/focal point with the overall responsibility for the development and implementation of PSEA policy and activities.



the entry points through whom individuals (community members, colleagues from the same agency, colleagues from other agencies/organisations) are able and encouraged to safely report SEA concerns/incidents – and those reports are referred through the internal complaints mechanism to the appropriate entities for follow-up action.

- Agencies are expected to facilitate effective policy development & implementation with regards to prevention, response and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. These include standards of conduct, whistle-blower protection policies, effective recruitment & performance management practices, mandatory training, reporting, survivor assistance and investigations.
- PSEAH related activities and mandatory training for personnel on PSEAH should be tracked - Staff members and associated personnel should be made aware of their obligation to report SEAH/misconduct and aware that there is a policy for protection from retaliation in place. Simplified PSEA training podcasts for frontline staff, volunteers, casual workers, e.t.c that can be shared either via email or through social media platforms can be [accessed here](#).
- Agency internal complaints and investigation procedures should be in place and made accessible to all staff and beneficiaries, in line with respective headquarters. Investigations should be undertaken by experienced and qualified professionals who are trained on sensitive investigations such as allegations of SEA. Survivors/victims of SEAH should be given protection where relevant and provided with appropriate care and substantiated complaints should result in either disciplinary action or contractual consequences
- With the support of the PSEAH Network, ensure comprehensive communication and community engagement. An inter-agency community-based complaint mechanisms (CBCM) in place to aid and facilitate the receipt and referral of SEA allegations and complaints from beneficiaries.
- Conduct SEA risk assessment and develop mitigation measures. Challenges and positive changes communicated to the UNCT and HCT.
- Reporting requirements:
 - a) Notification on allegations received: all agencies confidentially notify the RC when an allegation has been received concerning their personnel or IP. This is not a bureaucratic exercise, this is so, the RC as the Secretary-General (SG's) highest representative in the country is not caught unaware of allegations within his/her area of responsibility.
 - b) Provide quarterly reports on agency-specific actions on PSEA which will be compiled by the RCO for the UNCT and HCT quarterly update/report. A reporting template already in use for the humanitarian response will be revised and made available.
 - c) Annual certification: The RC - in his/her capacity as the most senior UN official in the country, with accountability to implement the Secretary-General's Bulletin on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse – is required to send an overarching management letter to the SG stating that UN agencies in the country have (i) fully and accurately reported all credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to UN staff and affiliated personnel serving in the organisation; and (ii) made training on the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse available to these staff and affiliated personnel, in compliance with the Secretary-General's request to all leaders at every level. The



framework for this is Section 4.6 of the Secretary-General’s Bulletin on “Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse” (ST/SGB/2003/13). The annual certification is compiled from the agency reports mentioned in a) and b) above. An agency that has not been providing the reports above for one reason or the other, has the responsibility to provide information for the annual certification

Stakeholder engagement, cooperative arrangements and partnership agreements:

The United Nations values its partnerships and collaboration with government and non-governmental entities, commits to promote a shared culture of zero tolerance to SEAH and ensure adequate safeguards and appropriate actions related to SEAH.

- UN Implementing partners (IPs): Due diligence procedures and PSEAH clauses incorporated into IP agreements with both governmental and non-governmental IPs. Implementation of the UN Implementing Partner (IP) PSEA Capacity Assessment should be prioritised using the UN IP PSEA common assessment. As a result, the UN will have the necessary assurance of partners’ organisational capacities on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse with this assessment.
- Collaborative partners: provide technical support to establish policies and mechanisms that prevent and respond to SEA.
- Government engagement will involve three key areas: 1) ensuring that relevant government ministries understand that PSEA is a UN-wide priority, 2) agreeing on a means to handle allegations of sexual misconduct against state actors and 3) provide technical support for legislation processes at federal and state levels to protect women, children and vulnerable persons from violence.
- Donors: The RCO will keep donors informed of ongoing collective initiatives, share good practices and key messages to maximise their role to support effective SEAH prevention and response

Implementation

The PSEAH Network will develop and implement an annual PSEA Action Plan which will provide for joint activities guided by the four pillars, namely 1. Management and Coordination, 2. Prevention, 3. Response and 4. Engagement with and support of local communities and stakeholders. The RCO will rely on commitments of the agencies to mobilise these resources (funds, human resources and time) as an indicator of management commitment and accountability.

*Endorsed by the UN Country Team on
4th February 2021*

