

Nigeria. A Guide for Integrating Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) into Programming and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)

Introduction

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) is a term used to describe inappropriate sexual conduct perpetrated by aid workers - humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors - against recipients of assistance and other members of the community. SEA is a form of gender-based violence (GBV), as victims of SEA are often abused because of their vulnerable status as women, girls, boys, or even men, especially in contexts where communities are faced with extreme desperation.

The term aid worker encompasses all persons involved in providing protection and/or assistance to communities, affected populations and who have a contractual relationship with the participating organization/partners, including staff, volunteers, contractors, incentive workers, vendors, interns, implementing partners and anyone performing a task on behalf of any humanitarian/development agency or organization, regardless of the type or duration of their contract.

When personnel of aid organizations commit acts of sexual exploitation and abuse against the affected population that is meant to be served and protected by the very same persons exploiting them, the values and principles of humanitarianism are betrayed, and the trust and the credibility of the **entire system** is undermined. It is one of the most basic failures of **accountability** to the people whom the aid system is supposed to protect.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) is a collective responsibility for all humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors. As a rule, integrating PSEA should be considered as part of “good programming” to achieve protection outcomes and follow the do no harm principle. Therefore, it is the responsibility for all agencies to undertake PSEA activities and make them coherent, systematic and integrated into the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) as well as programming in other nonhumanitarian contexts.

What conduct is prohibited for aid personnel?

- Any sexual activity with a child (any person under 18years old)
- Any exchange of money, food, employment, goods, assistance or services for sex or sexual favours, including with sex workers
- Any relationship with a person benefiting from assistance and protection that involves improper use of rank or position
- Any sexual activity that is forced upon another individual
- Any use of a child or adult to procure sex for others

Obligations of all aid personnel:

- To know the standards of conduct on sexual exploitation and abuse
- To comply with the standards
- To report sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers
- To cooperate with investigations into sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers

Necessary conditions for implementing PSEA

1. **Accountability:** Organisational accountability - responsibility of each agency as an institution and as part of system-wide approach; Accountability of the perpetrator - criminal or/and disciplinary process and sanctions; and Accountability vis a vis community and victims - possibility to report, victim assistance, receive follow-up on a complaint, impartial investigation, proportionate sanctions and reparations.
2. **Leadership:** PSEA requires leadership from the top, embedded in the structures of management and reflected in a shared sense of values throughout the organisation that should actively demonstrate zero tolerance for SEA.
3. **Link to Accountability to Affected People (AAP):** To ensure affected populations are at the heart of any PSEA initiative, links must be made between AAP and PSEA actions on the ground. Aid partners must ensure AAP and PSEA strategies and reporting mechanisms are strongly linked and build upon their respective added value.

Operationalising PSEA Commitments into organizational programming

The Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Minimum Operating Standards for PSEA (MOS – PSEA) set out four pillars to inform collective PSEA Action as well as internal organizational-level PSEA Action Plans for individual partners namely; 1. Management and Coordination, 2. Engagement with and support of local community population, 3. Prevention of SEA and 4. Response,.

1. Management and Coordination

- a. Ensure effective policy on PSEA - Standards of conduct, whistle-blower protection policies, mandatory training, reporting, survivor assistance and investigations - and a work plan to implement the policy.
- b. Mandatory PSEA training for all personnel. Training should include but not limited to, a reference to definitions of SEA, a clear and unambiguous statement that any form of SEA is prohibited for all personnel, the requirement that any allegation of SEA must be promptly reported, and the requirement that alleged victims of SEA shall be referred for immediate, professional victim assistance.
- c. Ensure there is a dedicated PSEA focal point that has the overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the PSEA policy and activities within the organisation. Incorporate PSEA focal point roles and responsibilities into work plans and performance evaluations.
- d. Ensure there are mechanisms to enforce policy on whistle-blowers – to empower, encourage and protect staff who report cases of sexual exploitation and abuse – are being developed and safeguarded.

2. Engagement with and support of local community population

- e. Within your programmes, raise awareness on the rights of the affected population including information on the organization’s standards of conduct and reporting mechanisms
- f. Develop common messaging to convey to the affected population in collaboration with the PSEA Network, the Communication with Communities and/or Accountability to Affected Persons working groups.
- g. Obtain feedback from beneficiaries on the appropriateness and effectiveness of your programmes including PSEA activities.

3. Prevention of SEA

- h. Identify SEA risks within your programmes, develop and implement risk mitigation measures.
- i. Establish effective recruitment & performance management processes within your organization i.e. signing of Code of Conduct, system of reference checking and vetting for former misconduct; supervision and performance appraisals should include adherence to Code of Conduct; etc.
- j. When working with implementing partners, vendors and contractors, ensure adequate safeguards are in place and appropriate action is taken related to sexual exploitation and abuse – e.g. screening, cooperative arrangements, monitoring, and termination of arrangements.
- k. Integrate PSEA in all your programmes. For instance, incorporate a short session on PSEA during training and capacity building activities, incorporate SEA messaging in community engagement activities for your organization.
- l. Ensure PSEA “lens” is continually embedded in programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as beneficiaries are respected, dignified and protected.

4. Response

- m. Establish complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFM) internal to the organization or strengthen existing ones. Ensure these are safe and accessible reporting channels for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse
- n. Ensure written procedures on complaints/reports handling from staff members or beneficiaries are in place. Staff members are informed on a regular basis on how to file a complaint/ report and the procedures for handling these.
- o. Ensure all your service delivery points have clear information on how to prevent and report incidents of SEA. Your organization is one of the entry points for reporting SEA either by your own personnel or that of another organisation.

Reporting Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Ideally, an organizational complaint and feedback mechanism (CFM) should be able to receive SEA and broader accountability complaints. All aid organisations should have clear entry points/channels for reporting SEA allegations, whether as integrated within existing programming or as a specific intervention. Channels for reporting include hotlines, SMS or other messaging, complaint boxes, trained PSEA focal points, complaints desk etc.

Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs) do not need to be specifically for SEA allegations, but should meet the following criteria:

- Ensure that staff receiving complaints are trained on handling SEA allegations
- SEA allegations should deliberately be considered part of the purpose for the complaint's mechanism. SOPs should be established and/or integrated for the safe and confidential receipt and handling of SEA allegations, including the referral of survivors for assistance.
- Include clear linkage to the agency's PSEA accountability mechanism
- Beneficiaries/Communities must be aware that SEA concerns can be reported and what procedures will be followed in these situations
- Ensure channels for reporting are secure, visible & accessible to beneficiaries, adapted to considerations for age, gender, literacy, data protection e.t.c
- Agency reporting channel should be linked to the inter-agency SEA referral process, SEA referral pathways or PSEA-CBCM SOPs

When an incident of sexual exploitation and abuse has been reported to you

- Ensure that all information is well-documented using the [standard Complaint Intake & Referral Form](#), so that the allegation can be immediately referred to the appropriate unit in case of the same organization or the employer of the alleged perpetrator in case of another organization for investigation.
- Prioritise the wellbeing and safety of the survivor and the family by ensuring the relevant immediate assistance is provided while assessment for medium- and long-term assistance is conducted. Quality victim/survivor assistance includes medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, reintegration as well as resolution of paternity and child support claims for children born as a result of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Immediately institute an internal investigation into the matter and support any ongoing police investigations. Investigations should be undertaken by experienced and qualified professionals who are trained on handling sensitive investigations.
- Ensure substantiated complaints have resulted in either disciplinary action or contractual consequences and, if not, the entity is able to justify why not.

How can your sector support PSEA collective responses?

- Develop and disseminate targeted and specific messaging on PSEA within sector programming.
- Identification of SEA risks within programmes and integration of PSEA measures in programming actions. Identify sector specific points of increased risks - for instance in activities which involve distribution, activities where there is more time in close proximity to the affected population, activities in areas with no or limited protection safety nets, e.t.c - and target those points for safety measures.
- The Protection Sector and its Areas of Responsibilities for GBV and Child Protection and working groups such as Communicating with Communities (CwC) or AAP should include PSEA responsibilities in their Terms of Reference (TORs).
- The GBV and CP sub sectors should coordinate closely with the PSEA Network to align referral pathways, avoid duplication of activities, and to ensure that PSEA programming aligns with their principles, for example ensuring that PSEA programming is child friendly and survivor centred.

Monitoring progress in PSEA

The PSEA Network is the point of reference for coordination of activities between partners, guided by a PSEA Strategy and implemented through a collective PSEA Action Plan. The PSEA action plan has a compendium of activities and indicators that organisations have agreed to undertake collectively as the PSEA Network. Core PSEA indicators have been incorporated into the HRP and will be monitored. As such, it's important for all HRP implementing partners to report progress on PSEA activities.

All HRP participating organisations should appoint a PSEA Focal Point to consolidate the agency/organisation report and submit on a quarterly basis, using the reporting template provided. Access the PSEA Focal Points template [here](#) to submit details for your PSEA Focal Point to nga.psea@humanitarianresponse.info.

If you are worried or suspect that anyone in your organization or another aid organization may be breaking rules on sexual conduct, report it, following procedures set up by your agency: Contact: Your PSEA focal point or Head of Organisation; Hotline: 0800-000-2022; E-mail: nga.psea@humanitarianresponse.info