

PSEA Risk Assessment: Somalia and Somaliland

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# Introduction

Few acts contravene humanitarian principles and ethos more than sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) – acts whereby those who are empowered to provide aid to the most desperate, abuse their positions. SEA flourishes in conditions of poverty, desperation and crisis, in which many find themselves entirely reliant on aid, while others are empowered to disperse this. SEA is exacerbated by a lack of oversight over aid distributions, as well as by a culture of corruption and cover-ups.

Somalia, having suffering years of ongoing insecurity and crisis, with its resultant lack of access for humanitarian staff and its corresponding culture of middlemen filling this gap; with its endemic rates of corruption; and with silencing of reporting and accountability, has become fertile ground in which SEA has flourished.

This study seeks to document the ways in which SEA is playing out in Somalia, looking to understand more about how SEA is happening, who is perpetrating it, who is at risk of it and when. The study also seeks to document the state of SEA response in Somalia – describing what services and response mechanisms are available and where the gaps are.

This research demonstrates that rates of SEA are high across Somalia. Southern Somalia appears to have the highest rates. There, the risk of SEA is greatest in sites where internally displaced persons (IDPs) reside, yet SEA is also evident in host communities. A wide array of actors are involved in perpetrating SEA, often quite openly; including ‘gatekeepers’, a range of armed actors, local government officials, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) staff and UN implementing partners.

This study found that the prevalence of SEA is lower in Somaliland, compared to Somalia. There, SEA manifests itself slightly differently. While this does happen in IDP settlements and host communities, this seems to happen more covertly. The same dynamic with gatekeepers does not exist Somaliland, as there is better access for humanitarian actors and as IDP settlements are governed differently.

This research shows how it is the intersection of vulnerabilities; being displaced, being from a minority clan, being socio-economically disadvantaged, and being part of a female headed-household, that heightens the risk of SEA for displacement-affected populations. IDP women find themselves exposed, powerless, without protection and with pressing economic needs, making them vulnerable to abuse or to the need to exchange sexual favours in return for access to humanitarian aid, jobs or money.

This report begins with a description of the methodology, the research objectives and the study’s limitations. It goes on to discuss how humanitarian aid is distributed in Somalia, describing the various categories of actors who are involved in the distribution of aid – many of whom are not those who are traditionally understood to be humanitarian actors, and who we refer to in this report as ‘quasi-humanitarian actors’. The report then provides some context about gender-based violence in Somalia.

The report then homes in on SEA specifically. It analyses who the persons are who are most at risk of SEA, pointing to the factors that make them vulnerable, followed by an assessment of who the key perpetrators of SEA in the country are. The report considers the moments where there is the greatest risk of SEA. It then considers the SEA mechanisms that are in place, in terms of reporting, accountably and victim response, providing recommendations based on this research, for how these can be improved.

# Methodology

## Research objectives

The aim of this assessment was to gather information on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in Somalia. The assessment collected information on SEA risk and prevalence in various sites across Somalia, as well as on the mechanisms currently in place to respond to SEA. The assessment aimed to inform the PSEA Taskforce, as well as individual humanitarian agencies operating in Somalia, on how best to mainstream PSEA within their operations, and on how to integrate PSEA interventions within their planning, programming and advocacy efforts.

The objectives of this assessment were as follows:

1. To determine the scale of SEA risks and related concerns in Somalia. The review spanned various geographic locations and a range of types of sites (including IDP settlements and host communities) where beneficiaries are located.
2. To determine potential and actual capacities existing on the ground to respond to SEA risks and needs, including the capabilities of both international and local actors, and communities.
3. To propose a set of recommendations for the PSEA Taskforce and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), to strengthen PSEA responses; including pointing out geographic and programmatic areas of priority.

## Research gaps and limitations

There is a critical lack of documented information relating to SEA in Somalia. A few factors contribute to this. First, continuing insecurity and a lack of access by humanitarian actors to many areas of Somalia, has meant that efforts to document SEA by international organisations have been confined to areas within and around Mogadishu.

Second, there are United Nations (UN)-imposed restrictions on how, and to what extent, the data that does exist about SGBV generally in Somalia can be shared. Data about SGBV in Somalia, including SEA, is systematically collected by the GBV Information Management System, a system that requires GBV service providers to record details about GBV incidents in a database, which is managed by the UN GBV Working Group. The GBV Working Group places stringent conditions on the sharing of information from the GBVIMS, through an Information Sharing Protocol.[[1]](#footnote-1) Information that is shared publicly does not include, for example, the identity of the perpetrators or the towns in which violations occurred,[[2]](#footnote-2) which means that this source of potential information on SEA incidents is not shareable, and is therefore not publicly available.

To date, SEA documentation activities have not been prioritised by international actors in Somalia. When SEA gained international attention in 2013 and 2014 due to a high-profile allegation of gang rape by AMISOM personnel, and a subsequent Human Rights Watch report describing 22 allegations of SEA by AMISOM, efforts to adequately document and address SEA were increased. However, as attention to the issue faded in the years that followed, these efforts largely stalled.

This report aims to fill critical knowledge and documentation gaps, by documenting the results of an assessment on SEA in Somalia. This research outlines who the most at-risk groups are with regards to SEA, who the main perpetrators are of SEA in Somalia, and how SEA plays out in Somalia and Somaliland. It will then outline which SEA prevention, reporting and response services are available in Somalia, highlighting where the key gap areas are.

## Methodological approach

This assessment relied on both a secondary data review, as well as original field research, conducted in six districts across Somalia and Somaliland. This study focused primarily on documenting SEA at the communal level.

### Desk-review

Prior to conducting field research, a desk-review was carried out by the research team, reviewing all existing literature and documentation on SEA in Somalia. This literature review considered any documented evidence and analyses of SEA risk, prevalence and response in the country. This desk-review included a review of documentation provided by the PSEA Taskforce, including inter-agency work plans and other programmatic documents. The desk-review informed the development of the study methodology and the research tools, elucidating what is already known and where existing knowledge gaps lie.

### Research tools

A series of interview guides and focus group discussion guides were created, tailored specifically to all categories of interviewees. These tools were tested by the enumerators in Mogadishu with community members over three days, and modified accordingly. All enumerators were trained in the use of the tools – as well as being provided with training on SEA and research skills and ethical considerations.

### Data collection

Data collection for this assessment was qualitative. Field research included key informant interviews and focus group discussions carried out in five locations across Somalia and one location in Somaliland. In addition to data collected at the district-level, 15 key informant interviews were conducted with key experts and humanitarian workers over Skype.

Key informant interviews were conducted with a range of persons, including settlement managers, GBV service providers, child protection actors, representatives of women’s groups, staff of United Nations (UN) funded facilities (such as teachers and medical personnel working in UN-funded schools and clinics), government actors and employees of humanitarian organisations.

Focus group discussions were held with beneficiaries across the various research sites. Separate group discussions were held with older women (defined as being above 35 years of age) and younger women (between 16 to 25 years old), in order to mitigate the effects that age-related power dynamics might have on research findings. Where possible, group discussions were held with community leaders and elders.

Research tools followed a semi-structured approach, allowing for a balance between flexibility and structure. Key SEA themes were covered in these research guides, yet this approach allowed enumerators to explore supplementary questions and topics, capturing additional unexpected information that came up across the sites.

### Selection of research sites

Research locations were selected for this assessment based on both the need for geographical diversity, but also on considerations about where research would be safe and viable. Research sites were agreed on by the PSEA Taskforce and UNICEF. The following districts in Somalia and Somaliland were selected:

* Baidoa
* Beletweyne
* Bosaso
* Burao
* Kismayo
* Mogadishu

It was recognised that the types of SEA risks and vulnerabilities that people face, might vary depending on the types of sites or settlements that they live in, and due to the population and community dynamics present in specific sites. As such, in each of the research districts, research was conducted in both sites hosting IDPs and returnees, as well as in areas with significant host community populations.

In each district two sites / settlements were selected, opting for geographical variation where possible (for example choosing a site/settlement on the outskirts and one in the centre of the city). Importantly, enumerators in each district were consulted in the selection of sites/settlements, relying on their knowledge of the local dynamics to help inform these decisions.

A key consideration in the selection of host community sites, were the density of aid organisations serving these populations, with selection favouring locations better served by humanitarian actors, to allow for better insight into SEA risks and vulnerabilities.

### Sampling of respondents

Sampling of respondents was purposive, with respondents selected based on their ability and suitability to speak about SEA risks and response. Attention was given to the clan composition of group discussants, to ensure representation of both majority and minority clan groups within focus groups discussions. In addition, representation of marginalised groups, remote communities, and persons with disabilities, were included in the research where possible. A full list of sampled respondents can be found in Annex 1.

### Challenges and limitations

There were several challenges faced during the research process, as well as certain limitations, of note to this research. The following section sets these out, and describes some of the mitigating measures that were put in place.

* **Covid-19.** The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic stalled the research process several times and led to significant delays in the collection of data. It also meant that the research methodology had to be slightly altered in certain ways. For example, in certain cases it was not deemed safe to conduct focus group discussions. In these cases, key informant interviews were carried out to replace these. This was an issue in two locations, Burao and Beletweyne, were the high prevalence of covid-19 and government restrictions did not allow for focus groups to take place. In all other four locations (Bosaso, Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu) focus groups took place, albeit with a reduced size (four persons per group).
* **Danger of reporting**. SEA is a highly sensitive topic in Somalia. Reporting on cases – or even discussing this issue – can be dangerous for individuals, as they are often reporting on persons in positions of power over them. To mitigate the risks to respondents from talking about these issues, all interviews were conducted in a safe and secure locations. Enumerators were also trained to revert to less sensitive questions in the interviews if they had a strong sense that the safety of any participants is being jeopardised, or if an unknown person entered the room. While seeking approval from the different authorities to conduct the research, enumerators were trained when they entered areas which had been classified as ‘high-risk’, such as IDP settlements, to be more generalist about the topic of the research, stating that it was related to sexual and gender-based violence, not directly SEA. In addition, all focus groups were held with small numbers, with persons from the same gender and a similar age group. All data has been anonymised in this report, so no respondents can be identified, only the location of the quotes provided in this report are given.
* **Research fatigue.** In several cases, the research respondents illustrated a degree of research fatigue, as they had several times been asked questions around SGBV or other problems facing their communities and felt that nothing had been done to alter the conditions in their communities, despite giving their time and energy to explain their situations. This was mitigated by explaining in detail the purpose of the assignment, namely an exploratory study into the prevalence and risks associated with SEA in the communities that was being conducted in order to inform programming by the PSEA Taskforce and other humanitarian actors, before seeking informed consent from the participants.

# Definition of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

There is no clear definition of SEA under any treaty or instrument of international law. The UN defines ‘sexual exploitation’ as “an actual or attempted abuse of someone's position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, to obtain sexual favours, including but not only, by offering money or other social, economic or political advantages”[[3]](#footnote-3). The UN defines ‘sexual abuse’ as “the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force, or under unequal or coercive conditions”.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Generally, when the UN and humanitarian actors use the term ‘sexual exploitation and abuse’, or ‘SEA’, they are referring to sexually exploitative or abusive conduct perpetrated by either humanitarian or peacekeeping actors. What is important here is that these actors hold positions of relative power over beneficiaries of humanitarian support, and in perpetrating SEA, they exploit and abuse this power. SEA is intrinsically related to the distribution of humanitarian aid – with the need for humanitarian aid by some, and the power over its distribution by others, creating the differential positions of power and the opportunities for abuse,that SEA is concerned with.

It is important to note that other security forces (such as members of the national army) might also exercise some level of power and control over IDP women, children and other vulnerable groups, and might engage in ‘transactional sex’ with persons from these groups, or subject them to sexual abuse. However, these persons are not generally described as being perpetrators of SEA, as they are not humanitarian actors or peacekeepers. Rather, when persons from these groups perpetrate such acts, they might be accused of committing acts of ‘sexual violence’, ‘conflict-related sexual violence’ or ‘gender-based violence’ more broadly. This said, the parts that such other security forces might play in guarding IDP camps, communities or aid convoys, might blur these definitional lines somewhat, and when such actors do play a part in the distribution of aid, their actions might thereby become relevant to a discussion on SEA.

# Distribution of humanitarian aid in Somalia: The context in which SEA plays out

Due to the nature of the protracted conflict in Somalia, the delivery of humanitarian aid has become characterised by a complex system of delivery, involving a wide array of actors. The distribution of food, schoolbooks and medicine, the provision of security for aid operations, and the delivery of transport and other services is a complicated exercise, seldom carried out by humanitarian actors alone.[[5]](#footnote-5) Due to ongoing insecurity and the lack of access that humanitarian actors enjoy, the UN and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) who provide humanitarian assistance work together with a network of state and non-state actors to deliver goods and services. District authorities generally oversee the exercise, in tandem with different ministries and humanitarian coordinators.[[6]](#footnote-6) Peacekeeping troops, militias and private security organizations provide security;[[7]](#footnote-7) while local NGOs, peacekeeping troops and IDP camp ‘gatekeepers’ are involved in the distribution of food, medicine and supplies to IDP settlements.

The UN and international humanitarian agencies rarely distribute goods or provide services in camps and IDP sites directly, with the goods they provide distributed by others – and with the nature of operations shaped and tempered by a series of intermediaries. Aid is delivered almost exclusively through implementing partners. These consist of NGOs, alongside a growing number of private contractors operating in this space. Humanitarian organisations must cooperate with, and have their movement and access restricted by, gatekeepers and their militias.[[8]](#footnote-8) To a great extent, the choice of who gets access to humanitarian aid is decided by local administration, in tandem with gatekeepers delivering assistance in their respective locations.

The exposure and access that staff of humanitarian organisations have to beneficiaries is highly limited. Justin Brady, the Head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, was quoted in a New Humanitarian article (published 18 July 2019) as saying that UN staff can only visit the IDP camps for a maximum of 30 minutes at a time in Mogadishu.[[9]](#footnote-9) Nuro Mustaf, deputy director of IDP protection at the National Commission for Refugees and IDPs, noted that “donors and international NGOs do not have direct contact with the IDPs, so it’s the gatekeepers who are dealing with NGOs. Sometimes the assessment of the needs is also made by the gatekeepers.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

As such, there are a range of actors who are not traditional humanitarian actors, involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance in Somalia, including security forces, gatekeeper and clan elders. As noted above, these ‘quasi-humanitarians’ present a challenge when considering SEA. There is some debate amongst SEA practitioners on whether and how such actors should be incorporated into understandings of SEA.[[11]](#footnote-11) For the purposes of this report, they will be included in the below descriptions, as these actors play important roles in the delivery of aid in Somalia – giving them ample opportunities to exploit their positions.

## The main actors involved in distribution of aid

#### The following are some of the actors involved in the provision of humanitarian aid in Somalia.

#### Gatekeepers

People who manage IDP settlements in Somalia, are referred to as ‘gatekeepers’.[[12]](#footnote-12) Gatekeepers might be the owners of the land on which IDPs are settled, they might be employed by land owners, or able to negotiate the settling of IDPs on the land of a landowner. Sometimes, gatekeepers are elders or leaders of IDP communities living on settlements. More commonly however, they are landowners or businesspeople from the dominant clan in the local area, who have links to local clan militia or local authorities.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The main roles of gatekeepers are to provide land on which to settle IDPs, to manage security within their areas of responsibility and to negotiate with NGOs for assistance and services.[[14]](#footnote-14) In many camps, gatekeepers also offer additional public services, functioning as a quasi-alternative governance system. According to a 2017 study on gatekeepers conducted by the Overseas Development Institute, “other additional services that gatekeepers provide include arranging funerals, supporting vulnerable people, assisting new arrivals, assisting in emergency situations such as births or illness, and resolving conflict between settlement residents.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Gatekeepers charge for the services they provide, including often by withholding food designated for IDP camp residents. They do this by diverting aid before it is delivered,[[16]](#footnote-16) or by charging beneficiaries a portion of their food aid as a form of tax.[[17]](#footnote-17) It is important to note that not all gatekeepers are exploitative and relations between them and IDP populations vary, depending on the dynamics in a given settlement. For example, a few IDP camps in Mogadishu are run by women from the Somali Bantu – a socially and politically marginalised clan – who have great support from the beneficiaries living in the settlement, in contrast to other camps which are run in a more exploitative manner.

In all locations, gatekeepers are part of the hybrid governance model in which aid is delivered to IDP settlements, involving a multitude of actors. These have increasingly become part of the humanitarian delivery in Somalia, even liaising directly on planning issues with regional bodies, and entrenched in the ways in which aid is delivered to IDP settlements in Somalia.[[18]](#footnote-18)

#### Camp committees

Often gatekeepers work together with camp committees, which assist with decisions around aid, comprised of clan elders, religious leaders, women’s and youth’s leaders and other influential community representatives. These individuals are appointed, selected, or endorsed by the gatekeepers[[19]](#footnote-19), who follows criteria broadly similar to selecting clan elders elsewhere in southern Somalia: impartiality, good mannered and good character. These structures are typically also responsible for dispute resolution within the settlement. The extent to which the gatekeeper engages these committees is highly context specific; a study in Mogadishu found that the perceived legitimacy of these structures by the IDP population is highly variant dependent on the settlement[[20]](#footnote-20).

#### Local administrations

The part that the local administration play in aid distribution, differs across various sites. Administrations play a role in deciding where aid is distributed within the geographical confines of the district. District administrations also play a role in liaising with regional and FMS bodies to sometimes lobby for an increase in aid to their district. They act as the most localised level of interface between the distributions of aid within host communities, and have a relationship with the gatekeepers in the IDP settlements. (These roles are described below, in the section on “some relevant contextual differences in aid delivery across different sites”.)

Gatekeepers are directly or indirectly linked to local administrations, with regards to aid distribution and decisions on beneficiary lists. The relationship between local administrations and gatekeepers differ across locations, and depends in part on the relative strength of the administrations and gatekeepers, and on the social dynamics of each location. In some parts of Mogadishu, such as the inner parts of the Daynille district, this relationship is characterised by them working closely together to deliver humanitarian aid and services to IDP settlements. In other parts of the country, the relationship is one of collusion aimed at siphoning off aid, with limited assistance and governance actually reaching displacement-affected communities. Sometimes these relationships are implicated in collusion around covering up SEA, discussed below.

#### Security sector

A consequence of the insecurity affecting the delivery of aid in Somalia, is the presence of security actors in aid operations and distributions, particularly in IDP settlements. This involvement is there in part to protect those who are conducting distributions, when aid is being delivered in camps. IDP settlements are typically located in insecure areas, on the outskirts of each district, in close proximity to al-Shabaab-controlled territory. Security forces are present during distributions, to guard the guard those doing distributions and to secure the sites.

This research confirmed that security forces were present around aid distributions across all five locations. In each location covered by the research, the presence of security actors generally involved the police forces. In some cases in southern Somalia, such as Baidoa and Beletweyne, it also involves the African Union peacekeeping forces, AMISOM. A member of the Baidoa police force explained that,

“We are living near camp area, then during any distribution going on we also take our part to assist the camp leaders.”

- Baidoa respondent

Explaining how these actors all work together, an interviewee said,

“The military make the queues, the Hay’ad reads the lists and the camp chairman tells us when we should go to the distribution site. He sits with them there and helps them with the distribution.”

– Bosaso respondent

## Dynamics affecting the delivery of humanitarian aid

Two factors related to political economy and social dynamics complicate the delivery of humanitarian aid in Somalia:

**First, the ability to control the distribution of humanitarian aid is a position of power, in an economy where aid is a critical incoming resource**. The ability to control where and how aid is distributed, is tied to holding positions within local administrations. There tends to be intense competition and high stakes over who holds these positions within district administrations. These positions tend to be controlled by members of larger, more powerful majority clans. Aid in this context should be seen as part of the political economy and viewed as a commodity in which access to aid can be negotiated by different groups, opening up the space for potentially predatory behaviour by the persons involved in distribution. This is slightly less so in Somaliland and Puntland, although even in these sites aid distribution tends to be based on favouritism and nepotism, and informed by clan membership.

“Local camp leaders always want to employ their relatives, even in a minor job such as cleaner. Corruption is high because the camp leaders always want to sell all non-food items and hygiene kits that were supposed to be given the vulnerable communities.”

- Bosaso respondent

“Nepotism is paramount in every service delivery agency, Camp leaders and other authorities are never saints. I once discovered a camp leader who in distribution of food aid registered 4 from his households instead of a required 1 per household to benefit the aid.”

- Kismayo respondent

**Second, the distribution of aid in all contexts across Somalia is corrupt**. Somalia is consistently ranked as being the most corrupt country in the world. This tendency reveals itself in humanitarian aid. A proportion of humanitarian aid is siphoned off before it even reaches the communities it was designated for. Where aid does reach communities, access to aid is often dependent on clan membership, and is mired by corruption – in turn making this an environment which is ripe for SEA to occur. According to an aid beneficiary in Beletweyne:

“Aid is not distributed fairly in this camp. The camp leader is prioritising their own people who are living outside the camp, and often we do not even see much aid coming in. I can give you an example. I saw an NGO trying to distribute mosquito nets because of the malaria here in this camp and then we did not even see one net. I heard from my friends that the mosquito nets had been given to people outside our camp. All of the camp committee is made up of the friends of the camp leader, so we don’t get anything!”

– Beletweyne respondent

Corruption in aid and SEA are intrinsically linked. Accordingly, something that is important to recognise when considering SEA in Somalia, is the prevalent perception of aid being something that can be sold or exchanged. This practice was evident across all locations researched. Beneficiaries would pay part of their humanitarian aid to gatekeepers, in order to be included on beneficiary lists. So too, gatekeepers of IDP camps usually take a portion of a beneficiary’s aid, as payment for providing services in the camp, as well as for providing IDPs with land to lodge on.

“I have never witnessed but I heard that the comp committee/gate keepers do corruptions by taking money from beneficiaries so as to include them in the beneficiaries list. “

– Bosaso respondent

Corruption and other abuses of power by NGOs working in the camps have been well documented. The UN Monitoring Group for Somalia and Eritrea, for example, has consistently reported that the staff of local NGOs are involved in the diversion and misappropriation of aid, yet has not gone into specific detail about these allegations.[[21]](#footnote-21) The UN Monitoring Group has also received allegations of aid being diverted by international NGOs, but describes these as “isolated; rather than systematic, practices”.[[22]](#footnote-22) Since 2016, the UN Monitoring has reported that the UN and INGOs involved in supporting food distributions have made increasing, and increasingly creative, attempts at monitoring aid distribution, including putting in place call centres, satellite imaging, electronic file assessments, biometric beneficiary registration and new layers of compliance requirements.[[23]](#footnote-23) Despite the numerous documented allegations of abuses of power by Somalia NGOs relating to food distributions, there do not yet appear to have been public allegations of sexual abuse.

In southern Somalia, corruption is compounded by the limited access by humanitarian actors to field sites, due to the high levels of insecurity, and the resultant inability to monitor and oversee distribution processes. The insecure conditions, means that security actors need to be involved in aid distribution, heightening the potential for SEA, explored below.

## Contextual differences in aid delivery across various areas

There are contextual differences in how aid is delivered, and in which actors are involved in aid delivery, across different parts of Somalia and Somaliland. Despite certain commonalities in the types of actors involved in humanitarian aid delivery, described above, there remain contextual differences related to power, social dynamics and governance, in both host communities and IDP settlements.

#### Somalia

In Mogadishu, the two districts which host the biggest displacement-affected communities, Daynille and Kahda, differ vastly in the degree to which local administration are involved in aid delivery. In Daynille, the District Commissioner has extensive oversight over the delivery of humanitarian aid, and has implemented a network of security actors which help with protection in settlements. On the other hand, in Kahda the nascent administration is less involved in humanitarian aid, with gatekeepers taking on a more central role in the delivery of aid. In each case, however, there is an organised system governing the delivery of aid, involving a relationships between hybrid networks of government administrations, gatekeepers, implementing partners and security forces.

In Kismayo, the delivery of aid is overseen by government actors. There, the Jubbaland Internal Refugee Agency (JRIA) has been cracking down on what is perceived to be coercive behaviour of gatekeepers trying to make financial gain from humanitarian aid. As such, aid distribution in Kismayo is more tightly regulated than in other areas, with the district administration taking the leading role in administering aid at the local level, with input from community leaders, including women’s groups, clan elders and camp leaders aligned with the administration. Non-governmental organisations also play a key role in delivering aid directly to IDP settlements and host communities, liaising with the government around the needs of the most vulnerable groups.

In Baidoa, the district administration is in charge of decisions around distribution of aid, working together with clan elders, who assist in making decisions around who is vulnerable through an elder committee. Administratively, Baidoa is divided into four districts, with two subdivision districts, with each administrative unit having a committee responsible for aid distribution. NGO workers are involved in the provision of humanitarian aid, including the distribution of both food and non-food items. Most of the IDP camps are located on the outskirts of Baidoa, and include primarily rural-based Mirifle clans, such as the Elay and Harin. The Ethiopian contingent of AMISOM are also involved in the distribution of aid in these settlements, and monitor movements in and out of these settlements.

In Beletweyne, there is less involvement of the local administration in aid distribution. There instead, there are site leader within each settlement who are responsible for distribution of humanitarian aid. These site leaders make decisions around who gets aid and when. When an NGO wants to distribute aid in a given location, they contact the site leader who liaises with the site committee to make decisions around distribution lists. There is a divide in the city between the western and eastern banks, with the west being socio-economically underdeveloped and receiving less aid compared to the eastern part of the district. According to an IOM Baseline, Beletweyne has the highest number of IDPs out of any district in Somalia[[24]](#footnote-24).

In the northern port town of Bosaso, the district administration has its own Department of Social Affairs, which coordinates and administers humanitarian aid in the district. The administration works closely with village and camp committees to select beneficiaries for implementing agencies. Some agencies engage the special police unit or regular police forces to secure distribution points during aid distributions. Private businesses are sometimes hired for the distribution of humanitarian aid or contracted to provide cash vouchers to vulnerable populations.

#### Somaliland

Burao differs from the areas described above, as the lack of continual conflict, has meant better access and oversight for humanitarian actors. In Burao, the local administration provides support to NGOs and UN-partners to deliver aid to both IDP settlements and host communities. Distribution of humanitarian aid is still primarily carried out by implementing partners, albeit with better oversight around whether or not distribution is favouring one community over another. Generally, in this research perceptions around nepotism and corruption were slightly less in Somaliland, compared to Somalia.

# Sexual and gender-based violence in Somalia and Somaliland

SEA is a type of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and therefore should be understood in the context of SGBV in Somalia. Somalia has amongst the highest rates of SGBV in the world. In the past few years, there have been several high-profile rape cases in Somalia and Somaliland, which has been met with public outrage, leading to some punitive measures for perpetrators. Yet, aside from these highly publicised cases, for a vast majority of SGBV survivors, there are limited available protections or means for recourse. There are also significant gaps in SGBV response services in many locations around the country.

The challenges around reporting and accountability that one finds for SGBV cases, the services gaps, and the often-problematic ways in which SGBV cases are dealt with by Somalia’s pluralistic legal system, all also apply to and affect SEA cases. As such, these are briefly outlined here, before the report turns to a more focussed discussion on SEA.

SGBV is highly prevalent in Somalia and Somaliland. This is especially common amongst vulnerable groups, such as women, girls, young men and boys, from politically and socially weaker clans. This research documented extensive evidence of rape in all research settings.

The research suggested that places with the highest occurrence of SGBV incidents, are IDP settlements, where women and girls, are at risk of getting raped by men living in the IDP camp, men working in the camp, men from the host community who come into the camp at night, and security forces, or men posing as security forces.

“Unfortunately, rape is very common in our camp. This mainly happens when the resident men’s come in at night to look for young women who might be a target for them. There was a case last month where a young woman, [name removed], was raped by resident men. We cannot even report this case, and our clan elders are not even daring to seek justice! This is because the resident men’s are very powerful men and they are linked to the politicians.”

– Beletweyne respondent

“There is often a lot of violence against girls in this camp, and no one is doing anything about it.”

–Mogadishu respondent

There are many risks of daily violence for women and children living in the IDP camps. This violence is best illustrated by a quote from a respondent in Bosaso:

“Everyday activities such as taking a shower or going to the toilet had become dangerous missions, as many facilities in the camps do not have locks. Moreover, there are not enough toilets and showers for them in a women-only area. Poor lighting in the camp makes fetching water or simply walking around at night stressful and risky. There are no lights in the toilets. At night, sometimes I go to the toilet with my sister or pee in a bucket.”

– Bosaso respondent

There was also evidence that children in the host community are vulnerable. In our data we found evidence of children as young as 4 years old being abused by their teacher.

### Lack of data and reporting

Statistics about SGBV in Somalia vary wildly. Poor statistics, coupled with the known rarity of reporting, means there is no way to get a firm grasp on the real scope of SGBV. In 2021, the Somalia Protection Cluster reported 233,167 cases of gender-based violence, with Benadir region accounting for the majority of these cases (and with Benadir, which hosts the city of Mogadishu, also being a region where cases are more likely to be reported and documented). Yet, “In a country where survivors themselves believe that “rape is normal” women’s rights advocates believe that these statistics represent a fraction of the sexual assaults that actually occur in Somalia.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

### Customary justice and SGBV

There are few justice institutions that can properly deal with SGBV cases in Somalia. Acts of SGBV constitute crimes against individuals, warranting the enforcement of individual rights and the punishment of perpetrators. In an environment of continual conflict, SGBV can also be seen to constitute an attack on a collective, and can therefore have the potential to escalate inter-communal violence.[[26]](#footnote-26)

This potential for collective retaliation means that clan elders often get involved in deliberating disputes around SGBV.[[27]](#footnote-27)

“As community members we do not feel comfortable reporting SGBV to any source because it is something that we are shamed about it. Clan elders mediate incidents in which women and girls who were been sexually violated. If the incident goes on to the courts or is reported to the organisations they would not feel they are getting justice, as it is the clan elders who are in charge of settling these types of disputes in our community in line with the qu’ran.”

– Baidoa respondent

As this quote illustrates, the main means for seeking justice in southern Somalia is through the customary justice system in Somalia (*xeer*) – including for cases of SGBV. The weakness of formal courts, their inability to enforce decisions, and their perceived tendency to favour majority clans, plays a part in this. Customary courts are associated with significant challenges in addressing SGBV cases and in punishing perpetrators of SGBV. The use of customary justice tends to favour those accused of SGBV. The punishment provided by customary courts is centred on compensation, and often, on encouraging a victim to marry a perpetrator. So too, punishments tend to be collectively shared among the perpetrators, in cases where there are many.

**“**As clan elders we deal with the SGBV complaints and solve it in our way, the beneficiary would not go to police station or call organisation to report it. We have our own technique to solve such incidents. If the perpetrator is known, we marry him with the beneficiary, but if the perpetrator is unknown person we try to solve it, as the norms which is paying money for the crime that he did.”

– Baidoa respondent

According to a recent publication in Somalia, survivors generally prefer rights-based avenues[[28]](#footnote-28), however these are limited and weak. The problems in ensuring justice are compounded by the stigma faced by survivors who report in their communities. In particular, IDP women appear to be the most vulnerable to SGBV, yet they have few options available for investigation and legal recourse for SGBV cases.

# Profile of most at-risk groups for SEA

This section discusses the profiles of those who are the most at risk of falling victim to SEA, explaining what features make them most vulnerable to abuse.

## Persons living in IDP settlements

|  |
| --- |
| **Definition: Internally Displaced Person**  “IDP” carries a very different meaning in Somalia, than it does in international humanitarian parlance. In Somalia, IDP tends to be used as code for a Somali from a low status group who is living in a city dominated by a more powerful clan, and who is poor and squatting or renting in a slum.[[29]](#footnote-29) Due to the clan-based nature of settlement, IDP populations are generally from socially and politically weaker clans, living in the large cities in Somalia. Depending on the context, ‘IDPs’ could include majority clan members, however most of the displaced are from traditionally marginalised groups from the farming areas of southern Somalia and agro-pastoral groups from Bay and Bakool.[[30]](#footnote-30) |

#### Southern Somalia: Baidoa, Beletweyne, Kismayo and Mogadishu

In southern Somalia, the most at-risk group for sexual exploitation and abuse, are women and girls living in IDP settlements. Women and children make up the majority of displacement-affected communities, accounting for between 70 to 80 percent of the IDP population Somalia.[[31]](#footnote-31) Many IDP women are widows or heads of households. IDP women have multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities, which make them particularly at-risk of SEA: they are socio-economically disadvantaged, they face little prospects of social integration, and their marginalised status in society means they have little protection, from the law or otherwise. The UN has consistently reported that between 75-85% of GBV incidents collected through the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) are perpetrated against IDPs.[[32]](#footnote-32)

The conditions within IDP camps make IDPs vulnerable to GBV and SEA, due to general insecurity within the camps; a lack of lighting; shared bathrooms; households made of temporary structures without doors or the ability to lock them; and proximity to and dependency on security forces, peacekeepers and camp managers (gatekeepers). IDP women and girls are also vulnerable because they have to travel long distances to gather food, firewood, materials to construct shelters, or to work, and because many of the traditional social structures that protect women from abuse have disintegrated due to conflict and displacement.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Geographically, IDP settlements within cities and towns tend to be physically isolated from the main parts of districts, adding to the vulnerability for GBV and SEA.[[34]](#footnote-34) These areas tend to be characterised by high rates of petty crime, as well as by limited governance by state authorities. These areas with little governance, often have a high prevalence of armed actors – who are frequent perpetrators of GBV and SEA. So too in these areas, gatekeepers are more extractive, as these sites are not often visited by third-party monitors or research actors, due to their insecure locations. In Mogadishu, the outer parts of Daynille and Kahda exemplify these dynamics, falling outside of the remit of state authority, especially in the night-time, leaving women highly vulnerable.

Within IDP settings, female-headed households appear to be particularly vulnerable to SEA. Female headed households are more common amongst IDP and minority communities, due to the deaths of their men during conflict, or because men stayed behind in places of origin to guard their homes and land after their families were displaced. Exacerbating the problem, is that there is an economic pay gap between men and women’s work in Somalia, making such women even more socio-economically disadvantaged. The result: that some do not feel as though they have a choice other than exchanging sex for humanitarian aid and services.

IDP women often face a high risk of evacuation, as they have insecure tenure status.[[35]](#footnote-35) This is compounded by the fact that women are dependent on men to acquire property, rental housing or even temporary shelter. While having fewer economic opportunities that would enable them to afford housing themselves; these women also have less access to the relevant personal connections necessary to acquire housing, than men do.[[36]](#footnote-36)

It is therefore the intersection of these vulnerabilities; being displaced, being from a minority clan, being socio-economically disadvantaged, and being part of a female headed-household, that heightens the risk of SEA for displacement affected women. IDP women are often exposed, powerless, without protection, and with high economic needs, making them vulnerable to abuse, or to the need to exchange sexual favours in return for access to humanitarian aid, jobs or money.

The prevalence of SEA against IDPs appears to be acute across all the locations surveyed in southern Somalia: Baidoa, Beletweyne, Kismayo and Mogadishu. According to respondents from those locations:

“There was a women with eight children in this camp whose husband had passed away, and she was not able to find work to provide for her family. She had sexual relation with someone who was in a position of power in the district in order to get access to more aid, including the ratio card, money and some food for her children!”

- Baidoa respondent

“Most cases of SEA I have heard of are single mothers who are abused by the camp managers in order to receive her aid. I have met a case of woman who is single mother. She was sexually abused by the camp managers and was given some food, which she needed that time for her family.”

- Beletweyne respondent

“It happened to a woman who lived in the camp. She had a sexual relation with one of the humanitarian workers. He used his position of power in return to the aid he distributes. Anytime aid arrives he gives her priority, and in return she give him what he wants from her. She had four children which their father passed away two years ago.”

- Kismayo respondent

“I hear people are using a lot of force against women in this area, includes jobs for sex return, taking money for your body and even taking food for your body or sex.”

– Mogadishu respondent

“I have heard of various incidents of the use of administrative force, and then harassment of women in this camp. People living in this area (camp) for access to money supplies, humanitarian support and basic services face many waves of abuse such as rape, sexual assault and so.”

– Mogadishu respondent

**Children:**

Notably, children living in IDP settlements in southern Somalia are highly vulnerable to SEA. There are significantly more reports of sexual violence related to the conflict (that committed by security forces or armed groups), against girls under the age of 18, than against any other group: in 2018, the UN verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence against 20 women, 250 girls and 1 boy.[[37]](#footnote-37)

This research found that across southern Somalia, children who are displaced are acutely vulnerable to SEA, particularly young girls. Abuses usually occur in areas where children are separated from their caretakers, such as in schools within the IDP settlement. There were multiple report of abuse against children happening, in Beletweyne, Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu.

“Children in the IDP settlements experience sexually assault from those in powerful positions. Girl who get an aid from humanitarian worker were raped inside the camp by the camp leader, he promised her food in exchange and more aid, but instead he attacked her directly. He gave her a small amount of food.”

– Baidoa respondent

**Table 1. High-risk groups: SEA, southern Somalia**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Location** | **At-risk group** | **Characteristics** |
| Beletweyne | All IDPs, in particular women and girls | **Geographic**: Western part of the district hold IDP settlements that are much more vulnerable to SEA  **Gender and age**: Women and girls  **Clan**: Bantu communities |
| Baidoa | **Geographic**: Outskirts of district  **Gender and age**: Women and girls  **Clan**: Minority Mirifle clans such as Elay and Boqolhore, and Somali Bantu communities |
| Kismayo | **Geographic:** IDP camps on the outskirts of town had reports of SEA cases: Dalxiska, Galbet and Kafiyo camps.  **Gender and age:** Women and girls between 15-30 years were the most vulnerable groups  **Clan**: Somali Bantu communities |
| Mogadishu | **Geographic:** IDP camps on the outskirts of town are vulnerable, especially in the outer parts of Daynille (Afgoye corridor) district and the more rural parts of Kahda  **Gender and age**: Women and girls  **Clan**: Digil-Mirifle and Somali Bantu communities |

#### Puntland: Bosaso

The dynamics described above for southern Somalia, are mirrored in Bosaso, with women and girls living in camps for IDPs being the most at-risk group for SEA.

Bosaso is a key transit point for migrants and return point for returnees. Displaced groups are diverse and include; girls and women feeling conflict from south and central Somalia, returnees from Yemen and Saudi Arabia, and refugees from Ethiopia and Yemen. Displaced women often reside in the shelters for displaced-persons, and are predominantly members of female-headed households.

Returnee female-headed households are the most vulnerable to SEA in Bosaso. These are women who have returned to Somalia from Yemen or elsewhere in the Gulf States. What makes them vulnerable to SEA are high levels of corruption, collusion between actors to cover SEA and a culture of abuse, which has become endemic to the aid industry in Bosaso, outlined further below. Women from minority clans are considered ‘easy prey’ by perpetrators of SEA. There are very few services available to these women and they have limited access to justice.[[38]](#footnote-38)

**Children**

Children living in displacement-affected households are also at a high risk of SEA in Bosaso. Similarly to southern Somalia, this research demonstrated that children’s vulnerabilities are heightened when they are away from their caretakers, such as in schools in the IDP settlements or within medical facilities.

Privately run educational facilities were frequently mentioned as sites whereby IDP children were at risk of SEA. In addition, unaccompanied minors were seen to be at especially high risk – in particular the thousands of young male migrants, mainly from Ethiopia, who try to transit through the port every year. Several respondents mentioned that in order to be able to afford the passage, they try to work by any means possible to earn the crossing fee. This involves the exchange of sexual favours in return for cash vouchers or non-food items from humanitarian actors.

**Table 2. High-risk groups: SEA, Puntland**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Location | At-risk group | Characteristics |
| Bosaso | Displacement affected communities, including IDPs, returnees and migrants | **Geographic**: IDP settlements (in particular Ajuuran and Absame camp), returnee population  **Gender and age**: Girls and women, young male migrants  **Clan**: Not relevant |

#### Somaliland: Burao

By and large, the group classified as most at risk from SEA in Burao are children in displacement-affected families. These include children from minority clans and children living with disabilities. These children are sometimes unaccompanied minors, who sleep in the IDP settlements. They are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation from humanitarian actors, primarily in educational or medical facilities. According to a respondent from the research:

“If I heard about someone working for a clinic having a sexual relationship with beneficiaries, there is no one I can report it to. Such cases are very rare, but I heard many times some health workers say that other health workers have a relationship with the young girls in exchange for provision of medicine, and no one has been planned to report. It would be just like rumour but if the survivor speak out at that time everything would be different and he had to face the justice.”

- Burao respondent

**Table 3**. **High-risk groups: SEA, Somaliland**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Location | At-risk group | Characteristics |
| Burao | All IDPs, in particular women and girls | **Geographic**: Koosar IDP camp, and Farah Omar IDP camps  **Gender and age**: Girls aged between 12-19 years old  **Clan**: Gaboye |

## Persons living in host communities

The most at-risk group for SEA in host communities in Somalia and Somaliland, are children. The point in which children become separated from their caretakers and become unaccompanied minors, is the point at which they are the most at-risk from SEA.

Minority clans in the host community are the most vulnerable to SEA. This is in part because they lack adequate security protection, have lesser access to recourse for judicial claims and they tend to come from more socio-economically disadvantaged families.

In host communities, the research suggested that SEA overwhelmingly takes place in educational facilities, often in exchange for grades. While IDP children are much more at-risk than their counterparts in host communities, SEA appeared to be prevalent across all host community locations in the research, with several cases reported in southern Somalia (in particular in Baidoa and Mogadishu), as well as Bosaso (two cases) and Burao in Somaliland.

“School teacher had a relationship with his student he tell her he will gave high score in exams he used to have sex anytime he needed, later on the case was heard by the other teachers and her family they solved with in the school.”

- Baidoa respondent

“I have seen someone accused for having inappropriate relationship with his student in exchange for good marks in exams and he was arrested in Wadajir police station after the family of the survivor come up with clear evidence!”

- Mogadishu respondent

# Profile of perpetrators of SEA

In this section, the main perpetrators of SEA in Somalia will be described, explaining their roles in relation to SEA, describing how their act of SEA play out, and seeking to understand the risk of them perpetrating SEA in different locations.

## Humanitarian actors (including the UN, international and national NGOs)

There have been few publicly recorded allegations of SEA against NGO workers in Somalia, and – at time of enquiry – only one recorded allegation against a UN employee, which is listed in the UN database of SEA allegations against peacekeeping operations as being ‘unsubstantiated’ (There is no further information provided on the website about the role the UN staffer was in, nor any further information about the nature of the allegation).

**However, the low rates of formally reported SEA cases stands in stark contrast to the findings in this study, in which UN implementing partners (IPs) and non-governmental organisations involved in providing humanitarian assistance, were found to be amongst the key perpetrators of SEA in Somalia.** While there was no evidence from the data collected for this study (across any of the six districts in Somalia and Somaliland) to implicate UN employees in this, there was strong evidence to suggest that IPs and NGOs are abusing their positions in exchange for sexual favours, across all locations.

This type of abuse has become endemic in humanitarian aid delivery in both IDP settlements and within host communities, with numerous cases reported in this study, across all locations.[[39]](#footnote-39) It also appears to be somewhat systemic, as SEA occasionally plays out through perpetrators colluding with one another in acts of SEA – with collaborators involving staff of NGOs, gatekeepers, and the local authorities responsible for the aid distribution.

There are different ways in which humanitarian actors perpetrate SEA, which are explored here.

#### Staff of non-governmental organisation

One of the most common ways in which SEA occurs in communities in Somalia, is where sexual favours are exchanged for humanitarian assistance, by persons working for NGOs. There are several ways in which this dynamic plays out.

The biggest risk moment in terms of SEA by NGO workers, is during humanitarian aid distributions. A large number of NGO workers abuse their positions, exchanging aid and services, for sexual favours from beneficiaries. These acts take place during distribution of food and non-food items (NFI), when humanitarian workers make promises, or make actual exchanges of aid, or additional aid, to beneficiaries. Oftentimes, this happens inside IDP settlements.

“It happened to a woman who lived in the camp. She had a sexual relation with one of the humanitarian workers. He used his position of power in return to the aid he distributes. Anytime aid arrives, he gives her priority, and in return she give him what he wants from her. She had four children which their father passed away two years ago. “

– Baidoa respondent

“Most of NGO workers abuse their authority by taking advantage of these people who live in here, by corruption in distribution. Often that people with authority is abusing their power in sexual relations with beneficiaries in exchange for the aid distribution.”

– Beletweyne respondent

“One of Absame camp leaders refused to add a single mom into beneficiaries list unless she allows her daughter to marry him.”

– Bosaso respondent

While this was a found to be a critical SEA risk across Somalia, this risk is heightened during periods of acute crisis, such as during the periodic droughts and flooding experienced in southern Somalia, or when there is a critical shortage of humanitarian supplies. During fieldwork, beneficiaries in Baidoa noted that as a result of the corona-virus pandemic there was an acute shortage of aid supplies delivered to the district.

The risk of SEA by NGO workers was found to be particularly common during distribution of non-food items. Cases of SEA were reported in Baidoa, Bosaso and Beletweyne, of NGO staff using their positions to obtain sexual favours from beneficiaries in exchange, or with the promise of an exchange, for better access to non-food items. In western Beletweyne, in particular, there were several cases whereby NGO workers maintained ongoing sexual relationships with women in IDP settlements, promising NFI distributions in return. This was also highly prevalent in Baidoa, where female IDP beneficiaries are asked for sexual favours in exchange for NFIs, while the same pattern manifests itself in Bosaso. According to a beneficiary in an IDP settlement:

“I heard about concerned a female beneficiary of non-food items who was asked for sex, in exchange for extra commodities by NGO workers responsible for the distribution of humanitarian aid. The female beneficiary was accepted the demand and received extra items. It happens frequently in this camp.”

- Bosaso respondent

In Somalia, most humanitarian implementing partners and sub-contractors are made up of male staff, especially at the local level. There are challenges with hiring women in these roles, due to the low literacy rates amongst women and socio-cultural norms. The challenges are also connected to clan dynamics, and to these being difficult workspaces for women.[[40]](#footnote-40)

NGOs in Somalia are often run by influential men in the community, who set up NGOs to deliver aid to communities. Sometimes these men exchange sex for temporary jobs in their organisations. This research uncovered several cases of NGO workers promising temporary jobs to women, from both IDP settlements and host communities, in exchange for sex. This was commonly found happening in medical facilities in southern Somalia. This was reported in Baidoa, Kismayo and Bosaso. In Kismayo, SEA plays out in the construction sector, where site supervisors engaging in construction for the humanitarian sector, elicit sexual favours in exchange for casual labour from women in the host community. In Beletweyne, there were cases reported of powerful men working for NGOs, who promised beneficiaries jobs in exchange for sexual favours.

“There was a woman who had a sexual relationship with a humanitarian worker as means of a favour of job in exchange.”

- Baidoa respondent

In Bosaso, was also common. Most of the NGOs working in Bosaso are run by men from the community. There were several cases reported in the research, of men having relationships with women from the host community and offering them jobs in the NGOs in which they work. There were also cases reported whereby NGO staff promised jobs in exchange for sex from women who live in the IDP community.

In addition to jobs, transportation in an NGO vehicle was offered to a beneficiary, by a man working for an NGO, in exchange for sex. According to a respondent from Bosaso:

“In 2020, a driver engaged in a sexual relationship with one of the camp residents, in return for free rides in an NGO car.

– Bosaso respondent

#### SEA in the educational sector (where educational facilities are supported by humanitarian actors)

This study suggests that the greatest SEA risks that children face, are from teachers who either work for NGOs, or have been contracted to provide education services in humanitarian facilities (such as in schools in camps). Where educational facilities are funded by / supported by humanitarian organisations, then acts of abuse by teachers in these institutions, would constitute SEA. (While not classified as SEA, abuse perpetrated in schools that are not humanitarian-supported, yet which were reported in this research, are also described below).

Abuse in schools was found to be a risk across Somalia, in all the study sies. This appeared to be particularly prevalent in Mogadishu, where teachers in *madrassa* schools and other educational facilities, reportedly sexually abuse and exploit children, in exchange for promises around grades or other benefits. This dynamic was also prevalent in Baidoa and Beletweyne – mentioned by several respondents as a risk setting for SEA. Sexual abuse and exploitation was reportedly also common in Beletweyne in particular, with several reports around exchanges of marks or access by students, and by sometimes their parents, by teachers demanding sexual favours. This happens primarily in schools within IDP camps, but also occurs outside of IDP settlements.

“I have heard about teachers in schools in this area having a sexual relationship with students, and sometimes their parents, in exchange for access to the school.”

– Beletweyne respondent

“Sexual exploitation for children exists in the education settings, as children are exempt from representing their families to receive humanitarian aid distribution.”

– Bosaso respondent

Due to the collapse of most state-run institutions from 1991, the gap in the educational sector has been filled by religious *madrassas*. Numerous allegations of SEA came up in our data, related to teachers in *madrassa* schools, perpetrating sexual abuse towards their students.

Another place of risk was child “rehabilitation” centres; privately run clinics that operate as correctional type facilities for youth. These types of facilities are high-risk for SEA according to our research in communities. Abuse in such rehabilitation centres were reported in Bosaso, where child rehabilitation centres are very common. It is perpetrated by teachers against the youth within the facilities, often in exchange for different small favours.

In Somaliland, schools were also the sites of the highest SEA risks. Comparatively, in our research, Somaliland illustrates far fewer incidents of SEA, however the risk is highest for girls in educational facilities. There are many privately run educational facilities in Somaliland, alongside schools operated by humanitarian actors in Burao. Generally, the privately run facilities appear to be much more at-risk with regards to abuse compared to the humanitarian facilities. However, there were two mentions in the research data around teachers in humanitarian-run educational facilities eliciting sexual favours in exchange for access to these schools, from young girls from poor families in Burao.

#### SEA in the health sector (where health facilities are supported by humanitarian actors)

In southern Somalia, there were several cases reported of sexual abuse by health workers, in both IDP and host community settings. Where these took place in health facilities supported by the humanitarian sector, or in facilities which are serving aid beneficiaries, these cases of abuse could constitute SEA.

One of the ways in which this is playing out, is where medical clinic staff promised access to treatment, in exchange for sexual favours, from beneficiaries or their family members. This was reported in Baidoa and Kismayo. In one case in Baidoa, a staff member working at a clinic, promised a beneficiary treatment in exchange for repeated sexual favours. This person was reported to the clinic, and subsequently fired.

Another place where abuse was occurring, was in jobs being provided by medical facility staff in exchange for sexual favours from women. This came up most frequently in Kismayo, in which there were three reports of staff working at humanitarian medical clinics eliciting sex for jobs from poor women – promising them employment as nurses, or temporary contracts within the facilities. One of the cases mentioned several times in Burao, was a case of abuse by an owner of a private hospital and a 19-year-old girl. The girl was from a poor family, and was engaging in a relationship with this man. He promised her a job and helped her financially in exchange for sex. This private hospital was not supported by humanitarian, but deserves mentioning as it illustrates how abuse plays out in Burao.

#### SEA by business contractors working in the humanitarian space

Business contractors responsible for the distribution of cash vouchers are also reported to perpetrate of SEA. This risk was particularly acute in Bosaso, where poor members of female-headed households were said to be at risk of SEA in exchange for their cash vouchers from contractors who distribute the items. These women were told that they would either not receive a cash voucher if they did not exchange sexual favours, or in some cases, promised a greater amount of aid. In some cases, these episodes of abuse have been reported, and the business contractors have had their contracts cancelled.

“The last case I heard of SEA was a female beneficiary of a cash voucher who was asked for sex in exchange for extra commodities by the business contractor responsible for the distribution of humanitarian aid to IDP camp beneficiaries. The female beneficiary refused the exchange, and reported the matter to the NGO, and the business contractor’s contract was cancelled as a result.”

- Bosaso respondent

## Gatekeepers

‘Gatekeepers’ are regularly accused of abusing their positions of power – most commonly with regards to the diversion of humanitarian aid, and to the practice of withholding a portion of food rations (usually between 10 to 30 percent in Mogadishu) as a form of tax.[[41]](#footnote-41) There do not appear to publicly recorded instances of the gatekeepers committing SEA. However, Human Rights Watch’s 2014 report, ‘Hostages of the gatekeepers’,[[42]](#footnote-42) documents many instances of the security forces who are mobilised by gatekeepers to provide security in the camps, committing rape, particularly during food distributions.

This current research found ample evidence that gatekeeper are key perpetrators of SEA in southern Somalia and Puntland. Being the focal points for decisions-making around who receives humanitarian aid and being involved in distributions of aid in IDP settlements, they wield immense power within these vulnerable communities.

This research revealed that SEA by gatekeepers takes many different forms within IDP settlements. The most frequent type is when sexual favours are elicited by gatekeepers from women living in settlements, in direct exchange for aid, promises of aid, or placement on distribution lists. Where women do not comply, they might be threatened with eviction from settlements, risking losing their places of residence. There were several reports in the data from southern Somalia, of such threats, or of real evictions, taking place where IDP women rejected gatekeeper’s advances.

In Mogadishu in particular, this risk is acute for women living in IDP settlements. Beneficiaries, acting out of fear or necessity, commonly engage in sexual relations with gatekeepers, in exchange for humanitarian aid (for both food, non-food items and cash voucher cards). This phenomena was mentioned in almost all of the interviews conducted, with high risk areas including the IDP camps on the fringes of the capital: including the outer Daynille and Kahda districts. In some cases in Mogadishu, these episodes led to the eviction of families from camp sites, where the beneficiaries threatened to report the abuse, and as a result, the gatekeepers felt threatened by their position.

“I heard non conditional cash was being provided to a beneficiary in Kahda IDPs camps, but the camp leader requested to have sex with a women in the camp, and in return promised her three tokens instead of one.”

- Mogadishu respondent

This was also found to be a significant SEA risk in Baidoa, albeit manifesting itself in slightly different ways. In Baidoa, gatekeepers use their authority, to demand sexual relations with members of female headed households, or other young women in the camps, in exchange for giving them preferential treatment during humanitarian aid distributions – including in distributions for ration cards, food, NFI distributions and cash vouchers. This dynamic is described in detail by a women’s representative in Baidoa:

“I have heard and solved cases together with the Ministry about people who abused their authority in sexual relation with women, who had lived in camps. There was a time when we were mobilizing internally displaced people and we discovered that women who lived in the camp had sexual exploitative relationship with camp leader [gate keeper] and those who work for NGOs. We attempted to reach out to these women as a group, under the Ministry and actually we did reach out them, and almost three of those women made a confession about that they are in a relationship with the camp leader by force.

They told us that the camp leader is the one who is responsible for the aid distribution in the settlement, and he threaten us that we cannot get access to the aid, if we do not please him as the way he wants. One of these beneficiaries has six children with no father, and she is a disable person, and he gave her more aid in order to sleep with her. People with such authority use their power in any way that they want because of there is no accountability and transparency in some organisation or public offices...”

In Bosaso, SEA is also perpetuated by gatekeepers, or camp committee members, who demand sex in return for humanitarian aid or inclusion on the beneficiary lists. Here this mainly takes the form of cash vouchers which have been donated by humanitarian organisations. Sex is exchanged for being given cash vouchers, or the promise of additional vouchers. In particular, the Ajuuran and Absame IDP Camps in Bosaso city have been notorious sites for sexual exploitation in exchange for humanitarian aid. In these sites, gatekeepers promise young, vulnerable women in the settlements inclusion on distribution lists ahead of the next round of humanitarian relief, in exchange for sexual favours. These women cannot speak up, as they do not trust in the local reporting processes, or that their confidentiality will be ensured and that they will be protected, discussed further below.

## Local government authorities

Gatekeepers work together with local government administrations to divert aid from vulnerable populations, and in some cases, to perpetrate and cover up cases of SEA. This is the case in Bosaso in which there is clear collusion between gatekeepers and the Department of Social Affairs, who are in charge of administering aid, in covering up the significant volume of SEA cases experienced by women in the local IDP camps.

The research revealed many allegations about the District Administration and Department of Social Affairs, being implicated in sexual exploitation themselves, with sex being exchanged by their personnel for a variety of favours, primarily inclusion on beneficiary lists. This has widespread implications for the safety and security of beneficiaries in Bosaso. The following quote summarises this view:

“Sexual exploitation and abuse happens. Aid workers and government officers, especially Department of Social Affairs at the District Administration, which is responsible for the allocation and coordination of aid to camps in the district, ask for sex in exchange for a benefit or a favour. Sometimes, they making unnecessary physical contact at night, including unwanted touching.”

- Bosaso respondent

In Mogadishu, the same close relationship emerges between gatekeepers and local government authorities. In districts across Mogadishu, such as Daynille, Kahda and Hodan, the District Administration was mentioned as being directly involved in the distribution of humanitarian aid. Beneficiaries pay rent to the gatekeepers, and some of this is distributed to the District Administration. Many respondents reported that staff of the District Administrations come frequently into the camps, demanding sexual favours from beneficiaries, and threatening to take away their aid or to evict them if they do not comply. Beneficiaries are left with limited options, as return to their areas of origin is not possible due to climatic shocks or conflict. Yet they risk SEA if they remain in the camps.

“Sometimes powerful officers from the local government manipulate the beneficiary lists. They see a lot of people in t-shirts, and communities don’t know whom to trust.”

- Baidoa respondent

## Armed groups (clan militias, security forces)

The available literature indicates that the primary perpetrators of conflict related sexual violence in Somalia are armed men — usually wearing a military uniform.[[43]](#footnote-43) It is often difficult for sexual violence survivors to identify which group of uniformed armed men their perpetrators belong to. One reason for this is that military and police uniforms have been donated to various forces by different international donors, with the result that they are not consistent or easily recognisable. So too, uniforms are also generally readily available on the markets.[[44]](#footnote-44) As an example of the possible confusion, Ethiopian AMISOM forces may be difficult to distinguish from Ethiopian military and paramilitary forces who are operating within Somalia outside of the AMISOM umbrella.[[45]](#footnote-45)

A range of armed personnel have been implicated in acts of sexual violence in Somalia, including members of the Somali National Army[[46]](#footnote-46), AMISOM forces (discussed in further detail below), Ethiopian security forces (operating outside of AMISOM), including the Ethiopian Defence Forces and the Ethiopian Liyu police,[[47]](#footnote-47) Somali National Police Force (SNPF),[[48]](#footnote-48) independent security contractors, and members of clan and religious militias.

Not all SGBV committed by armed forces would constitute SEA. Using the understanding of SEA employed in this research – that is, where the perpetrators take advantage of their positions of power over aid beneficiaries, to sexually exploit or abuse – it is arguable that sexual abuses perpetrated against IDPs, by security forces charged with providing security in IDP camps, or with guarding aid distributions or operations, would constitute SEA. As mentioned above, Human Rights Watch has documented instances of rape committed by both private security forces contracted by gatekeepers to provide security in IDP camps, as well as by the Somali National Army who are stationed in IDP camps during food distributions[[49]](#footnote-49) - both of which would constitute SEA.

This research uncovered several cases of SEA perpetrated by different armed groups, taking advantage of their positions of power to sexually exploit beneficiaries. This happened most frequently in the IDP camps in southern Somalia. This also happened to some extent in northern Puntland and Burao in Somaliland.

In Daynille in Mogadishu, it was reported that armed men disguised as SNA enter the IDP camps at night to patrol the area, and frequently sexually exploit and abuse women living in the camps – especially in the outer parts of the district. SEA also occurred when armed groups were mandated to monitor humanitarian distribution points. Then, armed men dressed in police uniforms would come into the camps and sexually abuse young women or girls living in the camp.

In Kismayo, there were several reports of SEA perpetrated by security guards. The CCCM reporting mechanisms flagged one such in October 2020; in Warshada camp B1, there were reports of a security guard entering the camp at night to sexually abuse women living in the camp. The same thing also happened in another camp in Kismayo, where two armed men pretend to be police entered the camp to perpetrate SGBV. This episode was described by an aid beneficiary, interviewed in this study:

**“**I have seen police who are armed, and they say they are part of police. They use their power to assault the beneficiaries. On February 10 this year, there was case that happened in my camp, where two police men attacked a mother who was my neighbour and they pointed the pistol on the head, and they told her to keep quite otherwise she will be killed. After that she was raped and they run away. It was midnight. My neighbour came out after she screamed and they took her to hospital. The case was reported to the police and the police confirmed that those perpetrators are not part of the police.”

- Kismayo respondent

Similarly, in Baidoa, there were reports of several armed men who perpetrate SEA in IDP settlements. Interviewees reported that during aid distributions in particular, when the SNA or police are supposed to be protecting humanitarian workers coming into these locations, armed guards often sexually exploit and abuse women living in the camps. This was reported to happen frequently in the camps at the outskirts of Baidoa district. There were also reports of many women living inside the camps, who are in relationships with security guards mandated to guard the camps.

In Beletweyne, the type of SEA that is most common is armed security personnel in the IDP settlements abusing their positions in exchange for sex. Due to the insecure settings in which many IDP settlements are based, security personnel in Beletweyne often live inside the camps. Personnel within these forces often have relationships with women living in the camp and in some cases, forced marriages between these personnel and IDP women and girls that may have been raped by the security forces. Exacerbating matters is that this takes place in an environment of heightened clan tensions, in which women are also the targets of communal clan violence, in the form of SGBV perpetrated on the basis of clan identity. According to a respondent:

“There are many different types of violence which can happen within this site. The main type of violence faced by women is rape and sexual assault from the groups I have talked about. We are also fearing the breakout of clan violence. There has been fighting between different groups of people. There has been one revenge killing in our site. It was a man who was killed, because of his clan identity. Beletweyne is place where violence is very common. As you know we are experiencing bombings and fighting almost every year, so we are also fearing that.”

- Beletweyne respondent

All IDP populations interviewed for this assessment mentioned that they did not feel protected by the police mandated to guard their camp. There were several cases of police having ‘wives’ living with the camp, alongside their other wives outside of the camp - and presumably offering these wives protection or other privileges in exchange for these relationships. In Bosaso, relationships between police mandated to guard the camps and IDP women were also reportedly common.

In Burao, Somaliland, there were also allegations of police who were allocated to protect the IDP settlements having relations with girls under the age of 18 years inside the camp. This appeared to happen less often than Somalia, but two cases were specifically mentioned in our data, related to police having relationships with girls inside IDP camps. One of these girls became pregnant, and the police officer gave her money to stay quiet. After the girl had given birth, her family attempt to abandon the baby off in the street. As a result, the community elders became involved and temporarily arrested both the mother and the police officer. After they were released, the police was allocated to another camp.

## AMISOM

This section focuses on summarising the allegations of incidents of SEA committed by AMISOM personnel, and the response to these allegations. SEA by AMISOM has been the only type of SEA in Somalia that has been well documented, and that has received significant national and international attention.

AMISOM functions as a UN peacekeeping mission would; it is authorised by a UN Security Council Resolution, made pursuant to its powers under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter.[[50]](#footnote-50) AMISOM is deployed by the African Union.[[51]](#footnote-51) Its mandate includes, “Facilitat[ing] humanitarian operations including repatriation of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)”. AMISOM deploys both military and police contingents, as well as civilian support staff. Its military contingent is comprised of troops from Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti and Ethiopia. Its police contingent is comprised of personnel from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia.

Allegations that AMISOM personnel were engaged in SEA against Somali women and girls gained traction in 2014, due to a high-profile gang rape in 2013, and a report released in September 2014 by Human Rights Watch (HRW), detailing allegations of SEA perpetrated by AMISOM personnel. This report, ‘The Power These Men Have Over Us: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by African Union Forces in Somalia’, documented 10 separate incidents of sexual abuse, and 14 incidents of sexual exploitation perpetrated by AMISOM personnel on both the AMISOM base camp and the Burundian National Defence Forces camp in Mogadishu.

This HRW report followed a series of other allegations about SEA committed by AMISOM troops, from different sources. This included a report by three UN agencies[[52]](#footnote-52) drafted in 2012, entitled *‘Violence in the Lives of Girls and Women in the Somali Republic’*, which included allegations of sexual exploitation perpetrated by AMISOM personnel, in exchange for money and food. This report was never released.[[53]](#footnote-53) Another allegation was made by a survivor of a high-profile gang rape by AMISOM troops, made through the internet-based ‘Somali Channel’ in August 2013. The woman told the online channel that she was kidnapped by soldiers from the Somali National Army and taken to the AMISOM base in Mogadishu, where she was drugged and gang raped by uniformed AMISOM soldiers from the Ugandan contingent. So too, a section of the Security Council Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea’s July 2013 report stated that allegations of SEA were regularly levelled against AMISOM, and that AMISOM lacked the procedures to adequately address these allegations.[[54]](#footnote-54)

In response to these allegations, both the Somali government and AMISOM headquarters established Boards of Inquiries (BoIs) to formally investigate and report on the incidents. The BoIs did not produce any findings from their respective investigations. In a letter to Human Rights Watch, the AU Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission for Somalia, and the Head of AMISOM, stated that the AMISOM BoI did not proceed because the NGO sheltering the survivor would not disclose her location nor allow her to testify before the BoI, and because the FGS had assumed responsibility for the investigation.[[55]](#footnote-55)

The investigation undertaken by the AU’s independent investigation team found that two of the twenty-one allegations of SEA were credible. It found for all other allegations that there was not enough information or evidence available to make such a finding. Many of the investigations appear to have stalled because the relevant troop contributing country (TCC) refused to grant an audience to the investigation team.

The commencement of the investigation by the FGS was announced on 16 August 2013. This announcement established an investigation committee and mandated that the committee’s final report be released within 60 days.[[56]](#footnote-56) This report was never made public. A high-level meeting between prominent CSOs, held in Mogadishu in November 2013 revealed that the civil society members appointed to the investigation committee had not been engaged in the investigation process, had not received any progress reports, and could not attest that an impartial and transparent investigation had taken place.[[57]](#footnote-57) No prosecution was ever made for these acts.

The following actions were taken by AMISOM and the African Union over the course of 2014 and 2015:

* In December 2014, the AU committed to drafting a Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse for AU Peace Support Operations;
* The AU Commission established an Investigation Team following the release of the report to investigate the allegations, and released a report describing the Team’s findings on 21 April 2015;
* The African Union Commission Chairperson constituted an Assessment Team comprised of gender and sexual violence experts to advise all AU peace support operations in developing policy and response mechanisms;
* AMISOM organized a three-day workshop aimed at strengthening the Mission’s instruments and approaches towards preventing and addressing SEA;
* On 3 March 2015, a high-level panel was held on the topic of sexual violence committed by the security forces in Somalia, comprising of several high-level participants, including AMISOM **Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson (SRCC) Ambassador Maman Sidikou** and UN **Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Ambassador Nicholas Kay.** During the panel, the AMISOM Special Representative admitted to the commission of SEA by AMISOM personnel. The panel resulted in the first joint statement by the UN and the AU calling for increased measures to combat sexual violence in Somalia.[[58]](#footnote-58)
* In September 2015, AMISOM set up a sexual violence hotline through which survivors can report incidents of sexual violence allegedly committed by AMISOM personnel.

In our field research, we received no direct reports of SEA perpetrated by AMISOM. However, several key experts interviewed for this stydy mentioned that within the Aden Adde International Airport (AAIA) compound area in Mogadishu in 2019, there had been a case of SEA perpetrated by AMISOM forces against Somali women working at the Mama’s shop. Different items, including food and money, were allegedly exchanged, in return for sexual favours from two women who worked as cleaners, and who sold items at a shop within the AAIA. This was investigated by UNSOS, however the investigation was considered ‘unsubstantiated’, after having been reported to the Mission, and onwards for investigation by the Mission Special Investigation Unit (SIU). The investigation was spurred by an opinion piece, written by human rights colleagues at UNSOS, who wanted to protect the alleged victims, however when matter was presented to the SIU, no witnesses or complainers showed up for the hearings.

# Key moments of risk for SEA in Somalia and Somaliland

This section will outline the key moments of risk in Somalia’s humanitarian operations, where beneficiaries are at heightened risk of SEA.

#### Distribution of humanitarian aid.

Communities are in highly vulnerable to SEA during moments of aid distributions. In these, abuse is perpetrated by those who decide who gets access to aid, including gatekeepers, local administrations, NGOs and UN implementing partners. During distribution, these actors might make it clear to certain beneficiaries that if they want access to the aid being distributed (cash vouchers, non-food items and food aid) they must provide sexual favours, threatening them with exclusion from distribution lists if they do not comply. IDP women, highly vulnerable and dependent on aid, especially where they have families to feed, might feel they have no other choice but to comply.

“During food distribution is the most common times for sexual exploitation and abuse, and also when there is an NGO or a government authority that brings vouchers in the camp. In these cases, it is common for sexual exploitation to happen, because they are threatening if you do not have sex with them, then you cannot get your distribution.”

- Kismayo respondent

It is not always explicitly coercive. In Baidoa and Bosaso women in focus group discussions spoke about how women living in the camps compete for the attention of gatekeepers and implementing partners, to secure access to additional aid.

“The girls compete for the attention of humanitarian people. Is that a problem? My mother is religious, and I think they see her as rigid, and that's why she never gets selected (for inclusion in the distribution lists). All I know is that most pious women are not included in humanitarian distributions, like my mother whom I have overheard other women refer to as "rigid”. I do not know how far it goes but most of the women are endearing to persons in authority who are in charge of distribution of aid.”

- Bosaso respondent

#### During a humanitarian emergency

Rates of SEA spikes during moments of acute emergency, where vulnerability and desperation amongst beneficiary populations rise. SEA is also heightened in moments of fresh population movements, triggered by emergencies.

While the prevalence of SEA in Somaliland is lower than in Somalia, respondents reported that their highest levels of SEA were seen during the 2017 drought, when there were high levels of displacement, particularly from the eastern regions, Sool and Sanaag, whose populations were displaced to Somaliland’s two largest cities, Hargeisa and Burao. This was reportedly a moment when SEA took place often in the IDP settlements in these towns.

#### Beginning of a new humanitarian project or cycle

During the start of a new programme or project in a district, there are certain risks of SEA occurring. At the start of a new humanitarian project or cycle, expectations arise within communities around jobs and employment opportunities to be created. This is a moment when persons working for implementing partners can take advantage of their positions of power, to practice nepotism and corruption, alongside SEA, in exchanging jobs and benefits from the incoming resources.

This appears to happen frequently in Baidoa, in both IDP settlements and host communities.

“There were a women who moved out the camp almost five months ago, she was beneficiary who had relationship with an NGO worker he convinced her that he is going to look her for a job that she can make an income from it if she make him with sexual relationship, she used to sleep with him for a while and he was giving her money every time they sleep together but then he left her and stopped coming the settlement anymore. Everyone in the settlement discovered that she had sexual relation with an NGO worker they discriminate her and she moved out. “

–Baidoa respondent

# SEA measures available in Somalia

The remainder of this report will document what SEA services are available in Somalia, seeking to describe what is already being done, and where the key gaps are. This section will begin by discussing SEA prevention efforts, before moving on to describe reporting measures, measures aimed at ensuring accountability for SEA, and services available the provision of ‘victim assistance’ for survivors.

It appears that the degree to which SEA seen as a priority in Somalia waxes and wanes. Key experts interviewed for this assignment noted that the extent to which SEA is prioritised within humanitarian missions is largely dependent on personalities and the political will to act.

In 2017 a PSEA Taskforce was established, to put a firmer spotlight on the topic of SEA in Somalia. UNCHR and IOM laid the foundation for the Taskforce and recruited a PSEA Taskforce Chair. The aim was to bring together all UN stakeholders on this issue, with a PSEA focal point from each agency, being the point person on SEA for their respective agencies. A PSEA workplan for the Somalia Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) was drafted by the Taskforce, with this workplan still guiding the SEA response in Somalia. Some UN agencies operating in Somalia have also created their own internal working groups to prevent SEA, such as UNFPA and UNICEF, including colleagues from within each agency and tasked with conducting in-person PSEA trainings staff across the organisation.

# Prevention

Efforts to prevent SEA within humanitarian operations have scaled up since 2018. a rape case within the AAIA (the Mogadishu International Airport compound, where most UN agencies and AMISON are based), triggered a discussion around what the UN should be doing to prevent such cases.

Prevention work on SEA in Somalia has largely focused on trainings and awareness raising. These efforts have been directed at two levels; work at the organisational level, with mandatory SEA trainings required for humanitarian staff, and with this being extended to implementing partners and security forces in some cases; and some limited awareness raising work done at the communal level.

For UN agencies globally, it is now mandatory to ensure PSEA training as part of the on-boarding process for all new employees and consultants. As such, many humanitarian staff in Somalia have some level of knowledge and understanding on SEA. In some cases, a mandatory online training is followed up on a yearly basis with refresher trainings.

Different UN agencies have taken differing actions around SEA prevention. UNFPA was the first agency to appraise their own performance on SEA, and to create clear guidelines on how to prevent SEA within humanitarian operations in Somalia. UNICEF has implemented a training of trainers (ToT) model, in which colleagues teach their peers about SEA. Interviewees suggested that this model has been working well, especially in the head office in Mogadishu, and increasingly in UNICEF’s regional offices. IOM has trained PSEA ‘champions’ across different districts in Somalia, through a ToT, which include their own staff, as well as third-party contractors and research enumerators. The PSEA Taskforce has also conducted PSEA TOTs for implementing partners and NGOs across Somalia.

There are many well-resourced UN agencies within Somalia, with significant capacity to develop PSEA materials. Representatives from all agencies interviewed, noted that they have good materials for trainings, for use both in-person and virtually. However, a key barrier to rolling out these trainings, is the time and effort required to do this. A respondent explained that in some cases, PSEA trainings and activities are not integrated into workplans of projects, so the issue does not receive the time required to adequately deal with this.

SEA trainings have mostly taken place in Mogadishu, as well as in a few other urban centres outside of Mogadishu. This research revealed a clear need to ensure better geographic coverage of trainings, in order to ensure that these are available for actors working in geographically remote locations, with limited humanitarian access (for example, Xudur and Ceel Barde), as well as for those working in IDP camps, which are generally on the peri-urban outskirts of each district and more rural parts of the districts.

At the more local level, the UN has pushed to ensure that PSEA trainings are mandated and facilitated for all UN implementing partners across the country, ensuring that all their staff have awareness on this topic.

Yet other than this work with implementing partners, there remains a gap in terms of prevention work at the local level, both in terms of providing SEA trainings for local actors, as well as on ensuring other preventative and compliance measures at the local level. Actors such as gatekeepers, local administration personnel, and logistic sub-contractors have largely been left out of trainings, awareness raising and prevention programming – a gap that needs to be filled. As these ‘quasi-humanitarians’ are some of the main perpetrators of SEA, these are prevention gaps that need to be filled.

This research demonstrated a widespread lack of understanding about what SEA entails, from most community actors interviewed for this assessment, as well as a lack of understanding that certain behaviours are problematic – speaking to an urgent need to scale up community level awareness raising work.

“The girls compete for the attention of humanitarian people. Is that a problem?”

– Bosaso respondent

Despite efforts by the PSEA Taskforce to roll out a community-reporting mechanism, efforts in this regards have lagged. There were plans to pilot an inter-agency community-based response mechanism in Baidoa, with Baidoa selected due to the mission presence there. However, the status of this is unclear, due to lack of funding. In particular, the PSEA Taskforce Chair position was recently defunded, and as such, the energy required to take these efforts forward is lacking. In particular, as the co-chairs of the PSEA Taskforce conduct all these activities not as full time positions, but on top of their full time roles within their respective agencies.

Some of the work being conducted on SEA prevention within Somalia, stems from global initiatives from UN headquarters that all missions must adhere to. For example, UNICEF just conducted a global audit of all implementing partners across their various country missions, to ensure compliance with SEA standards, with Somalia being included in this. UNFPA have certain strategic indicators that they need to report against for SEA assessments for all country missions, integrated into their workplans.

There is also a lack of PSEA mainstreaming throughout other complaints mechanisms. For example, there is great interest from the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) team around better integrating questions around SEA into their regular data collection methods and complaints mechanisms within the camps. The CCCM cluster plays a role in coordinating aid and strengthening access to services in IDP settlements. Considered the ‘bedrock’ of humanitarian response in camp like settings, this cluster carries out service monitoring and mapping, capturing an overview of what partners are offering. It also engages with community governance structures in camps and tries to ensure dignified condition for populations living in camps. The CCCM cluster carries also out camp management level safety audits to assess protection risks, through a rigour method including KIIs and FGDs, to come up with recommendations on protection. SEA could be integrated into these as a separate topic for probing to understand how best to prevent and report it in the communities it happens most within: the IDP settlements across Somalia. These plans come up with recommendations on protection, and the results are be presented to protection partners with close follow up of action points. Secondly, there are camp management committee trainings for the camp committees, which has a SEA component. These could be looked at and revised based to ensure they are appropriate and include a segment on non-compliance.

In addition, PSEA could be better integrated into community awareness sessions led by the protection cluster. The protection cluster provides community awareness trainings that have components around SGBV and fraud, this provides an opportunity to integrate PSEA within this.

Lastly, the Ministry of Gender at national, regional and state-level, depending on the location, plays somewhat of a role in ensuring human rights and gender standards are adhered to. While the Ministry is not directly mandated with the distribution of aid, in theory it is mandated with ensuring gender mainstreaming across service delivery. This would mean handling any complaints related to SEA from a rights-perspective. The Ministry of Gender’s capacity to carry out this role varies across Somalia. In Kismayo it plays a role in ensuring the rights of women and children in aid delivery, whereas in other districts captured in this study the Ministry played more of a tokenistic role in practice. This was one of the reasons for slight better reporting structures for SEA in Kismayo; these are slightly more robust, compared to the rest of the locations in this study. There is more oversight by the Jubbaland Ministry of Women, Family Affairs and Human Rights into the process of documenting gender-based abuses and violence. They liaise with police stations in the camps to monitor abuses, and play more of a direct role in coordination with agencies, around protection within IDP settlements. Resulting from these efforts, there were less incidents of abuses by camp leaders, who assist with monitoring abuses and reporting these to the police.

# Reporting mechanisms

There are various reporting mechanisms in place, at the agency, inter-agency and community-levels. These take a variety of forms, including hotlines, complaints mechanisms and email addresses.

UN agencies and most large INGOs have established their own complaints and reporting mechanisms for the purposes of receiving complaints about abuse and misconduct. Many INGOs operate complaints hotlines and beneficiary feedback systems, using SMS or complaints desks within camp sites.[[59]](#footnote-59) Some INGOs have integrated complaints mechanisms within each project, at the beginning of each project they will inform off beneficiaries of how they can file complaints surrounding that project. When received, complaints are not generally publicised, so it is unclear the extent to which these mechanisms have been used by community members to make complaints about SEA.

There are different hotlines used in different areas; in Baidoa, complaints through hotlines were seen to be working well, in particular the different complaints hotline set up by IMC SWDC, DRC and SAMA, were mentioned by respondents in this study as used by the community. In other districts in this study, Beletweyne, Kismayo and Mogadishu, hotlines were not mentioned. Hotlines were however, described by on-the-ground actors as being the best way to enable communities to report on SEA, as they are anonymous, and as such can shield survivors from the stigma and other possible repercussions of reporting on SEA.

The UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) has a Conduct and Discipline Team (CDT) that is able to receive complaints of misconduct and abuse, through their hotline and email address. Individuals may also engage directly with the UN Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).[[60]](#footnote-60) The UNSOS CDT and the OIOS deal with allegations against “all United Nations personnel, including consultants and contractual workers”. This does not include AMIOSM personnel. The material distributed by the UNSOS CDT say that it can be contacted for abuses by UN staff “and related personnel”. Details about the complaints made to the CDT do not appear to be publicised.[[61]](#footnote-61) OIOS audits of UNSOS are publicised, but individual allegations made against staff are not.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Within agencies, all UN agencies and INGOs have internal PSEA reporting lines. There is also an inter-agency feedback mechanism in place, through an email address, designed to ensure peer accountability and tracking, within the agencies working in Somalia. This effort has been led by the PSEA Taskforce, and responsibility for checking this email and follow-up around claims remains the purview of the Taskforce.

A humanitarian worker interviewed expressed the view that the focus on policies and procedures, discussions around the meaning of SEA, has meant a lagging in efforts on reporting mechanisms – especially at the community level, where survivors lack knowledge about SEA reporting mechanisms.

At the state-level, there are handful of PSEA focal points. These focal points are responsible for dealing with SEA complaints, and receive the phone calls directly. However only in Baidoa were community-level respondents interviewed in this study familiar who the focal point was in their district. Humanitarians interviewed mentioned that the reliance on email is something to move away from, to increase quicker and reliable communication around SEA cases, in particular using more accessible systems of reporting.

There are some complaints mechanisms that are not specific to SEA, which are important to note, as these can receive cases of SEA too. Within IDP camps, the CCCM are responsible for an inter-agency complaints mechanism, which documents feedback and complaints lodged by IDP communities across Somalia. Using this system, beneficiaries can report any issues they are facing with services, as well as any complaints against made humanitarian workers. Complaints are made through three primary modalities: a hotline system (which has been the most popular), a static desk within the camp, and community mobilisers. While all public data on SGBV is not disaggregated by type of violence, there have been a few SEA cases that have come through this system. Some of these cases are being reported as SEA cases, but are in fact, on closer inspection SGBV, demonstrating the need for community awareness around the definitions and rights of beneficiaries.

The protection cluster have also created feedback platforms in three locations in Somalia. This feedback platform involves the deployment of monitors who go to the field to ask questions around beneficiary’s satisfaction with humanitarian services, and about any complaints they might have. The PSEA Taskforce has been working with the enumerators on helping them to understand more about SEA, and in getting them to collect this type of data. Protection monitoring documents “violence in assistance”, which would include SEA. This information is publicly available online.[[63]](#footnote-63)

There have been few civil society-led SEA reporting mechanisms. In 2018, in response to the absence of secure, community-based mechanisms for submitting complaints about violations committed by security forces in IDP camps in Mogadishu, the INGO, Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) and the Somali organisation, Witness Somalia, set up a pilot Independent Complaints Mechanism (ICM) in two camps in Mogadishu. The ICM receives complaints from the community through community-based paralegals, calls, messages sent to phone numbers distributed around the camp, and regular meetings with camp elders and leaders, including female leaders, who advise on both specific challenges faced by persons who have approached them to have their concerns raised to the ICM, and general challenges faced by their community. Notably, the statistics collected by the ICM do not distinguish between SEA and other types of sexual violence. The largest number of these cases are related to sexual violence committed against women by men within their families or who are known to them; while the second largest category is sexual violence committed by armed men in uniform. None of the cases collected to date relate to UN personnel or humanitarian actors,[[64]](#footnote-64) although presumably this mechanism would be able to pick up on these cases.

The lack of an independent civil society run reporting structure is another reasons for the underreporting of SEA.

## Obstacles to reporting

While SEA happens, few people feel comfortable reporting this through the available channels. Most interviewees reported being familiar with reporting channels, yet not feeling comfortable reporting on SEA. The reasons for this will be explored here:

“The people in this district and the camps as a whole have no place to lodge their grievances, and their grievances are not addressed.”

–Mogadishu

**Lack of confidentiality:** Most respondents listed a lack of confidentiality as being a key reason for why they were afraid to report SEA cases to existing reporting structures. Many felt that if confidentiality could not be assured, they would be at-risk in reporting SEA, particularly when reporting on superiors or persons of power.

**Stigma against survivors:** There is significant stigma levelled against victims of sexual violence in Somalia. As a result of this stigma, few survivors speak out. This same pertains to SEA cases. At its most extreme, women might be forced to leave their communities if they report on SEA.

“They cannot live in the community. It is shameful for them. Most of them leave because they call them "sluts" and the children are called bastards.”

- Bosaso respondent

**Fear of retribution:** Many persons would not feel comfortable reporting SEA due to a fear of retaliation from perpetrators. People are reluctant to publicly acknowledge instances of SEA, as doing so risks retribution – or possibly the discontinuation of their aid benefits. Reporting of SEA cases take place within the same power structures in which abuse happens, and as such beneficiaries do not feel safe reporting these cases. Beneficiaries interviewed explained that they would feel threatened by camp leaders if they reported SEA, particularly as some of them are closely aligned with the security forces. Survivors and witnesses fear for themselves and their families.

“Because of speaking out against this [SEA] is too dangerous. If I tell this or name the perpetrator, the problem may spread to the whole family. So to avoid more harm, we keep silent. Because of speaking out would put us, and our families in great danger!”

– Bosaso respondent

“I would not report it to anyone because of security issues in this area. Lack of confidentiality comes along with security issues, by reporting such source to anyone. I would not feel comfortable reporting such source due to the confidentiality.”

- Mogadishu respondent

Sexual exploitation is existing, but people do not report because the IDPs are scared of the gatekeepers.

* *Baidoa* respondent

**Lack of security:** With many SEA victims being from minority clans, many survivors would not have protection, if they came out with allegations against perpetrators.

**Fear of immunity and inaction.** A culture of impunity exists in Somalia. Interviews revealed a strong belief that inaction would likely be the outcome of any reporting and investigation. There have been few cases of SEA which have been properly investigated, adjudicated, and where survivors have been assisted in a rights-based manner – and hence few have witnessed this happening in a satisfactory way. This is compounded by the fact that there is often limited humanitarian capacity to respond to SEA reports in a meaningful way.

Most interviewees believe that a culture of impunity pervades the humanitarian sector. So too, it is felt that there is largescale impunity around SGBV and rape. These leave survivors feeling powerless in reporting allegations.

“Most of the refugees and internally displaced communities do not make complaints about SEA by an aid worker and armed groups for many reasons including; fear of consequences, embarrassment, belief that nothing will change and so on.”

- Beletweyne

**Lack of trust in reporting mechanisms.** There is a lack of trust in the reporting mechanism that do exist. There is no culture of reporting SEA in Somalia, and a high level of mistrust towards the humanitarian aid system. One factor that contributes to this, is that where actions are taken, these are seldom fed back to communities, exacerbating this lack of trust. According to a humanitarian expert interviewed for this assignment:

“Humanitarians have failed in their ability to follow up with beneficiaries, resulting in a lack of trust between them and humanitarian sector. There is a centralisation of senior management, in Mogadishu and Nairobi so removed from PSEA incidents that are occurring at the local level. There are issues related to access, and incidents tend to be held on to (at the local level) and not dispersed to higher levels when they are reported. There is a complete disconnect between senior management and individuals working in districts, information does not end up at the central level.”

**Cost / benefit**: The high-risks and concerns around safety, are weighed up against whether survivors feel action would be taken against perpetrators, and whether they feel they would receive any assistance or benefit that makes this risk worthwhile. The current reality in Somalia, is that when SEA cases are reported, this puts a spotlight on survivors, drawing significant attention to them, with limited recourse for the survivor, a threat of retribution, and few consequences for perpetrators. This is summarised by a respondent in Bosaso:

“Humanitarian worker often come to us and interview like this. But unfortunately all of our stories end up at the hand of our perpetrators. Subsequently, they revenge us. So, I do not want to say more about that for security reasons.”

– Bosaso respondent

# Accountability in SEA cases

In practice, most SEA cases go unreported. Where these have been reported, few cases have been addressed in a way that has led to true accountability. Importantly, there have been very few known investigations into SEA cases by the humanitarian sector in Somalia.

**Justice in SEA cases**

At the community level, SEA cases that are reported tend to be treated in the same way as other SGBV cases are; resolved through the customary justice system and occasionally, with police involvement.

As discussed above, *xeer*, does not prioritise the interests of survivors, as it is based on compensation (which usually does not even reach a survivor or her family). Alternatively, if a perpetrator can be identified, a survivor might be forced to marry her abuser, especially if she is young and unmarried.

“If the girl can identify her rapist, there is a high chance that the elders from the rapist clan will force the man to marry the girl he raped. The clan usually will pay for the crime, with the traditional penalty of 40 sheep.”

- Bosaso respondent

Making things worse is that women and children are seen as minors in the customary justice system. This makes it difficult for them to speak up against abuse they are facing, as they need the backing of a male. But in the case of SEA, very few women have men who can vouch for them on this issue.

“Children and women survivors are seen as minors, Discriminated and not socially accepted in the community gathering. They are cursed by the community, and some were chased away by camp leaders.”

- Mogadishu respondent

Few cases make it to the formal court system. Once there, the legislative framework governing sexual violence remains still incomplete, with the Somalia Sexual Offences Bill still not passed. Passing this Bill would at least ensure that the component acts that make up SEA are properly criminalised in Somalia.

“The Somali customary law which is very lenient to perpetrators of sex crimes and the limited government capacity to fully implement the Puntland Sexual Offenses Act.”

– Bosaso respondent

**Interference into cases**

SGBV and SEA cases are generally viewed by communities as local level disputes – with their resolution not involving UN agencies or INGOs.

“There was sexual assault happening in this camp, but the information hidden and interfere by elders.”

- Mogadishu respondent

**Termination of employment**

Interviewees did mention a few SEA cases which had been reported, in which the employment contracts of the perpetrator were terminated. This happened in Bosaso and Kismayo.

**“**There was a man who was fired from his position at an NGO after he was accused of blocking aid access to a mother who refused to accept his offer of marriage, in exchange for 6 months of humanitarian assistance. He was fired after neighbours reported the issue to the charity group. No legal charges were brought against this man for attempted sexual exploitation.”

– Bosaso respondent

“An NGO worker was once terminated from his job duties when the agency has known of his dealings in the camp where he exploits women in the camps through sexual exploitation in return food vouchers and other.”

- Kismayo respondent

“I heard a case of child sexual exploitation caused by a staff of an NGO which was reported to UN Officers and ended through work termination but don’t know whether that person was blacklisted.”

– Baidoa respondent

“As clan elders we do not accept people who work for humanitarian organisations perpetrate sexual assault or have sexual relationship with beneficiary. But if they do that, we directly report it the organisation they work for. And if they did not deal with it we solve it our way which as norms and culture states (marrying the beneficiary at any cost).”

– Clan elder, Baidoa

**Investigations**

Proper investigation of SEA cases is a critical gap area, where there is an evident need for increased focus and attention. It appears that few actions have been taken to ensure SEA training capacity around the country.

“There is sexual exploitation and abuse by authorities. But actually, no investigation and follow-up by anyone.”

– Baidoa respondent

There have been some efforts by locally based actors in Marka, in Lower Shabelle, focussing on investigation issues, and conducting trainings for the local administration on how to investigate SEA cases.

Where investigations into SEA cases have taken place, these have tended to involve the clan elders and the police – rather than any humanitarian actors. For example, in Bosaso, there was a case where a women became pregnant after being sexually exploited by a humanitarian worker, who she slept with, in exchange for a cash voucher. This case was investigated by the police and the perpetrator was arrested. However, this perpetrator was later released without charges.

In Baidoa, an investigation was conducted into SEA perpetrated by an NGO worker against a young, displaced woman in an IDP camp. The police and clan elders assisted in mediating this case, which resulted in compensation towards the women’s family.

Investigating and establishing facts in SEA cases is extremely difficult, in large part due to the stigma levelled against survivors, and communities’ fear of speaking out about cases, which makes people reluctant to talk, and to support investigations in any way. In a case documented by a large programme in southern Somalia, the family members of a girl who had been sexually exploited, simply stopped responding to calls from the organization attempting to support the investigative process. Similarly, in a case in northern Somalia, a survivor’s family begged an agency who were trying to investigate SEA by AMISOM forces to leave them alone, as this was drawing negative attention to them from members in the community.

Insecurity and a lack of access to many locations and camps by humanitarian staff and investigators, amplifies the challenges in investigating, meaning that many parts of the country will be entirely reliant on local investigative capacity. In most parts of Somalia, there is not even enough access for humanitarian organisations to have proper oversight over these processes. This underscores the importance of developing and improving local investigative capacity.

As such, it seems that there is little proper accountability for SEA cases in Somalia. Most beneficiaries are aware that if they report, they might endanger themselves and their families; be forced to marry a perpetrator, yet that a perpetrator would likely not be brought to justice or be held accountable in any way. In order to ensure that SEA is properly tackled in Somalia, it is critical that accountability processes are supported and improved.

# Victim assistance

Where cases of SEA are identified, at the same time as an accountability process is taking place, ‘victim assistance’ is supposed to be provided to a survivor, ensuring that her needs related to the abuse are met. As a victim of SEA is understood to have been wronged by the humanitarian sector, it is the responsibility of humanitarian organisations to ensure that these needs are met.

‘Victim assistance’ for SEA cases are tied into the GBV referral pathways in Somalia and Somaliland, meaning that when SEA survivors require services, they are referred to local SGBV service providers, who should meet their needs. As such, the availability of ‘victim assistance’, depends on the availability of quality SGBV services in a given location. Unfortunately, what is available is oftentimes insufficient.

Humanitarian actors interviewed for this study lamented the disconnect between what is available on paper in terms of SGBV services, and on-the-ground SGBV services and referral pathways. In practice, they said, SGBV responses are always limited. This is particularly the case in remote and conflict-affected geographic locations. Resource constraints, access constraints and a lack of coordination around services all further hamper the quality of available SGBV services. Many of those services that are available are of a poor quality. These problems are compounded by a lack of knowledge by communities around what actually exists.

The gaps in SGBV services mentioned most frequently by respondents are:

* There is a shortage of adequate medical care for survivors.
* There are problems around coordination between SGBV and medical services providers.
* There is a shortage of female doctors in hospitals and clinics, who SGBV survivors might feel more comfortable dealing with.
* There is a shortage of emergency equipment in many areas, to assist survivors who are unable to walk to clinics.
* Psychosocial support services are unavailable in almost all locations, where it is available it is poor quality.
* There is a need for survivor protection options, or safe places / safe houses for survivors to stay following abuse.
* There are insufficient options for relocation where it has become untenable for survivors remaining in their current locations.
* There is a need for more ‘one-stop GBV centres’ in camps. One stop-centres provide the full range of services that SGBV survivors require, including police and prosecution services, counsellors, psychological support and social workers.
* These is a lack of legal assistance services available for survivors.
* There is a need for further training for law enforcement actors working at the local level on SEA issues.
* There is also a need for increased training on confidentiality and survivor centred GBV response, for all actors involved in SGBV and SEA response.

Interviewees spoke disparagingly about the quality of services available for survivors.

“There are too many gaps. Currently there are no services at all. “

– Beletweyne respondent

“If someone is being abused or harassed, they have no access to services such as health or justice for girls who have been raped.”

– Mogadishu respondent

Most SEA identified survivors live in IDP camps on the outskirts of districts, where there tend to be the greatest service gaps. Most hospitals and other services are located in the centres of towns, which are too far for most IDPs to travel to. For example, in Mogadishu legal services are available in the central Abdiaziz district, yet there are none on the outskirts in Daynille or Kahda, meaning that IDPs are not able to access legal services.

Urban areas and administrative capitals are generally prioritised for services, leaving rural parts of regions and outskirts of districts, unserved with GBV services. In Bay, many respondents said that no GBV services were available outside of Baidoa, and districts such as Dinsor, Bardale, Buur and Qansadhere, were not able to access these due to insecurity, meaning that survivors are unable to access any kind of services.

The interlinkages between SEA and SGBV responses also need to be improved. There is an evident need to better link up SEA survivors with GBV referral pathways and with the services that do exist on the ground. Currently there appears to be only a cursory knowledge amongst SGBV providers of what SEA is, what to do in the case of SEA allegations, and how responses should differ from ordinary SGBV responses. The capacity of SGBV responders in dealing with SEA cases needs to be improved.

This research also revealed a gap between Camp Management and Camp Coordination (CCCM) and SEA/SGBV in Somalia. CCCM actors are not sufficiently familiar with what SGBV services are available in the camps; leaving a disconnect between the two. There is a need to integrate GBV referral pathways, including SEA referral pathways, into CCCM efforts, as it is clear that camps are where most cases occur.

Of the limited services available to survivors, a few were mentioned by respondents as being particularly useful to survivors.

1. **One stop centre in Baidoa**: Many respondents in Baidoa mentioned that the one stop centre run by Somali Women’s Development Centre (SWDC) was a useful resource for survivors. It was said to be well-resourced and informative, they can be easily contacted, and they are well known in the community. This facility provides the basic services required by survivors.
2. **Hotline, referral services and cash disbursement for survivors:** Similarly, in Baidoa, respondents mentioned that after calling the hotline, survivors were referred to services provided by Intersos for medical and psychosocial support, in addition to cash disbursements and both food and non-food items, which last two months.

As such, this research made it clear that in many parts of Somalia, survivor support systems are lacking, meaning there will be gaps in the victim response that can be provided to survivors of SEA.

# Conclusion

This research has made is clear that the risk of SEA is extremely high across Somalia, with millions of beneficiaries of humanitarian aid, vulnerable to abuse from a wide array of humanitarian and ‘quasi humanitarian actors’.

Where incidents of SEA do occur, the ways in which these are responded are problematic, with limited reporting, often problematic outcomes for cases that are reported, and inadequate victim response services. It is critical that SEA measures are improved and expanded upon across Somalia. To this end, the following programmatic recommendations are made.

# Recommendations

* **Utilise PSEA focal points more:** All organisations should designate PSEA focal points, in all locations where they have field offices. PSEA focal points are an access point for field locations to prevention and support mechanisms that exist and to the PSEA Taskforce.
* **Linkages with GBV actors:** Improved linkages are required between the PSEA Taskforce and GBV actors. There is a need to strengthen these links on a number of levels, including:
  + Improving referral pathways;
  + Building knowledge amongst SEA actors on GBV referrals;
  + Building understanding amongst GBV actors on how to deal with SEA cases;
  + Getting more GBV focal points into the PSEA Taskforce;
  + Establishing formal channels or periodic meetings between the two groupings.
* **SEA ‘toolkit’ for GBV actors:** An SEA toolkit is required for SGBV actors, explaining in simple terms the relevant definitions, how SEA is a specific type of SGBV, and how reporting and response may differ from other SGBV. Clear guidance should be provided for GBV actors on how best they should respond to these cases.
* **Mainstream PSEA in prevention and reporting mechanisms established by CCCM and protection clusters**. There is great interest from the CCCM team around better integrating questions around SEA into their regular data collection methods, camp safety audits, and complaints mechanisms within the camps, and having a conversation with the PSEA Taskforce to updated their camp management committee trainings to better reflect SEA realities on-the-ground. PSEA also be integrated into community awareness sessions led by the protection cluster.
* **PSEA training gaps:** While UN agencies, their implementing partners, and NGOs and INGOs have generally been trained on SEA, many other key actors have not received SEA training. Most crucially, no gatekeepers or local level security forces (police) have been trained on SEA. This is a significant gap, considering their importance in providing aid across the country.

There is also a need to ensure better geographic coverage of SEA trainings, ensuring that these are available for actors working in geographically remote locations, with limited humanitarian access (for example, Xudur, Ceel Barde), as well as for those working in IDP camps, which are generally on the outskirts and more rural parts of the districts.

* **National NGOs:** While larger NGOs have improved around SEA, some smaller national NGOs/CSOs have made less progress in this regards and should be supported in doing so. The staff of some smaller local organisations have not been trained on SEA. There is also a need to ensure that all smaller NGOs have SEA policies in place.
* **Better coordination with CCCM, and mainstreaming SEA within camp response:** There is a need for PSEA actors to further engage with CCCM actors, including through collecting disaggregated data and conducting SEA training for CCCM actors.
* **Increased engagement with government on SEA:** There is a need to better engage the government on SEA, particularly at the local government level. This should, in part, be aimed at ensuring better local government oversight into aid operations, and at ensuring that local government staff are held accountable when they are involved in abuse.
* **Sexual Offences Bill:** There is a need to push forward the Sexual Offense Bill, together with civil society, in order that acts of SEA are properly criminalised.
* **Strengthen coordination with Ministries of Gender:** State levelMinistries of Gender across the country should be strengthened, with capacity support from the PSEA Taskforce, in order that they can play an oversight role in SEA cases across the country.
* **Bring in civil society to better understand how reporting mechanisms could be strengthened:** Consult with civil society to better understanding how SEA could be integrated within civil society reporting channels.
* **Address gaps in victim response for SEA survivors:** There is a need to ensure improved SGBV services, in all sites across the country, in order to fill the response gaps described above. These include:
* Ensuring adequate medical care for survivors and improving coordination between SGBV and medical services providers.
* Ensuring the availability of psychosocial support services.
* Ensuring the availability of survivor protection options, including safe places / safe houses, and relocation options.
* Increased ‘one-stop GBV centres’ in camps, providing the full range of services that SGBV survivors require, including police and prosecution services, counsellors, psychological support and social workers.
* Improved legal assistance services.
* Training on confidentiality and survivor-centred GBV response, for all actors involved in SGBV and SEA.
* **Workplans:** Within humanitarian organisations, PSEA trainings and activities should be integrated into project workplans, so that they receive the time and energy required to adequately deal with this properly.
* **Investigations:** There is a need for improved capacity on SEA investigations around the country, in order to ensure that cases are dealt with properly. Given the lack of access for humanitarian actors, in most cases investigating SEA will fall to local actors, and as such, there is a need to ensure that this capacity is developed across the country.

# Annex 1. Respondents per location

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Data collection** | **Location** | **Total** |
| **Focus group discussions (12 in each location)** | | |
| 1 group of older women (over 35 years) | Settlement setting (2) | 2 |
| 1 group of younger women (16-25 years) | 2 |
| 1 group of elders /community leaders | 2 |
| 1 group of younger men (16-25 years) |  |
| 1 group of older women (over 35 years) | Host community (2) | 2 |
| 1 group of younger women (16-25 years) | 2 |
| 1 group of elders / community leaders | 2 |
| 1 group of younger men (16-25 years) |  |
| **Key informant interviews** | | |
| Settlement manager (gatekeeper and CCCM actor) | Settlement setting (2) | 1 |
| GBV facility staff | 1 or 2 |
| Child protection actor | 1 or 2 |
| Leader of women’s group |  |
| Representatives of humanitarian organisations | 4 |
| Teacher | 1 |
| Medical clinic staff | 1 |
| Security personnel | 1 |
| District administration | Host community setting (2) | 1 or 2 |
| GBV facility staff | 1 or 2 |
| Child protection actor | 1 or 2 |
| Leader of women’s group | 1 |
| Representatives of humanitarian organisations | 4 |
| Teacher | 1 |
| Medical clinic staff | 1 |
| Minority clan elder | 1 |
| Military personnel (AMISOM, SNA) | 1 |

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