



INTRODUCTION

The engagement with Government actors on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) has been constrained by a lack of a common approach between the United Nations, aid actors and government partners. Personnel deployed in implementing humanitarian response or development programmes, have power and resources, which can exacerbate the risks of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. This has been recognized as a key challenge and potential risk factor in many contexts. Following the 10th Ebola Response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where numerous SEA allegations emerged amidst joint leadership by the Government and the UN, the [2020 IASC Senior Technical Mission Report](#), recommended establishing a global framework for cooperation with government on PSEA at a system-wide level.

In June 2022, UNICEF launched an interagency Technical Working Group (TWG), under the auspices of the Office of the Special Coordinator, comprised of representatives from OSC SEA, IASC, DCO, OHCHR, OVRA, DMSPC, WHO, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNDP, IOM, WFP, UN WOMEN, Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (as observer) and led the spearheading of the government framework for PSEA in response to this recommendation.

A mapping conducted by the TWG revealed a wide range of existing obligations and commitments of the UN and Member States pertaining to the prevention of violence against women and children and specifically to PSEA, providing a strong foundation for the development of the Joint UN-Government Framework. The mapping also showed that majority of UN agencies, funds and programmes have included a legal obligation on PSEA within their bilateral project agreements with governments, leading to a fragmented approach among UN entities.

This framework aims to establish a shared PSEA approach between a government and the UN through strengthening system-wide cooperation on PSEA, streamlining government engagement among various UN entities, and bolstering the capacity of government partners.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The government framework fosters system-wide coherence, bringing together existing legal obligations and voluntary commitments made by Member States under an overarching framework on PSEA.

The UN shall promote a whole-of government approach to PSEA that considers the need to engage all relevant line ministries. The framework will lay the foundation for improved cooperation,

balancing PSEA compliance with capacity development and technical support.

A survivor/victim-centred approach guides UN SEA prevention and response and the UN shall place the human rights, interests and needs of all victims at the center of our efforts and adhere to the principles of 'do no harm,' confidentiality, safety and non-discrimination when responding to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

MODEL PSEA CLAUSE ENDORSED FOR INCLUSION IN THE UNSDCF

The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) promotes a system-wide approach and streamlines government engagement among UN entities. In May 2024, the High-Level Steering Group on PSEA endorsed the inclusion of a model PSEA clause in the UNSDCF in Chapter 2 'UN Development System Support to the 2030 Agenda' of the framework document and in Annex 5 'Programme Management and Accountability in the Cooperation Framework'.

The model PSEA clause represents an aspirational standard, encompassing a clear prohibition of SEA, reaffirming the shared commitments to PSEA of the UN and governments,

Model PSEA Clause

"Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) is a key priority for the UNCT entities, with a special focus on prioritizing victims' rights and creating an environment in which sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) do not occur. SEA is unacceptable behavior and is prohibited for UN personnel and UN implementing partners. The UNCT entities will therefore pursue all appropriate means to protect against, prevent and respond to SEA, and will require a similar commitment from its partners.

In delivering on the obligations articulated in the present Cooperation Framework, the UNCT and the government of [insert name] affirm their commitment to preventing and responding to reports of SEA in connection with their personnel involved in common/joint projects. It is understood that this would entail the need to: (i) adhere to common values on PSEA, (ii) take preventative measures against SEA, (iii) investigate allegations, and (iv) take appropriate corrective action when incidents occur, including providing support to victims in accordance with a victim-centred approach."

and outlining key areas of cooperation on PSEA. Its inclusion in the UNSDCF is particularly significant, as the framework is co-signed by both the Government and the UN Country Team, underscoring their joint commitment to these principles.

FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION

The model PSEA clause will be operationalized through a National PSEA Review providing the basis for engagement with Governments on PSEA. Developed around a set of six domains, the National PSEA Review will facilitate the identification and prioritization of technical support needs and serve as a baseline to review progress against core PSEA standards.

Priority needs for capacity strengthening identified through the National PSEA Review will be integrated in the UNSDCF Joint Work Plan and Country Programme Documents of UN entities. This will strengthen collective action on PSEA through coordinated capacity-building initiatives for the Government.

The TWG has conducted a series of consultations from May-July 2024 with a wide range of stakeholder groups on the technical aspects of the Framework. A technical guidance note outlining key elements and processes of the Framework is being finalized and will be shared to support the roll out of the Framework.

 For more information, please visit the [IASC PSEA Website](#)