

Minimum Operating Standards

PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE BY OWN PERSONNEL

Revision August 2024

To provide protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) by own personnel the compliance with a set of Minimum Operating Standards for PSEA (MOS- PSEA) is required. These minimum standards apply to IASC member entities, and are applicable according to organizational structure, at headquarters, regional, and country level unless specified. The MOS-PSEA are codified in the agreed global guidance as referenced below the MOS table.

		PSEA Minimum Operating Standard
1	Policy Development, Oversight and Implementation	<p>1.1 PSEA policies and other guidance that set out standards of conduct both at the entity level and in all duty stations are in place in accessible formats.</p> <p>1.2 The PSEA policy delineates mandatory responsibilities and obligations and is made available in the relevant language(s) of the duty station.</p> <p>1.3 The policy/standards of conduct have been conveyed to all staff, related personnel, and management (at HQ, regional, and field level).</p> <p>1.4 An action plan for PSEA is developed, monitored, and updated annually.</p> <p>1.5 PSEA focal points have clear and formalised responsibility for PSEA articulated in their terms of reference, annual workplans and performance appraisal or similar.</p>
2	Leadership commitment	<p>2.1 Overall responsibility and accountability for the progressive implementation of PSEA at the corporate level rests with the most senior individual within the office.</p> <p>2.2 The head of the organisation should request periodic reports from the designated department/focal point on implementation of the PSEA action plan identifying matters that may need senior engagement.</p> <p>2.3 Senior leadership/HQs communicate clear expectations regarding the standards of conduct and reporting mechanisms.</p> <p>2.4 Leaders are responsible to create and maintain a working environment which promotes a respectful and safe culture, where individuals can speak out against misconduct.</p>

3	Victim/survivor-centered approach and victim assistance	<p>3.1 A victim/survivor-centered approach is articulated within policies and procedures.</p> <p>3.2 The organisation has a policy/ procedure on victim assistance including offering multi-sectoral assistance in line with the victim/survivor's needs or wishes.</p> <p>3.3 The most senior official within the office and staff with delegated roles have updated information on referral pathways for victim/survivor assistance.</p> <p>3.4 Feedback about the status of investigations or other proceedings is provided to victims/survivors in a safe and timely manner. Communications are offered in a way preferred by the victim/survivor, taking into account personal circumstances.</p>
4	Effective recruitment and performance management	<p>4.1 The organisation has systems in place for reference checking and vetting for sexual misconduct for all categories of personnel.</p> <p>4.2 All candidates are required to sign a code of conduct.</p> <p>4.3 Supervision and performance appraisals include adherence to standards of conduct that include PSEA.</p> <p>4.4 Performance appraisals for Senior Management include the responsibility to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual misconduct and promotes the application of the IASC Six Core Principles or code of conduct.</p>
5	Prevention, Risk Management and Training	<p>5.1 SEA risk is incorporated into the organisational risk management strategy.</p> <p>5.2 An SEA risk assessment and mitigation measures are resourced and incorporated into projects and programmes.</p> <p>5.3 Mandatory training on PSEA is completed by all staff and related personnel on the standards of conduct, how to file complaints and the implications of breaching these standards.</p> <p>5.4 Staff and related personnel are aware of their obligation to report SEA and are aware of the policy for protection from retaliation for reporting misconduct.</p> <p>5.5 Training is provided to PSEA focal points on their role in referring complaints and referring victims/survivors for assistance in line with a victim/survivor centered approach.</p> <p>5.6 The organisation takes steps towards achieving gender parity in high-risk locations.</p>

6	Cooperative arrangements and partner support	<p>6.1 Entering cooperative arrangements is conditioned on the inclusion of the PSEA policy in the written general contract conditions.</p> <p>6.2 Agencies will seek written agreement in cooperative arrangements with entities or individuals that they are aware of and will abide by the standards of the PSEA policy.</p> <p>6.3 General contract conditions require that failure by the second party to report and respond to allegations of SEA constitute grounds for terminating the cooperative arrangement.</p>
7	Community engagement, feedback, and referral	<p>7.1 Safe, confidential, and accessible community feedback mechanisms are established, designed in consultation with communities, in particular women and girls, persons with disabilities and people affected by the crisis, and adapted to the specific locations.</p> <p>7.2 Safe, accessible, child-sensitive mechanisms are in place for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse, particularly in high-risk areas.</p> <p>7.3 PSEA commitments, including rights of aid recipients, are communicated to affected communities using their preferred language and communication channels.</p> <p>7.4 Community feedback mechanisms are coordinated with an inter-agency referral system that can safely manage SEA complaints and can facilitate timely action.</p> <p>7.5 The effectiveness of complaint mechanisms, including the organisation's handling of complaints, is monitored and reviewed, including by the concerned community and management, on an annual basis.</p>
8	Investigations and management response	<p>8.1 Standard operating procedures for SEA allegations, which include sharing information with the victim/ survivor at critical points during the investigation, are issued and used to guide investigation practice.</p> <p>8.2 Investigations are conducted by experienced and qualified professionals who are trained on sexual misconduct investigations and a victim/survivor-centered approach to investigations. Children should only be interviewed by investigators trained in working with child survivors.</p> <p>8.3 Substantiated complaints result in disciplinary action or contractual consequences.</p> <p>8.4 Mechanisms are in place to track the status of investigations and actions taken are reported publicly.</p> <p>8.5 Corrective action in response to SEA complaints is taken, including preventative measures, and identification of and reduction of risks in programme or project delivery.</p>

The MOS-PSEA are based on and informed by the following:

1. Secretary-General's Bulletin (ST/SGB/2003/13) Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
2. IASC Principals Statement on PSEA and Sexual Harassment, 2024
3. UN Secretary-General's report (A/71/818) Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: a new approach, 2017.
4. IASC Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, revised 2019
5. Secretary-General's Bulletin (ST/SGB/2017/2/Rev.1) Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations
6. UN Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse involving Implementing Partners, 2018
7. UN Protocol for the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2019
8. IASC Strategy for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment 2022-2026
9. IASC Definition and Principles of a Victim and Survivor Centered Approach
10. IASC Framework Collective Accountability to Affected People (AAP), 2023
11. IASC Inter-Agency Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Referral Procedures Guidance Note, 2024
12. Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Global Protection Cluster 2012
13. IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, 2024
14. Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming, 2019