



نعم لتلقي الخدمات والمساعدات
الإنسانية بكرامة، بلا إساءة أو استغلال

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

State of Palestine
2025

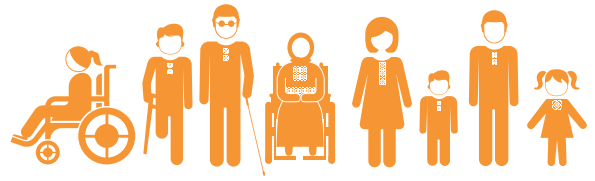


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CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability
CoC	Code of Conduct
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
NGO	None Government Organization
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SoPs	Standard Operating Procedures
ToRs	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
CLI	Community Based Initiatives
FP	Focal Points

1.INTRODUCTION



1.2. IMPETUS

This toolkit is a compilation of information collected from various documents providing information on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). It is brought to you to introduce Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and its application in a simple style. Its purpose is to make information about PSEA accessible to everyone regardless of their background and area of expertise.

It is inspired by and based on the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that is grounded reference to global instruments like the Secretary General's Bulletin , Inter Agency Standing Committee and the Palestine PSEA Network that works on the PSEA Strategy for Palestine aiming at ensuring the protection of the affected communities from sexual exploitation and abuse; which is exasperated during humanitarian crisis.

This toolkit targets all local and international organizations including those who do not have a PSEA policy in place aiming at spreading the knowledge on PSEA in Palestine.

It was prepared taking into consideration all questions that might come in mind when someone wants to discover PSEA and its application in the context of Palestine.

1.3. GUIDE TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

While SEA is a form of GBV, PSEA refers in this context to the duties of aid workers to fulfill IASC's commitments towards affected communities and the Do no Harm principle. In this sense the PSEA Network in Palestine is a collective accountability mechanism towards zero tolerance against inaction. Survivor centered practices and Safeguarding principles must always be maintained. In the course of this toolkit, you will be introduced to PSEA. It starts with **definitions of key terms** and ensures presenting **key information** referencing to original documents in addition to an explanation in simpler words when needed.

What you will read next is a journey in the world of PSEA. For any further details on how to apply any of what you will be reading next, or to receive the PSEA Standard Operating Procedures for Palestine, you may communicate with the PSEA Coordination team in Palestine.

The contact information is provided in the Credits section in the last page.

2. BASICS



2.1. DEFINING THE BASICS

As we are talking about PSEA, we have to first introduce the key terms.

Therefore, SEA happens when an aid worker commits a sexual misconduct against a member of the affected community. But who are these?



Sexual Exploitation (SE) means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of

vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

In other words, SE occurs when an aid worker or related personnel abuses or attempts to abuse his/ her position of power to request or accept sexual favors in exchange of humanitarian assistance, services, favors, or privileges.

Sexual Abuse (SA) means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

In other words, SA occurs when an aid worker or related personnel abuses or attempts to abuse his/ her position of power to force, request, or accept sexual favors from a beneficiary.

Sexual activity (also referred to as sexual favor) is any activity with a sexual nature. It can come in many forms including but not limited to a text message, a touch, a kiss, and a sexual intercourse.

Therefore, SEA happens when an aid worker commits a sexual misconduct against a member of the affected community. But who are these?



An aid worker is a person involved in providing services to affected populations. That person can be a paid staff, volunteer, contractor, incentive worker, or anyone performing a task on behalf of any humanitarian agency or non-governmental organization (NGO), regardless of the type or duration of their contract. Suppliers, volunteers, and other personnel operating under humanitarian operations are considered aid workers while holding contractual relations.

Affected community is the group of people in need of humanitarian assistance and intervention.

There is an imbalance of **power** between an aid worker and a member of the affected community. Aid Workers have power over the affected community because they have access and control of resources. When this power is used negatively, it is called abuse of power and can result in acts of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).

The affected community is divided into two main groups: children and adults. How do we decide to which group a person belongs?



A child is any person aged under 18, regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally.

Every beneficiary can be a victim or survivor of SEA. So how do we know if a person is a victim or survivor?

A survivor of SEA is a person who experienced any form of SEA. The word victim is used interchangeably with the word “survivor”. It is not in any way meant to imply a lack of strength, resilience, or capacity to survive.

Therefore, **PSEA** is a set of actions taken with the purpose of addressing all forms of SEA and other harms in liaison with humanitarian operations.

You might also encounter the term **sexual harassment**. It is any unwelcome sexual advance, comment, expressed or implied sexual demand, or any other communication or conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal or physical by any person to another individual within the scope of work. It may cause offense or humiliation to another, create a hostile work environment, or it can be made a condition of employment.

In the context of Humanitarian operations, SH is the classification of **claims occurring** between two aid workers. These claims are usually dealt through the internal mechanism of HR in each organization.

Communities, however, often have a different use for the word ‘harassment’ تحرش , which is a more culturally acceptable way to refer to SEA.



OUR FOCUS IN THIS TOOLKIT IS SEA.

To make it more comprehensible, next you'll read scenarios of SEA to explain further the definitions but first, remember, the two parties in any SEA act are an aid worker (who is the perpetrator) and a member of the affected community (who is the survivor).

SEA does not have to always be initiated by the aid worker.

Considering the power imbalance, an aid worker has the responsibility to refuse any sexual favor offered by a member of the affected communities.

For example: A community member approaches you. She lost her home, all her belongings and has no source of income to support herself and her children. You empathize with her, she appears to be helpless, vulnerable, and desperate for any money or aid. She offers sexual favors in return for aid or money.

The exchange of sexual acts between an aid worker and a community member in return for any services, aid, or money are strictly prohibited, no matter the gravity of the situation and under any circumstances.

For recent and contextualized scenarios from Palestine, please refer to [Annex 1. Case Studies from Palestine](#).

2.2. CORE PRINCIPLES

If you are now wondering what other key information you should know on SEA, here are the official PSEA Core Principles from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and their simplification. These principles are essential to ensure:

- » Organizations are able to legally address cases of SEA
- » Staff are aware of now their expected code of conduct
- » Communities know their rights, and are protected.

A. Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.

In other words, SEA is unacceptable, and a worker can lose the job if s/he commits any acts of it.

B. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense.

In other words, sexual activity with any person younger than 18 is prohibited regardless whether the child is or is not a beneficiary

C. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.

In other words, exchange of anything for sex is prohibited including paying for people in prostitution, even if prostitution is legal in the country and regardless whether the person is or is not a beneficiary.

D. Any sexual relationship between those providing humanitarian assistance and protection and a person benefitting from such humanitarian assistance and protection that involves improper use of rank or position is prohibited. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.

In other words, sexual relationships with beneficiaries is prohibited.

Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.

In other words, if there is any suspicion or concern, reporting of SEA is mandatory to a designated Focal Point who will address the matters related to consent.

E. Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes.

In other words, it is your responsibility to know the PSEA System in Palestine, who is your designated Focal Point(s) and integrate PSEA within your organization, programs and staff trainings.

the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

Note that these are not only applied during your working hours but also outside duty station and during holiday times.

Any aid worker needs to abide by these 24 hours 7 days a week regardless of their position and contract type including volunteers, part-timers, full-timers, contractors, and any other person related to the humanitarian work.



The humanitarian community in Palestine takes all incidents of SEA very seriously and has zero tolerance towards inaction. Therefore, when an aid worker commits any form of SEA, they will face corrective actions which include but are not limited to a termination of their employment. Programs and operations must include risk assessments, mitigation plans and corrective actions and remedies.

2.3. KEY MESSAGES TO THE COMMUNITY

Community members have the right to access information, and the right to share their feedback and complaints with us. The below messages can help them gain knowledge, raise their awareness, and shift their attitudes towards reporting SEA.

Action: Every aid worker should be well informed of these messages, and to disseminate them amongst target communities; especially amongst adolescents, women, divorced and widowed women, children and people with disabilities, children who lost their parents, the elderly and other vulnerable and minority groups.

Key messages:

1. Every community member **has the right to receive humanitarian aid in dignity and respect**. Please do not **tolerate** any **misconduct or abuse** while receiving humanitarian services.
2. Humanitarian aid is **free** and should be given without **exchange** of any type of favor.
3. All aid workers, UN and NGO staff have a duty to treat you and all community members with **dignity and respect**; which means: refraining from ridicule, harassment, sexual attempts, or requesting any service in return for humanitarian assistance. If it doesn't feel right, it isn't right.
4. If you or someone you know experiences any form of misconduct by any aid worker or related personnel, it is **not your fault, and you have the right to report** it directly to a PSEA Focal Point or by calling our partner Sawa's free and confidential helpline: **164**.
5. Reporting SEA incidents and concerns **should not affect** your access to humanitarian services.
6. SEA reports are handled safely & **confidentially**. Your name or information will not be shared without your consent.
7. Survivors of SEA **have the right** to access safety, protection, psychosocial, medical, and legal support, and any other relevant services. The Sanad Network can provide you these services. To request support and report a complaint, you may contact our partner **Sawa Organisation** through their free and confidential helpline: **164**.

2.4. PSEA in Palestine

It is very important to talk about PSEA in the State of Palestine, noting the increased SEA risks which are directly linked to increased vulnerability and humanitarian aid dependency.

- » The humanitarian crisis; especially in Gaza; exasperates SEA risks. The overall coercive environment in Palestine including excessive use of force, demolitions, evictions, settlement expansion, and settler-related violence, all combined drive insecurity, deprivation of basic human rights and humanitarian needs among Palestinians.
- » The Poverty rate in Palestine has surged to 58.4 per cent since 7 October.
- » 89% of the population of Gaza has been displaced under forced evacuation orders, lack of access to sufficient shelter, food, life-saving medical services, clean water, education, and livelihoods. With almost 2 million Palestinians completely aid dependent.

All these increase vulnerabilities and when vulnerability increases, risks of SEA increase.

Through all this, the Sanad Network in Palestine joined forces to protect communities from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. What is the **Sanad PSEA NETWORK**?



The PSEA Network in Palestine is called Shabakat Sanad. It is an interagency technical body implementing the PSEA country programme and is a primary forum for PSEA coordination between Palestinian and international organizations and agencies. It includes UN, INGOs, national NGOs and civil society organizations. Through its collective action, network members are working towards:

- » Establishing access to communities to safe and confidential reporting that leads to assistance and investigations.
- » Communicating and applying PSEA standards and commitments amongst all members.
- » Monitoring, evaluating, and supporting the implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs).
- » Through Sanad platforms, implementing Risk Communications and Community Engagement on PSEA amongst partners and the affected communities.
- » Developing and updating SOPs and referral pathways.

The Sanad Network is available to support you to access all needed information and resources for the development, implementation, and follow-up of PSEA in your agency/organization.

3. PREVENTION OF SEA

3.1. CODE OF CONDUCT AND PSEA POLICY



To introduce PSEA and ensure its application, each organization should have a Code of Conduct with a section or article on PSEA or preferably a PSEA policy in place.

What are these and how are they different?

A CODE OF CONDUCT is a set of standards of behavior that staff of an organization are obliged to adhere to.

See [Annex 2](#) for a more holistic example of a **Code of Conduct** which you may adjust and apply as part of your organization's mandatory clauses.



I, _____, working for _____ office in _____

am signing this Code of Conduct to confirm that I understand and commit to uphold the highest standards of professional and personal conduct. I understand that the Code of Conduct applies to me throughout the period that I am employed by or representing a humanitarian or development organization, including when I am off duty, or away from my duty station or on leave. I understand that this Code of Conduct complements, but does not replace, any other policies, rules and regulations of the organization that I am working for.

Maintaining high standards of personal and professional conduct Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

Reporting on incidents that may breach the Code of Conduct Repercussions for breach of the Code of Conduct

For further information, please consult your organization's PSEA Focal Point: [insert relevant contact details]

By signing this Code of Conduct, I confirm that I have understood it and have had it explained to me and that I hereby agree to uphold its principles.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Organization: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Human Resources Department

Name: _____ Title: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Whereas a **PSEA POLICY** is a document that describes appropriate standards of conduct, other preventive measures, reporting, monitoring, investigation and corrective measures. Here is a sample outline (For full text communicate with the PSEA Network):



Policy title: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Policy objective:

Targeted Audience:

Effective Date:

Mandatory Revision Date:

1. Policy statement:

2. Scope of application:

3. Definitions:

4. Commitment to PSEA:

5. Six core principles:

6. PSEA framework:

6.1. Prevention:

6.1.1. Vetting

6.1.2. Training

6.2. Response:

6.2.1. Reporting

6.2.2. Investigation

6.2.2.1. Referral to National Authorities

6.2.3. Victim assistance

6.3. Cooperative arrangements

It is important to know that these are two separate documents. In summary, the PSEA policy aims at introducing SEA and explaining everything related to it including prevention and action. Whereas the CoC is an illustrative guide for staff on dos and don'ts in their professional and personal lives that can include a clause on PSEA and therefore mentioning basic key information on PSEA like the core principles.

It is always recommended to have in place a PSEA policy as it is more detailed and specific.

3.2. RECRUITMENT AND HR FOLLOW-UP

Steps of prevention start earlier than the understanding and signing of the policy or CoC. PSEA needs to be applied in recruitment. This starts by recruiting staff following the HR Checklist.

Below is the outline of “**SAFER RECRUITMENT ‘CHECK LIST’ AND GUIDANCE FOR PREVENTING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**” created by the PSEA Network. This outline portrays a brief of the different levels on which key considerations need to be considered by the Human Resources department when recruiting new staff.

For a comprehensive list, refer to [Annex 3. HR Tool- Recruitment Checklist](#).



Prior to a job announcement; development of TORs/Job description

Job announcement and application stage

Interview stage Reference checks Induction process

Performance management

Annex A: Sample PSEA Clause for Job Advertisements

Annex B: Sample Interview Questions on PSEA

Annex C: Sample Reference Check Questions on PSEA

Annex D: Sample Database of Disciplinary Measures

Annex E: Sample disclosure of information related to breach of Code of Conduct for personnel employment contracts.

Important Note: After recruitment, every staff should be periodically evaluated on work objectives and their abidance by the core principles. This will help in the detection of SEA when it occurs.

Also, a key preventive action is the presence of an active PSEA focal point. Who is this person? This is the outline of the **TERMS OF REFERENCES OF THE PSEA FOCAL POINT** found in [Annex 4](#).

Short Example

Within his/her Organization, the PSEA Focal Point shall actively promote protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), with key responsibilities including:

- 1. Prevention**
- 2. Response**
- 3. Engagement with and support to local populations**
- 4. Management and Coordination**
- 5. Values and principles**

ORGANIZATIONAL RISK-ASSESSMENT:

Conducting an organizational risk assessment is crucial to identifying and mitigating potential vulnerabilities within an organization. It ensures that all aspects of the organization, from policies to personnel, are aligned with core PSEA standards. These assessments help ensure the organization of capacity building needs, equipping your organization, protecting it and the staff from backlash.

In [Annex 5](#) you may find **Organizational Risk Assessment Guidance for Implementing Partners** which outlines key standards developed by the IASC, covering the following:

The Risk Assessment Guidance includes:

- 1. Organizational Policy**
- 2. Organizational Management**
- 3. Human Resources System**
- 4. Mandatory Training**
- 5. Reporting**
- 6. Assistance and Referrals**
- 7. Investigations**
- 8. Corrective Action**

3.3. Equipping your staff and organization with everything they need to know

The next step of prevention is sensitizing all aid workers to PSEA. It is always recommended to host mandatory and regular trainings for staff. These trainings should include all key information including:

- » Definitions of SEA
- » Core Principles
- » Key Messages to be shared with the community
- » Impact of SEA
- » Intake from survivor
- » Guiding Principles
- » Reporting mechanism

Training Support

For support in developing your organization's mandatory training plan, and to request a trainer, contact the Local PSEA Coordinator [:optconfidential@un.org](mailto:optconfidential@un.org).

Please provide the below information along with your training needs:

1. Focal Points Name.
2. Contact information including phone and email address.
3. Location where the training is to take place.
4. Number of trainees.

For a quick introduction on PSEA:

A short foundational online course, please refer to the below:

Arabic course: <https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=18168>

English course: <https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=7380>

3.4. How can communities address and prevent SEA

Another way to reduce SEA is by informing members of the affected community about PSEA. In Palestine, local partners find it most effective when they invite community members to participate in awareness raising sessions; held inside the community itself. Separate groups are held for men and women including adolescent girls, where community members are given the safe space to engage in discussion, to express their concerns, fears, and the solutions and practices they can adopt o collectively reduce SEA.

The recommended topics and structure of awareness raising sessions include:

a) Awareness sessions:

- » What is SEA?
- » Who can commit SEA?
- » What are your rights?
- » How and who to report to?
- » Right of accessing the services

b) Distribution of visual materials like flyers and posters that include the reporting channels of the organization.

c) Information sharing online.

For more information and additional PSEA training materials tailored to the emergency context in West Bank and Gaza, please contact the PSEA coordinator, found in the Credit section in the last page of this toolkit.

3.5. PSEA Risk Assessment and Mitigation – Project Planning

Prevention is central to humanitarian intervention. In every phase of the project cycle, starting from proposal writing to planning to implementation to monitoring and reporting, PSEA should be considered at all phases to ensure safety for all members of the affected community.

Programme and project managers are responsible for the **identification, prevention, and mitigation of SEA risks across all activities and sectors.**

For a basic list, [Annex 6 PSEA Risk Mitigation Template](#) includes an example of how organizations can integrate PSEA prevention measures in their planned activities and interventions.

What are SEA risks in Palestine?

To identify the most recent and applicable risks to the affected community, Sanad Network partners working across Palestine in **WASH, Health, Shelter, and Food distribution** participated in a recent assessment in 2023. The assessment consolidates clear guidance and safeguarding practices organizations need to plan for and implement at all phases of their project cycle and interventions. You may request the **Risk Mitigation Report**, from the Palestine PSEA Coordination Team.

- » The two examples below provide the logical identification of risks and mitigation measures, tailored to the partner's specific intervention.

The potential risk identified: Limited safeguarding and PSEA capacity among subcontractors, who may be unaware of the zero-tolerance policy.

Recommended mitigation measures:

- » Capacity building on PSEA and safeguarding measures for staff and related personnel.
- » Inclusion of policies in contracts with subcontractors prohibiting misconduct and SEA, including preventive and corrective measures.
- » Conducting awareness sessions for subcontractors on PSEA and safeguarding before project implementation.

Another identified risk was **the lack of supervision**, where staff or subcontractors are accessing households unsupervised.

Identified mitigation measures include:

- » Developing safety protocols for staff and subcontractors during household visits, such as maintaining a record of visits, limiting visit duration, ensuring visits are conducted in pairs including both genders.
- » Conducting pre-visit risk assessments to identify potential vulnerabilities to be addressed. Enforcing recruitment practices that include hiring of female staff to be present during project implementation and monitoring activities.

Example 2: Distribution of sanitation kits in Gaza

If the kits are too heavy, vulnerable beneficiaries such as women, children, the elderly, may be unable to carry them to their tents or shelters. This could lead them to rely on others for assistance, increasing their vulnerability.

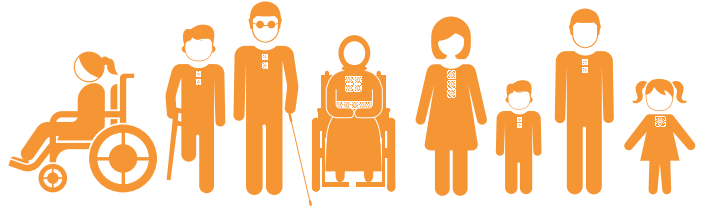
Mitigation measures include:

- » Ensuring the kits aren't too heavy and manageable to carry for all beneficiaries.
- » Strategically locating distribution points to minimize the distance beneficiaries need to transport the kits.
- » Providing support in a manner that does not create dependencies on others which could lead to exploitation.

To learn more about the potential SEA risks in Palestine and to access additional SEA risk assessment reports across all clusters, please contact the PSEA coordinator.

4. EFFECTS OF SEA

With all preventive measures, SEA still occurs. To ensure we can support the victim, we need to be in-tuned to their feelings and the possible effects on them; which vary from one individual to the other. Here are a few of the effects on the victims, their families, and the community at large.



4.1. ON THE VICTIM

VISIBLE HARM

Some forms of visible harm can be but are not limited to physical scars, injuries, and pain. Other forms can affect the sexual life of the survivor and show in the form of pregnancy, infertility, and sexually transmitted diseases. Visible harm can also be on the social level and can take the form of reputational damage, job loss, social rejection, and stigmatization.

INVISIBLE HARM

It is always important to notice that the effects of SEA are not always seen and can take the form of psychological and emotional harm like:

1. Feeling of shame, guilt, self-blame, isolation, rejection, fear, uncertainty, distress, anger, or mistrust in others.
2. Psychological Disorders (e.i. depression and anxiety) or Traits of psychological disorders.

It is important for you to know that these effects are not the same for every victim even for the same misconduct. Every person reacts and is impacted differently and therefore there is no standard effect of SEA on a victim. Many factors can play a role in these including but not limited to age, gender, maturity level, social environment, support, and history of abuse.

These effects can make alterations in the victim's behavior. The victim could show behaviors like: **hypersensitivity, impulsiveness, abuse, dependency, and passiveness.**

All these effects could influence the responsiveness of the victim to the support and could present themselves in the form of:

1. Reluctance to accept support
2. Difficulty to express oneself, to concentrate, and remember the incident
3. Provision of false information
4. Change in the event's details.

4.2. ON OTHERS

The effects are not limited to the victim only. Other effects can be on the:

A. Family and Peers of the victim. These can be but are not limited to stigmatization, rejection by the community, and feelings of guilt and shame.

B. Community to which the victim belongs to. These can be but are not limited to loss of trust in the organization, feelings of shame, embarrassment, and anger, and drain on resources.

C. Organization. These can be through loss of trust by the community, damage to reputation, security risk, loss of funding, and reduction in services. The failure to address SEA will undermine an institution's commitment to its core values, including respect, non-discrimination, safety, etc.

D. Staff and team members who witness SEA or are aware of unaddressed incidents may experience frustration, helplessness, and distress. leading to decreased job satisfaction, and reduced trust in organizational leadership and policies. Unaddressed SEA can create a toxic work environment, impacting team motivation and performance.

Again, these effects can vary from one context to another.

5. REPORTING SEA

To prevent SEA and ensure a safe environment for all parties, any sexual misconduct needs to be reported. The reporting mechanisms could be different from one organization to another.

Make sure that you familiarize yourself with the reporting mechanisms that are available for your organization. This can be done by reaching out to senior management staff who can provide you with contact of the PSEA focal point or other reporting channels (i.e. email, hotline number, or HQ complaint and feedback mechanisms). It is the obligation of each organization to make known to all their staff who is the designated focal point for PSEA.

You will be provided next with more information regarding reporting and its process but first, it is important to consider barriers that stop aid workers and members of the affected community from reporting.

In Palestine, all aid workers and communities are highly encouraged to promote the **Sawa free and confidential helpline 164** to report any concern of SEA. Under the current interagency protocol, no individual would be breaching internal procedures if she/ he wishes to report directly to the helpline. The helpline Accepts anonymous reports.



Organizations are highly encouraged to include Sawa's free helpline in their signage, visibility and communication materials, including packaging of humanitarian assistance being distributed. This provides community members with access to remote psychological support, and the option report safeguarding and PSEA incidents remotely by phone.

You may use the below text in your public communication materials:



Contact us to access Protection Services

To speak with one of Sawa's social workers for mental health support through their toll-free and confidential helpline: **164**.

Community members can call Sawa to:

- » Speak with a trained counselor for mental health support.
- » Report complaints of misconduct, including sexual harassment or exploitation by humanitarian or health workers, aid delivery service providers, or volunteers.
- » Refer victims of sexual abuse to protection services as needed.

Guidance Notes

To ensure Sawa is prepared to respond to increased calls during SMS and communication campaigns, please take the following actions prior to disseminating Sawa's 164 number in your communication materials.

1. Contact Sawa:

Inform Sawa of any upcoming campaigns at least one week in advance.

Please direct all of the above information and any questions to Sawa's helpline officer at: helpline@sawa.ps.

2. Needed information:

Provide Sawa with information or a Frequently asked Questions (FAQ) sheet, providing clear and precise information about your service. This prepares Sawa operators to respond to caller's questions.

3. For SMS campaigns

specifically, please provide Sawa with details of the text messages, including its content, the day, time, target location, and number of messages you plan to disseminate.

5.1. BARRIERS TO REPORTING

When the complainant is a PSEA victim/survivor some of the factors are:

- a. Social Barriers like pressure from a leader in the community or stigmatization.
- b. Fears of retaliation or of losing services
- c. Safety concerns
- d. Issues related to the complaint mechanism (i.e. lack of trust, lack of awareness, accessibility concerns, lack of follow-up)
- e. Lack of awareness of what can constitute SEA.

When the complainant is not the victim, some of the factors are:

- a. Doubts about the occurrence of the event
- b. Fear of retaliation
- c. Lack on SEA (i.e. rights).

Therefore, a few RECOMMENDATIONS to reduce barriers to reporting are:

- » Presence of active PSEA Focal Point and Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms
- » Constant trainings and refreshers of aid workers on SEA
- » Balance of genders in teams
- » Sensitization of the affected community on PSEA.

Reporting mechanisms and communication channels can be different from one organization to another.

Some of the possible forms of Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms are: PSEA Focal Points, call centers, SMS platforms, agency-specific or coordinated hotlines, cluster referrals, community focal points, suggestion boxes, women's centers, child-friendly spaces, reception centers, community centers, gender- based violence referral mechanisms, and other safe spaces. Complaints may be submitted online or through paper, voice message, text message or in-person.

What will be shared next is general information on reporting and some others that will guide you to access information about your organization's reporting structure.

5.2. IN-TAKE OF A COMPLAINT

Considering you work with an organization; you might be approached by a member of the affected community willing to share an experience involving sexual misconduct they went through or knew about. So, what do you need to ensure when they do?

You should always:

- » Treat the person requesting to talk to you with dignity and respect.
- » Talk to the person in a safe room to ensure privacy.
- » Explain to the person that you must report the SEA allegation, but you can keep their identity confidential if they do not wish to share it.
- » Believe the person telling you about a SEA allegation.

What is the information you need to collect from the complainant?

- » Always start by listening to the complainant
- » What you need are answers to:
 - » What is the event that the complainant wants to talk about?
 - » Where did it happen?
 - » When did it happen?
 - » Who is the perpetrator?
- » Refrain from asking “why it happened?” as this puts blame on the victim.

After they share the incident:

- » Take an informed consent to share names or details that could reveal the identity of the survivor or complainant (Check 5.3. for details regarding consent)
- » Ask the complainant how they would prefer to receive further communications about the case
- » Ensure that information you gather is well documented.
- » Inform the complainant that they can report to the police when the case constitutes a criminal matter.

The complainant can be the survivor or someone else who knew about the event.

If the complainant is the survivor:

- » Explain that what happened is not their fault
- » Inform them about their right to receive services
- » Report to the PSEA focal point.

Case Intake: A standard **SEA Intake Form** is provided in **Annex 7**. The form can be filled in directly by the survivor, or the PSEA Focal Point, on behalf of the survivor. All aid workers are obliged to report any concerns or suspicions of such incidents. If the survivor/victim does not consent to share their name, or if consent cannot be obtained, the incident must still be reported. It can be done **anonymously** and without sharing any identifiable information.

Collected information must be referred according to internal procedures. Claims and complaints collected through field workers and feedback channels **must be reported to the focal point within the coming 24 hours** and to the **PSEA Coordinator in the next 48 hours**. Focal Points must be mindful of data sharing protocols.



If you are the PSEA focal point or a staff authorized to receive and follow-up on SEA complaints:

- » Run an immediate assessment of their health, safety, psychosocial and other immediate needs
- » Mitigate all risks to ensure safety of the survivor
- » Refer the survivor to the required services
- » Refrain from sharing any information regarding the SEA allegation (perpetrator, organization of perpetrator...) when referring the case to the services.

If the complainant is not the survivor:

- » Do not look to the survivor for an interview.
- » Do not look for the survivor to offer them assistance and services.
- » Report to the PSEA focal point.



When the complainant, not the survivor, is an aid worker, we call this person a whistle-blower. Every aid worker is always encouraged to report concerns or suspicions of misconduct by colleagues in good faith and in compliance with internal agency policies. They will always be offered protection from retaliation.

When the survivor is a child ensure that:

- » They are protected from all types of harm.
- » The child is referred to a professional with the required training and skills in dealing with child survivors of sexual violence.
- » An informed consent and an informed assent are taken (For additional guidance, check 5.3.).

Note: Always check with the complainant about their preference of the interviewee's gender.

5.3. INFORMED CONSENT AND INFORMED ASSENT

Always take consent and/or assent of the complainant before sharing any information about them. If there is no consent, the report is sent anonymously.



The informed consent is the voluntary agreement of an individual that is aged 18 years and older based upon a clear appreciation and understanding of the facts and implications of an action, with no threat, coercion, or false promises.

Whereas the informed assent is the agreement used with children and people living with certain disabilities. The assent alone is not enough to take actions related to children. It should be obtained with the permission of a trusted adult.

This table prepared by the IRC explains its requirements:

Age Group	Child	Caregiver	If no caregiver or not in child's best interest
0-5	-	Written Informed Consent	Other trusted adult's or case worker's informed consent
6-11	Oral Informed Assent	Written Informed Consent	Other trusted adult's or case worker's informed consent
12-14	Written Informed Assent	Written Informed Consent	Other trusted adult's or child's informed assent. Sufficient level of maturity (of the child) can take due weight.
15-18	Written Informed Consent	Obtain informed consent with child's permission	Child's informed consent and sufficient level of maturity take due weight.

5.4. KEY PRINCIPLES



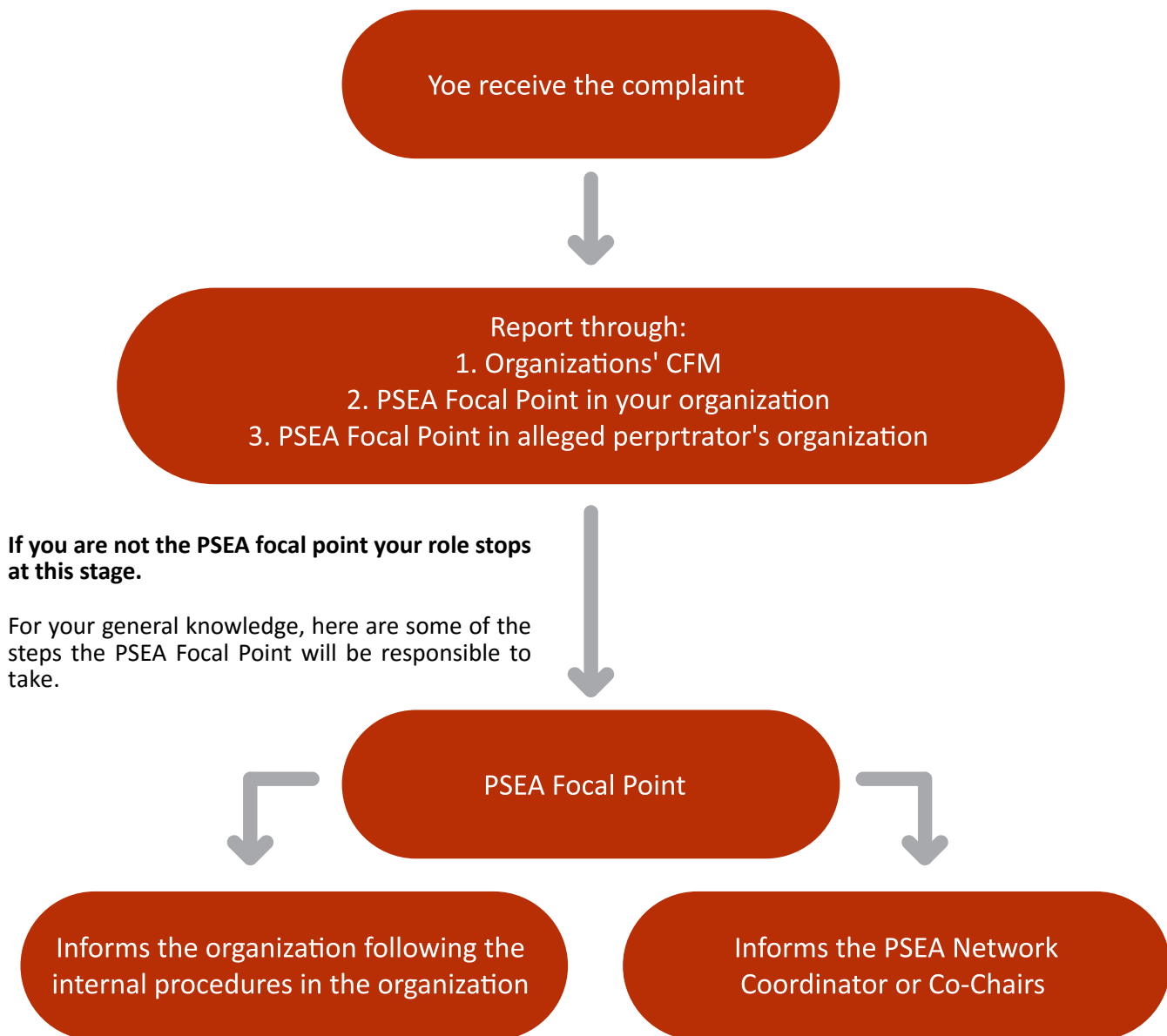
Other considerations to be followed when dealing with a complaint and when referring to services are the

PSEA KEY PRINCIPLES:

1. **Survivor-Centered Approach** The rights, needs, and wishes of the survivor are prioritized. The survivor has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, choose the course of action in dealing with SEA, and receive comprehensive information to help them make their own decision.
2. **Safety and Wellbeing:** The safety of the survivor and/or complainant will always be a primary consideration during reporting, investigation, and thereafter. It is essential to conduct a risk assessment for each survivor, and to develop a safety/protection plan if necessary, based on individualized needs to prevent any additional harm.
3. **Confidentiality:** Actors will always respect the confidentiality of complainants, survivors, and other relevant parties. All SEA-related information will be kept confidential, identities will be protected, and the personal information of survivors shall be collected and shared only with the informed consent of the person concerned. Disclosure of information will be on a strict need-to-know basis.
4. **Mandatory Reporting:** While reporting SEA is mandatory, this obligation may in practice conflict with the principles of confidentiality and the right of the survivor to choose how they would like to address the incident. Agencies and organizations will need to internally reconcile this potential conflict, balancing both the right of the survivor and the safety of the individual and broader community.
5. **Accessibility:** Multiple channels should be made for complainants/survivors and other persons to raise allegations and concerns regarding potential SEA. These channels must be accessible by all people, including those who are at increased risk. This can include options for survivors to speak to someone of their preferred gender and in their preferred language. Outreach efforts which clearly communicate the range of channels that exist to receive complaints in confidential ways should be communicated widely.
6. **Transparency:** Members of the affected community will be educated on how to raise complaints and report allegations, may offer input to improve how such complaints and allegations may be raised and handled, and will be kept informed and receive feedback on the outcome on a complaint or allegation raised, once available. In addition, the community will be consulted on regular basis to build trust and ensure that existing mechanisms are effective and appropriate.
7. **Accountability:** Awareness will be systematically raised among community members about their rights, including their rights to make and withdraw allegations. Complainants/survivors will be kept informed about next steps related to their case, including investigation and referral to GBV services, and will be provided with information on any obligation for service providers to report to the police, to enable them to make informed decisions.
8. **Do No Harm:** Ensuring that all actions and interventions designed to support the survivor do not expose them to further harm.
9. **Non-discrimination:** All actors are bound to treat all complaints without discrimination, based on age, economic or social situation, race, status, disability, nationality, belief or political opinion, gender, sexual orientation or reputation. Special support should be provided for children and people with disability to ensure their ability to safely report.
10. **Best Interest of the Child:** The child has the right to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. This includes the right for the child survivor to be protected while PSEA procedures are applied from any internal or external form of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation.

How does a person know who to report to?

Various factors affect the **REPORTING** procedures. So, after you collect all information, who are you supposed to report to?



It is important for the PSEA Focal Point to be updated on the follow-up and action needed regarding SEA complaints. For further details on reporting, you can check the SOP.

6. SURVIVOR ASSISTANCE

As mentioned earlier, every survivor has the right to receive assistance prior to the investigation and regardless of its outcome. These services need to be provided and followed-up by specialized staff at the organization of the alleged perpetrator:



1. **Safety and protection:** Development of a rapid safety or protection plan to address the risk of retaliation, possible breaches of confidentiality or other further violence against the victim.
2. **Medical care:** Provision of necessary treatment for conditions directly arising from sexual exploitation and abuse including but not limited to the Clinical Management of Rape.
3. **Psychosocial support:** Provision of basic psychosocial support, including but not limited to psychological first aid and psychosocial counselling.
4. **Education, livelihood support and basic material assistance:** Provision of food, clothing, shelter, school re-integration, and livelihood support. In cases involving children, support and assistance should be provided for children's families or care-givers when determined to be in the best interests of the child.
5. **Legal services:** Referral to providers of legal assistance if desired by the victim.
6. **Support for children born as a result of sexual exploitation and abuse:** Facilitate the pursuit of paternity and child support claims for victims, where desired by the victim and legally applicable, in cooperation with the relevant State.
7. **Service Referral:** In case your organization is unable to provide one or more of these services, referral will can be facilitated through the PSEA Network Coordinator. For more information contact: optconfidential@un.org. To refer the victim/survivor to the needed services (i.e. Health, GBV, Shelter, WASH, PWSN, Livelihood, Child Protection, Education), specialized staff can use the Interagency Referral Form found in ([Annex 8](#)).
8. **Case Intake:** A standard SEA Intake Form is provided in [Annex 7](#). The from can be filled in directly by the survivor, or the PSEA Focal Point, on behalf of the survivor. All aid workers are obliged to report any concerns or suspicions of such incidents. If the survivor\victim does not consent to share their name, or if consent cannot be obtained, the incident must still be reported. It can be done anonymously and without sharing any identifiable information.

7. INVESTIGATION



You are not responsible to check if the incident happened or not. Investigations should be exclusively done by dedicated, trained, and experienced personnel.

When you need to conduct any step regarding investigations, communicate with the PSEA Network for support.

To conduct investigations, the organization should consider:

- » Prioritizing the safety of the survivor, alleged perpetrator, witnesses, and other related persons before, during, and after the investigation
- » Having an investigation Standard of Procedures or scheme
- » Conducting the investigation only by a team of trained investigators or engage with external investigators
- » That all UN implementing partners are obliged to report any allegations of SEA to the UN entity/ entities
- » Cases that constitute a criminal matter should be reported to local authorities.

Knowing that there is a gap among many local humanitarian actors, the Palestine PSEA Network, is working to establish a pool of independent investigators at the national level.

For further information, you can check the CHS Alliance's website: www.chsalliance.org.

Credits

“This toolkit was originally produced by ABAAD - Resource Center for Gender Equality and CARE International in Lebanon, with the financial support of Lebanon Humanitarian Fund and in coordination with the PSEA Network.

The toolkit has been adapted to the state of Palestine, with support from the PSEA Coordination team.”

Contact Information

Send an e-mail to reach the PSEA Coordination team: optconfidential@un.org.

You may contact us to:

- » Report a SEA case directly to the UN.
- » Request support in the planning of your organization’s PSEA Training.
- » Identify certified PSEA trainers to conduct PSEA trainings.
- » Request materials and tools for community communication and engagement.
- » Any other business, clarifications, and support.

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To request communication materials: [Contact yqutob@unicef.org](mailto:yqutob@unicef.org).

8. Annexes and Tools

[Annex 1. Case Studies from Palestine](#)

[Annex 2. Code of Conduct](#)

[Annex 3. HR Tool- Recruitment Checklist](#)

[Annex 4. Generic Terms of Reference for PSEA Focal Point](#)

[Annex 5. Organizational Assessment Guidance for Implementing Partners](#)

[Annex 6. PSEA Risk Mitigation Checklist- Template](#)

[Annex 7. PSEA Complaint Intake Form](#)

[Annex 8. Inter-Agency Service Referral Form for Survivor Assistance](#)