

*Operationalization of the UN Protocol on Allegations of
Sexual Exploitation and Abuse involving Implementing Partners*

**Working with UNFPA: Key information for UNFPA Implementing Partners on completing the
Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Assessment**

I. Introduction

UNFPA, along with other United Nations entities are working together with its partners to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and reduce the risks of SEA in programme implementation.

One way to do this is to assess the capacity of our partners to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and strengthen the joint capacity of United Nations entities and implementing partners to realize commitments to PSEA. UNFPA is thus assessing our implementing partners using a common assessment developed in a consultative process between United Nations entities and our partners. It consists of a set of eight core standards assessing organizational policies and procedures to prevent and respond to SEA.

The assessment is intended to give UNFPA and its partners a baseline for tracking progress of partners' organizational capacities on PSEA. The standards are aligned with the [United Nations Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse involving Implementing Partners](#).

UNFPA and its implementing partners will use the findings of the assessment to a) inform selection of and continued working arrangements with its partners; b) for selected or existing partners, to develop a capacity strengthening [implementation plan](#) that reflects identified areas for improvement on PSEA; and c) informs monitoring activities.

This document provides guidance to our implementing partners about the assessment process and its implications.

II. Key information about the PSEA Assessment:

General information:

- UNFPA requires all of its implementing partners to eventually be assessed, either by UNFPA or another United Nations entity so long as the previous assessment covered the following standards: mandatory screening of personnel; mandatory training; adequate reporting procedures; appropriate action in past cases; adequate investigative and assistance capacities.
- UNFPA will take a phased approach to its rollout as follows:
 - All new new implementing partners will be assessed as part of the selection process;
 - Existing partners in designated countries¹ or as so determined by a UNFPA office as part of its new country programme or other determinant.
- The assessment is valid for a period of 5 years, unless there are significant changes to a partners' PSEA-related capacities, or any SEA related events which would require an earlier re-assessment.
- The PSEA Assessment, covers 8 core standards: 1. Organisational Policy; 2. Organizational management – Subcontracting; 3. Human Resources System; 4. Mandatory Training; 5. Reporting; 6. Assistance and Referrals; 7. Investigations; ; and 8. Corrective Measures.

¹ Designated countries included in the first phase include: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

- The number of core standards met provides the basis for the partner’s “SEA Risk Rating” and reflects partner’s current PSEA capacities, as follows:
 - Full capacity: Partner meets all 8 core standards;
 - Medium capacity: Partner meets most core standards (6-7) , support required to address remaining gaps;
 - Low capacity: Partner meets few core standards (5 or fewer), urgent action needed to strengthen PSEA capacity.

The process:

This section outlines the steps required to undertake the assessment. The self-assessment should take approximately 1-2 hours.

Step 1: Partner self-assesses:

- The partner conducts a self-assessment, either as part of an invitation for proposal response or, via a self-assessment template provided by the UNFPA office working with the partner, using the technical guidance available in Annex I of this document..
- Upon receipt of the self-assessment form, the partner, either on its own or with assistance from UNFPA, completes the self-assesses compliance with each core standard individually and rates with a “yes” or “no” (or “n/a” for core standards 2 and/or 8).
- There are two preliminary questions in the self-assessment:
 - If the partner has previously been assessed by another United Nations entity, the partner provides the date and the SEA rating and returns the form to UNFPA, without completing the rest of the self-assessment.
 - If the partner does not have direct contact with beneficiaries of assistance² (e.g. desk based research), the partner makes note of this in the form and returns it to UNFPA, without completing the rest of the self-assessment,
- Partner submits the completed self-assessment to UNFPA, together with relevant supporting documents, as proof of evidence of meeting the required 8 core standards. A list of suggested supporting documents which should be gathered for the assessment are included in the self-assessment form. Partners can add different and/or additional documentation to support its self-rating.

Step 2: UNFPA assesses and rates partner’s PSEA capacity and makes preliminary determination of partner’s capacity:

- Upon receipt of the completed self-assessment, UNFPA will review the self-assessment and supporting document and will verify the rating. During this time, UNFPA may request clarification from the partner and/or additional supporting documentation.
- Upon completion of its review, UNFPA will share the outcome (including the overall SEA risk rating) with the implementing partner.
- UNFPA requires its partners who receive a medium or low capacity SEA risk rating to address any gaps in its PSEA policies, procedures and systems (see Step 3 on how to address those gaps).
- UNFPA will terminate the partnership with any implementing partner who does not achieve full capacity within an agreed upon timeframe.

² Beneficiaries of assistance are individuals who are direct or indirect recipients of a partner’s or UNFPA’s action. In other words, this refers to people who a partner or UNFPA works with and/or serves or seeks to assist and are typically in situations of vulnerability and dependence vis à vis partner’s or UNFPA’s personnel. This includes any activities the partner undertakes under a contractual agreement with entities other than UNFPA. Therefore, the ‘no contact with beneficiaries’ rating applies only when the partner does not conduct any activity which involves contact with beneficiaries of assistance or other members of vulnerable communities, for example, desk based research. However, if the same partner subsequently undertakes activities that involve contact with beneficiaries, the partner must undergo the assessment.

Step 3: Capacity strengthening implementation plan

- To address any identified gaps, UNFPA will work jointly with implementing partners who receive a medium or low capacity SEA risk rating to develop a capacity-strengthening implementation plan. The purpose of the plan is to bring the implementing partner to full capacity.
- Implementing partners are encouraged to use the resources provided in the technical guidance as tools to develop or strengthen PSEA policies, procedures and systems.

Step 4: Monitoring:

- As part of its regular programme monitoring, UNFPA will monitor implementation of the capacity-strengthening implementation plan or, for partners who scored at full capacity, UNFPA will monitor to ensure they maintain capacity of the 8 core standards.

Step 5: Reassessment:

- Within 6 months of its initial assessment (9 months if an exceptional 3 month extension is given after the first reassessment) UNFPA and the implementing partner will work together to reassess the implementing partner's PSEA capacity.
- UNFPA will terminate partnership with implementing partners who fail to reach full capacity after the reassessment.

International non-governmental organizations:

- To the extent possible UNFPA will coordinate the assessment of international NGOs. If more than one UNFPA office requests an assessment, please alert them of another pending assessment.
- Assessment of international NGOs will take place primarily at the headquarter level. However, please note some questions, or parts thereof, may need to also be assessed at the country level.

Annex I: Technical guidance

The self-assessment may be integrated in the selection templates itself, or, may be a separate document given to a partner by UNFPA. Regardless, the self-assessment consists of 8 core standards the partner is expected to review and report on.

To complete the self-assessment, the partner gives itself a “yes”, “no” or “n/a” (n/a is only applicable for core standards 2 and 8) self-rating for each core standard. An implementing partner gives itself a “yes” self-rating if it meets the minimum requirements outlined below. When the partner submits its self-assessment to UNFPA, it must also submit supporting documentation for each core standard to assist UNFPA in its review and assignment of SEA Risk Rating.

Please note there are two preliminary questions in the self-assessment form:

- If the partner has previously been assessed by another United Nations entity, the partner provides the date, the SEA rating and returns the form, and supporting documentation to UNFPA, without completing the rest of the self-assessment.
- If the partner does not have direct contact with beneficiaries of assistance³ (e.g. desk-based research), the partner makes note of this in the form and returns it to UNFPA, without completing the rest of the self-assessment.

1. Core standard: Organizational policy

a) Assessment criterion:

“The partner has a policy document on PSEA. At a minimum, this document should include a written undertaking that the partner accepts the standards of conduct listed in section 3 of the [ST/SGB/2003/13](#).”

b) Minimum requirements:

Ideally, the implementing partner has a policy document on PSEA. However, recognizing this may not be the case, UNFPA recognizes the commitment made by implementing partner upon signature of the Implementing Partner Model Form and acceptance of the UNFPA’s General Terms and Conditions for Implementing Partner Agreements, which includes reference to the standards of conduct listed in section 3 of [ST/SGB/2003/13](#).

As such, the minimum requirement is met and the partner can self-rate “yes”, if the partner has a policy document on PSEA or a valid IP agreement and has agreed to and accepted the terms and conditions therein. If not, the partner self-rates as “no” and this standard will be added to the capacity strengthening implementation plan, upon UNFPA’s review.

Although not mandatory, partners are strongly encouraged to develop a PSEA policy demonstrating a clear commitment to prevent and respond to SEA. Partners should include the following core aspects when creating or strengthening their policy documents:

- A clear definition of SEA (same as or substantively similar to the [United Nations definition](#));
- An explicit prohibition of SEA;
- Reporting obligations: the requirement that all allegations of SEA must be promptly reported;

³ Beneficiaries of assistance are individuals who are direct or indirect recipients of a partner’s or UNFPA’s action. In other words, this refers to people who a partner or UNFPA works with and/or serves or seeks to assist and are typically in situations of vulnerability and dependence vis à vis partner’s or UNFPA’s personnel. This includes any activities the partner undertakes under a contractual agreement with entities other than UNFPA. Therefore, the ‘no contact with beneficiaries’ rating applies only when the partner does not conduct any activity which involves contact with beneficiaries of assistance or other members of vulnerable communities, for example, desk based research. However, if the same partner subsequently undertakes activities that involve contact with beneficiaries, the partner must undergo the assessment.

- Whistleblower protection: individuals who report SEA must be protected from any form of retaliation;
- Clear roles and responsibilities: this may include designating PSEA focal point(s) to assume key responsibilities, such as the development of internal systems, training and awareness-raising of personnel, and coordination with other relevant actors (see [Generic Terms of Reference for PSEA Focal Points](#));
- Transparent and clear language, adapted to local context to ensure it is understood by all targeted audience.

The partner can either revise its own existing documents, adopt the templates provided under resources, to articulate its policy or create a stand-alone PSEA policy, depending on its capacities and needs.

c) Supporting documents:

The following is a list of suggested documentation which can be used to support the self-assessment rating:

- Code of Conduct (internal or interagency);
- PSEA policy;
- Documentation of standard procedures for all personnel to receive/sign PSEA policy.

d) Resources:

The following resources are available as references or capacity building material to help develop the implementing plan and meet the core standard.

- [PSEA Policy Template](#)⁴: encompasses all core elements listed above. Partners can adapt this PSEA policy in their internal framework;
- [Code of Conduct Template](#)⁵: partners can adapt this code of conduct in their internal framework.

Other useful resources:

- [Minimum Operating Standards \(MOS\)-PSEA](#) and [Guidelines to implement MOS-PSEA, 2013](#) (p. 11) ;
- CHS Alliance, [PSEA Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#), 2017. (p.12);
- Interaction, [Interaction Step by Step Guide to Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#), June 2010.

2. Core standard: Organizational Management – Subcontracting

a) Assessment criterion:

“Partner’s contracts and partnership agreements include a standard clause requiring sub-contractors to adopt policies that prohibit SEA and to take measures to prevent and respond to SEA.”

b) Minimum requirements:

Partners are responsible for the technical and professional competence of their subcontractors. The use of a subcontractor does not relieve the partner of its obligations under the agreement with UNFPA. This means that subcontractors, too, must take all appropriate measures to prevent SEA of anyone by its employees. In line with the above, subcontractors must commit, at minimum, to:

- A clear prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse;
- Mandatory screening of personnel;
- Mandatory SEA training for its personnel;

⁴ For other sample PSEA policies, see [CESVI PSEA Policy](#), the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies \(IFRC\) Secretariat PSEA Policy](#).

⁵ For other sample codes of conduct see: International Rescue Committee (IRC), [the IRC Way. Our Standars for Professional Conduct the Code of Conduct for Norwegian Refugee Council \(NRC\) Staff](#), which includes references to PSEA.

- Mandatory reporting of all SEA allegations;
- Referring victims of SEA for immediate professional assistance;
- Investigating any allegation of SEA and agreeing that UNFPA may conduct its own investigation into such an allegation.

If the partner plans to sub-contract activities to another entity, the partner has to have the necessary reporting and monitoring mechanisms in place to prevent and respond to incidents of SEA.

If the implementing partner has subcontractors and can demonstrate that it has included a standard clause requiring sub-contractors to adopt policies that prohibit SEA and to take measures to prevent and respond to SEA, in line with the above noted minimum requirements, the partner can self-rate with “yes”. If not, the implementing partner self-rates with “no” and this standard is added to the capacity strengthening implementation plan. If the partner does not have subcontractors, the partner can self-rate with “n/a”. However, if this situation changes and the same partner subsequently subcontracts activities to another entity, this would warrant a re-assessment.

c) Supporting documentation:

The following is a list of suggested documentation which can be used to support the self-assessment rating:

- Contracts/partnership agreements for sub-contractors

Resources:

Partners can refer to the resources provided in this guidance to strengthen different aspects of its subcontractors PSEA capacities.

3. Core standard Human Resources Systems

a) Assessment criterion:

“There is a systematic vetting procedure in place for job candidates through proper screening. This must include, at minimum, reference checks for sexual misconduct and a self-declaration by the job candidate, confirming that they have never been subject to sanctions (disciplinary, administrative or criminal) arising from an investigation in relation to SEA, or left employment pending investigation and refused to cooperate in such an investigation.”

b) Minimum requirements:

Partners must implement adequate safeguards to avoid hiring individuals with a past record of sexual misconduct. Screening of personnel for past SEA violations must be a mandatory component of the recruitment process. At minimum:

- Job candidates should be required to self-declare prior involvement in sexual misconduct and consent to the disclosure of any such information by former employers during the verification of references;
- Reference checks with former employers should form a mandatory part of the recruitment process;
- All personnel should be requested to sign an organizational code of conduct or equivalent;
- PSEA clauses should be integrated in contract agreements;
- All PSEA-related documents should be kept on personnel file.

Additional background checks may be conducted to the extent legally possible. For example, the inter-agency [misconduct disclosure scheme](#) adopted by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) establishes a minimum standard for organizations to share information as part of their recruitment process about people who have been found to have committed sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or sexual harassment “misconduct” during employment.

The minimum requirement is met and the partner can self-rate “yes”, if the partner can demonstrate it has adequate screening measures in place. If not, the partner self-rates with “no” and this standard will be added to the capacity strengthening implementation plan, upon UNFPA’s review.

c) Supporting documentation:

The following is a list of suggested documentation which can be used to support the self-assessment rating:

- Reference check template including check for sexual misconduct (including reference from previous employers and self-declaration);
- Recruitment procedures.

d) Resources:

Resources are location specific and can be obtained from the UNCT and/or the UNFPA PSEA focal point.

4. Core standard: Mandatory Training

a) Assessment criterion:

“The partner holds mandatory trainings (online or in-person) for all personnel on PSEA and relevant procedures. The training should, at a minimum include: 1) a definition of SEA (that is aligned with the UN's definition); 2) an explanation on prohibition of SEA; and 3) actions that personnel are required to take (i.e. prompt reporting of allegations and referral of victims).”

b) Minimum requirements:

Partners should organize mandatory induction and refresher trainings on PSEA for all personnel on a regular basis. Such training should include, at minimum:

- A clear definition of SEA (same as or substantively similar to the UN’s definition);
- An explicit prohibition of SEA;
- The requirement that any allegations of SEA must be promptly reported;
- The requirement that alleged victims of SEA shall be referred for immediate, professional assistance.

The minimum requirements are met and the partner can self-rate “yes”, if the partner can demonstrate it has adequate PSEA training in place. If not, the partner self-rates with “no” and this standard will be added to the capacity strengthening implementation plan, upon UNFPA’s review.

c) Supporting documentation:

The following is a list of suggested documentation which can be used to support the self-assessment rating:

- Annual training plan;
- Training agenda;
- Training package;
- Attendance sheets;
- Training certificates.

d) Resources:

Where a partner has not put in place its own training, it may use any of the training material available at the following URL to fulfil its training-related obligations hereunder:

- IASC, [‘Saying No to Sexual Misconduct’ –an Interagency Training on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(SEA\) and Sexual Harassment \(SH\) for partners](#) , May 2020;
- UN Online Training on [PSEA](#);

- Interaction, [Interaction Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Training Guide](#), December 2013.

5. Core Standard: Reporting

a) Assessment criterion:

“The partner has mechanisms and procedures for personnel, beneficiaries and communities, including children, to report SEA allegations that comply with core standards for reporting (i.e. safety, confidentiality, transparency, accessibility).”

b) Minimum requirements:

Partners must have adequate mechanisms to 1) receive SEA allegations and 2) report SEA allegations to UNFPA:

- 1) Reporting mechanisms to receive SEA allegations should, at a minimum, incorporate the following core elements:
 - Accessibility: Reporting mechanisms should be easy to use, widely publicized and promoted to personnel, recipients of assistance and local communities. Potential barriers for usage should be removed (e.g. difficult or foreign language, costs and time needed for using them), keeping in mind the target audiences, including people of different ages, genders, educational backgrounds and abilities.
 - Responsiveness: A properly functioning complaint mechanism needs to provide a timely response, be adequately resourced and operated by appropriately trained individuals.
 - Safety: Partners have to ensure safety for those reporting allegations and concerns. This includes whistleblower protection, personal safety and data protection. Protection measures have to be set up before promoting the use of a reporting mechanism.
 - Confidentiality and anonymity: Complaints have to be handled strictly confidentially and appropriate safeguards should be put in place to prevent disclosure of information. Complainants should also be advised of the possibility of lodging a complaint anonymously, and of the implications of such a procedure, including the consequences for follow up of the complaint.
 - Transparency: Partners should explain procedures to all complainants, including how information will be shared, with whom and for what purpose, for investigations and assistance to survivors. This also includes notice of the organization’ obligations for mandatory reporting.
- 2) Reporting mechanisms should have the ability to refer SEA allegations to the UNFPA Office of Audit and Investigation Services. To this end, Office of Audit and Investigation Services (OAIS) [contact details and reporting mechanisms](#) should be incorporated into existing complaint mechanisms, to the extent possible.

Partners’ reporting obligations derive from their contractual relationship with UNFPA. Under UNFPA’s General Terms and Conditions for Implementing Partner Agreements, partners are required to “report allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, of which the partner has been informed or has otherwise become aware, promptly to the Director, Office of Audit and Investigation Services, UNFPA. To the extent legally possible, the partner will require its employees, agents or any other persons engaged by the partner to perform any services under this Agreement, to report allegations of SEA arising in relation to this Agreement directly to the Director, Office of Audit and Investigation Services.”

Additionally, partners can build the capacity of reporting mechanisms for SEA allegations, by using both internal and external reporting mechanisms to facilitate reporting of SEA allegations or concerns by personnel and recipients of assistance. Where possible, they should seek to incorporate

PSEA reporting mechanisms into broader feedback or complaints mechanisms in order to benefit from these channels' levels of trust, discreteness, and resources.

The minimum requirement is therefore met and the partner can self-rate “yes”, if the partner can demonstrate it has adequate reporting mechanisms in place. If not, the partner self-rates with “no” and this standard will be added to the capacity strengthening implementation plan, upon UNFPA’s review.

c) Supporting documentation:

The following is a list of suggested documentation which can be used to support the self-assessment rating:

- Internal Complaints and Feedback Mechanism;
- Participation in joint reporting mechanisms;
- Communication materials;
- PSEA awareness-raising plan;
- Description of reporting mechanism;
- Whistle-blower policy.

d) Resources:

The following resources are made available to the partners as references or capacity building material to help the partner develop the implementing plan and meet the core standard.

- [IASC Best Practice Guide Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms](#), September 2016;
- [IASC Global Standard Operating Procedures on Inter-Agency Cooperation in Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms](#), 2016;
- Save the Children, [Programme Accountability Guidance Pack. A Save the Children Resource](#), 2013(particularly chapter 4 “Handling feedback and complaints”, p. 25-42)

6. Core Standard: Assistance and referrals

a) Assessment criterion:

“To be consistent with the IP Protocol and other UN SEA instruments, the partner has a system to refer SEA victims to locally available support services, based on their needs and consent. This can include actively contributing to in-country PSEA networks and/or Gender based violence (GBV) systems (where applicable) and/or referral pathways at an inter-agency level.”

b) Minimum requirements:

It is the responsibility of the partner to ensure that victims of SEA allegedly perpetrated by their personnel receive immediate professional assistance. This is done either by providing them with direct services or referring them to relevant service providers where consent is given.

Partners must adhere to the following principles ([Victim Assistance protocol](#)) when facilitating assistance:

- Assistance and support will be made available to all victims of SEA irrespective of whether the victim initiates or cooperates with an investigation or any other accountability procedure.
- Assistance and support shall be provided in a manner that is victim-centred, rights-based, age, disability-and gender sensitive, non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate. The rights and best interests of victims shall guide how assistance and support are designed and provided. Assistance and support to child victims (under age 18) shall be provided in a manner consistent with the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular the “best interests of the child”.
- Assistance provided to victims shall adhere to the principle of “do no harm” and be provided in a manner which seeks to uphold their rights, dignity and well-being. This may entail provision of safety measures to protect against retaliation, re-victimization and re-traumatization.
- The rights of victims to privacy, confidentiality and informed consent in respect of assistance shall be respected. Victims (or their parents/caregivers where appropriate) have the right to decide on

the assistance they need, and information should be provided on the full range of options available. Victims should be informed of the progress and outcomes of actions or processes that concern them.

- Victims are entitled to pursue applicable accountability measures, including legal redress where desired.

Common services for victims/survivors of SEA include:

Type of service	Description
Safety and Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate safety or protection measures for survivors and witnesses to address the risk of retaliation or further violence, such as survivor safety planning, safe shelter (i.e. space that offers temporary safety to individuals fleeing harm), relocation support
Medical care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical care, including post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV (within 72 hours of possible exposure); treatment for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), pregnancy care, emergency contraception
Psychosocial support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health care, emotional and practical support, either individually or community-based
Legal services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal assistance services, including free legal counselling, legal representation and other.
Basic material assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of food, clothing, shelter, school re-integration and livelihood support to the survivor
Support for children born as a result of SEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical and psychosocial care and pursuit of paternity and child support claims, in conjunction with relevant national governments

- Partners should have an updated list of local service providers, which should include options for both children and adult survivors where relevant (e.g. names of a pediatric and adult medical care provider). In many cases, partners can use or adapt the mapping of existing GBV and child protection services and referral pathways of relevant inter-agency bodies, such as the in-country PSEA Network and in-country GBV and child protection coordination groups. Especially in cases involving children, partners should also consult with UNICEF country offices.⁶
- Where there are gaps in service coverage and needed services are unavailable, assistance and support should be provided to victims using partner’s internal resources. Additional resources to address gaps in service coverage may be provided through, for example, the [Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#).
- A set procedure should guide the referral process that is aligned with existing inter-agency procedures and protocols. The process should outline the steps that adequately trained personnel need to take.

The minimum requirement is therefore met and the partner can self-rate “yes”, if the partner can demonstrate it has a system to refer SEA victims to locally available support services in place. If not, the partner self-rates with “no” and this standard will be added to the capacity strengthening implementation plan, upon UNFPA’s review.

⁶ In some cases, organizations may also be able to access additional funding to provide specialized services through the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (the “Trust Fund”) established by the Secretary-General. For more information on the Trust Fund, see: <https://conduct.unmissions.org/remedial-trust-fund>.

c) Supporting documentation:

The following is a list of suggested documentation which can be used to support the self-assessment rating:

- Internal or Interagency referral pathway;
- List of Available service providers;
- Description of referral or Standard Operation Procedure (SOP);
- Referral form for survivors of GBV/SEA;
- Guidelines on victim assistance and/or training on GBV and GBV case management principles

d) Resources:

The following resources are made available to the partners as references or capacity building material to help the partner develop the implementing plan and meet the core standard.

Assistance for all survivors:

- [UN Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) (Victim Assistance Protocol);
- Technical note on the implementation of the Victim Assistance Protocol (forthcoming);
- [Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery](#), IASC, 2015;
- [SEA Victim Assistance Guide: Establishing Country-Based Mechanisms for Assisting Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN/NGO/IGO Staff and Related Personnel](#), ECHA/ECPS UN and NGO Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, April 2009;
- [Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to Gender-based Violence in Emergencies](#), UNFPA, 2015.
- [UN Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel](#), 2007.

Assistance for child survivors:

- [Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Guidelines for health and psychosocial service providers in humanitarian settings](#), International Rescue Committee/UNICEF, 2012;
- [Inter-agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection. The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children: A Guide for Policy and Programme Managers and Caseworkers](#), The Child Protection Working Group, January 2014;

7. Core Standard: Investigations

a) Assessment criterion:

“The partner has a process for investigation of allegations of SEA and can provide evidence. This may include a referral system for investigations where in-house capacity does not exist.”

b) Minimum requirements:

Partners are required to ensure that professional investigations of allegations of SEA involving their personnel take place without delay and with due attention to the safety and wellbeing of all persons involved. Timely and professional investigations are essential to ensure accountability of perpetrators, justice for victims and to enforce the zero-tolerance policy of the UN and its partners. Investigations should be conducted with due regard to a number of key principles including, at a minimum, but not limited to:

- Confidentiality, safety, impartiality, objectivity, thoroughness, timeliness and respect for the due process rights of all involved;
- Adequate protection and referral to support services for victims and witnesses throughout the investigation process, as needed;
- Regular communication and follow-up with witnesses and victims of investigative process and outcomes, as appropriate;
- Appropriate follow-up, including disciplinary/contractual action when allegations are substantiated;

- Referral of cases to competent national authorities for criminal investigation and prosecution, as appropriate;
- A set of standard procedures detailing the investigative process, including roles and responsibilities of investigation participants to ensure due process for all involved.

If the implementing partner can demonstrate it has in place a process for investigation of allegations of SEA and can provide evidence the partner can self-rate with “yes”. If not, the partner self-rates with “no” and this standard is added to the capacity strengthening implementation plan, upon UNFPA’s review.

Conducting such investigations requires trained professional investigators and can be a complex and oftentimes costly undertaking. It is therefore essential for partners to assess their investigation capacities early-on. Where in-house capacity is lacking (i.e. established internal investigative procedures and dedicated investigations or employees officially charged with carrying out internal investigations), partners have to ensure rapid access to a professional investigation service or consultant investigators familiar with conducting investigations in development or humanitarian settings. This may involve contracting a professional service provider on a retainer basis to ensure prompt deployment if and when needed.

Eligible partners may also qualify for funding through [the OCHA fund](#) for investigations into sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment, which can be used by IASC organisations and affiliated partners that do not have dedicated investigations capacity, or have limited investigations capacity.

Partners may also identify other options to meet their needs and capacities (e.g. using pro-bono legal services, requesting a partner to sponsor/deploy investigator).

Partners are required to keep UNFPA informed during the conduct of the investigations and, at the conclusion of the investigation, provide a complete and unredacted copy of the investigation report to UNFPA. (For further details refer to UNFPA General Terms and Conditions for Implementing Partner Agreements, para.28.5) UNFPA retains the right to conduct its own investigations into allegations of SEA involving implementing partners (clauses 28.5 and 30.3 UNFPA General Terms and Conditions for Implementing Partner Agreements).

For more information on past allegations and corrective action refer to Core Standard 7, p. 20-1.

c) Supporting documentation:

The following is a list of suggested documentation which can be used to support the self-assessment rating:

- Written process for review of SEA allegations;
- Dedicated resources for investigation(s) and/or commitment of partner for support;
- PSEA investigation policy/procedures;
- Contract with professional investigative service.

d) Resources:

The following resources are made available to the partners as references or capacity building material to help the partner develop the implementing plan and meet the core standard.

Complaints and investigation processes:

- IASC, [Model Complaints and Investigation Procedures and Guidance Related to SEA](#) (Draft), 2004.
- IASC, [Guidelines to Implement the Minimum Operating Standards for PSEA](#), March 2013.
- IASC, [Fund for Investigations into Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Sexual Harassment](#), April 2019
- Keeping Children Safe, [Management of Child Safeguarding Allegations](#), 2016.

- WHO, [Ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies](#), 2007.
- CHS Alliance, [Investigation of Cases of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Aid Workers: Challenges and Recommendations](#), Background paper to 2016 CHS Alliance PSEA Conference 5-6 September 2016: Bangkok, Thailand.
- CHS Alliance, [Guidelines for Investigations - A guide for humanitarian organisations on receiving and investigating allegations of abuse, exploitation, fraud or corruption by their own staff](#), 2006 (revised in 2015).
- International Council of Voluntary Agencies (CVA), [Building Safer Organisations: Training materials on receiving and investigating allegations of abuse and exploitation by humanitarian workers](#), 2007.

Investigations involving child survivors and witnesses:

- UNICEF/UNODC, [Handbook for Professionals and Policymakers on Justice Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime](#), Criminal Justice Handbook Series, UN, New York, 2009, as well as its [child-friendly version](#)).

8. Core Standard: Corrective measures

a) Assessment criterion:

“The partner has taken appropriate corrective action in response to SEA allegations, if any.”

b) Minimum requirements:

Partners are required to disclose any past SEA allegations involving its personnel and evidence of corrective measures and actions taken in response thereto.

Partners with a past record of SEA are considered high-risk. A number of corrective actions need to be taken before the risk rating can be reduced.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of factors that may be considered in making this determination:

- The partner has promptly informed UNFPA/UN of the SEA allegation⁷;
- A thorough and transparent investigation of the SEA allegation involving the partner has been undertaken;
- The outcome of the investigation/s on the SEA allegation have been shared with UNFPA/UN.
- Appropriate action has been taken towards the perpetrator, if the allegation was found to be substantiated;
- Adequate assistance and protection have been provided to the (alleged) victim/s of SEA;
- A time-bound action plan has been implemented to address systemic issues and key gaps.

If the implementing partner had past cases of SEA and it can prove it has undertaken adequate corrective measures the partner can self-rate with “yes” and provide relevant supporting documentation. If not, the implementing partner self-rates with “no”. Following UNFPA’s review of the adequacy of partner’s response, if UNFPA determines the corrective measures undertaken by a partner were inadequate, an

⁷ *Existing partners* with past allegations of SEA must report to the Office of Audit and Investigation Services (O AIS) per partners’ reporting obligations derived from their contractual relationship with UNFPA (Core standard 4, Reporting (p. 13-15): Under UNFPA’s General Terms and Conditions for Implementing Partner Agreements, partners are required to “report allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, of which the partner has been informed or has otherwise become aware, promptly to the Director, Office of Audit and Investigation Services, UNFPA. To the extent legally possible, the partner will require its employees, agents or any other persons engaged by the partner to perform any services under this Agreement, to report allegations of SEA arising in relation to this Agreement directly to the Director, Office of Audit and Investigation Services.”)

existing partnership must be suspended, whereas a new partner cannot be engaged, until it can satisfactorily show it has taken adequate corrective measures. If the partner has not had any past SEA allegations the partner can self-rate with “n/a”.

c) Supporting documentation:

The following is a list of suggested documentation which can be used to support the self-assessment rating:

- Evidence of implementation of corrective measures;
- Specific measures to identify and reduce risks of SEA in programme delivery.

d) Resources:

There are no resources available for this assessment criterion as it concerns the partner’s past allegations of SEA and corrective action taken in response.