



**Annex 5:**  
**Update on the UNFPA response to sexual exploitation and  
abuse and sexual harassment**

**Integrated midterm review and progress report on  
implementation of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021**

**Report of the Executive Director**

1. UNFPA is committed to nurturing a safe and trusted environment, which safeguards anyone in contact with the organization. UNFPA has zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) perpetrated against the people it serves and sexual harassment (SH) at the workplace. As the lead agency coordinating the prevention of, and response to, gender-based violence (GBV), UNFPA is determined to set an example in addressing all forms of sexual wrongdoing.

2. Under the leadership of its the Deputy Executive Director for Management, who served as the Fund's senior focal point, UNFPA significantly strengthened its institutional framework, policies and procedures for addressing for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The Fund ensured coordination and comprehensive engagement across the organization, and external coordination for interagency collaboration on issues related to protection from sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment. This improvement was confirmed by the "Independent review of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOP's policies and procedures to manage PSEA and SH, conducted by Deloitte in March 2019. The review made recommendations for further improvement, which UNFPA accepted and implemented in 2019. All actions have been coordinated with partners across the UN system and interagency collaboration formed the backbone of UNFPA's work in this area.

### **On accountability and governance**

3. Since 2018, all UNFPA head of offices certifies, on an annual basis, compliance with PSEA obligations under ST/SGB/2003/13. In January 2020, UNFPA concluded its 2019 PSEA Management Certification Cycle with a 100 percent compliance rate (147 certifications submitted). On 20 January 2020, based on this assurance, the UNFPA Executive Director provided her certification on PSEA and SH to the President of the Executive Board.

4. To strengthen local capacities, UNFPA established a network of 160 trained PSEA focal points in all country and regional operations to support the implementation of PSEA activities and serve as the first line of defense on the ground.

5. Jointly with other Funds and Programmes, UNFPA developed a harmonized screening tool to strengthen the accountability of the implementing partners. The tool is intended to give UN entities necessary assurance of partners' organizational capacities on PSEA in line with the standards of the [United Nations Protocol On Allegations Of Sexual Exploitation And Abuse Involving Implementing Partners](#). UNFPA will roll-out the tool in a phased approach – starting with Non-Governmental Organization partners operating in high-risk environments in the second quarter of 2020.

6. In 2019, UNFPA continued to collaborate closely with its UN system partners and led several joint activities. In October 2019, UNFPA held the first interagency workshop for PSEA focal points, including 55 participants from UNDP, UNICEF, UNOPS and UNFPA. Additional sessions planned for 2020 had to be postponed due to current travel restrictions. UNFPA also continued to provide considerable resources, with part- or full-time coordinators leading interagency PSEA networks in nine countries.

### **On Prevention and Communication:**

7. In 2019, UNFPA prioritized communications and outreach with over 30 general and targeted sessions provided to UNFPA managers and personnel worldwide. Additionally, PSEA focal points delivered tailored face-to-face training in country offices adapted to the local context. All personnel were provided with training on the revised, widely promoted UNFPA Harassment Policy, which is available in five UN languages. In August 2019, UNFPA adapted the Code of Conduct to Prevent Sexual Harassment, including Sexual Harassment at UN events, also available in five UN languages and mandatory for use at all UNFPA events. Lastly, all personnel had to retake the mandatory PSEA online training.

### **On Reporting and Investigations:**

8. In 2019, there has been a notable increase in SEA and SH allegations reported. Specifically, there was a 40 percent increase in sexual harassment matters (from 7 allegations in 2018 to 10 in 2019); and a 50 percent increase in sexual exploitation and abuse allegations (from 6 in 2018 to 9 in 2019) of which the majority involve implementing partner personnel.

9. UNFPA reported SEA cases and outcomes - on a real-time basis - to the UN Secretary-General for publication in anonymized form; and continues to report, in anonymized form, on investigations concluded and actions taken in SEA and SH and other cases of wrongdoing through the annual report of the Director of the Office of Audit and Investigation Services to the Executive Board.

10. In July 2019, UNFPA rolled out the Incident Reporting Form to facilitate intake and reporting of SEA allegations further.

**On Assistance:**

11. In 2019, UNFPA engaged external counselling services to improve psychosocial support for personnel, including in SH matters. Services are entirely confidential and available to all personnel. Additionally, UNFPA is collaborating with the Office of the Ombudsman for the UN Funds and Programmes to establish a trained network of Respectful Workplace Advisors to assist victims through early interventions in appropriate cases.

12. To improve services for victims of SEA, UNFPA is currently mapping referral mechanisms for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). This exercise aims at determining existing coverage, identifying remaining gaps and fully mainstreaming assistance in SEA matters into existing GBV referral mechanisms.

**Priorities for 2020:**

13. There was tangible progress but more needs to be done to ensure impact and sustainability of these measures on the ground. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, with disruptions to livelihoods, restrictions to movement and weakened protection systems, increases the risks of GBV including SEA. Protection from all forms of sexual wrongdoing therefore remains of critical importance in 2020, prioritized in UNFPA programming and operations.

14. The primary focus continues to be on strengthening country capacities through technical assistance and training. Due to current restrictions of movement, all such activities will be modified and adapted as necessary.

15. Second, UNFPA will fully operationalize the UN Protocol for Implementing Partners and monitor results to improve and revise its approach as necessary.

16. Third, UNFPA will conduct a UNFPA-wide survey on SEA and SH to allow an evidence based assessment of knowledge, capacity and impact at country level, to identify remaining gaps and possibilities for further improvements.

17. UNFPA will continue to prioritize outreach and communications by senior management and other managers to ensure understanding of policies and procedures by all personnel.

18. In September 2020, UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem will assume the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Championship on PSEA. Building on the work of previous Champions, UNFPA will focus on a set of priority results to strengthen a victim centered approach to the humanitarian sector's response to sexual wrongdoing.

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