

## UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS

### Background Note to the Executive Board on the Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment

June 2024

These background notes on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment have been prepared in response to decision 2023/9 of the Executive Board.

#### United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP is pleased to provide an update on progress achieved in 2023 on preventing and addressing all forms of sexual misconduct (sexual harassment (SH) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)), taking into account, the results of our annual PSEAH survey. The results of this survey have also informed our updated Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2025, which was prepared by UNDP's corporate Taskforce on the Prevention of SH and SEA (the Taskforce) and approved by the Executive Group of the Administrator in April 2024. A copy of the updated Action Plan is attached at Annex A as requested by Executive Board decision 2022/2.

UNDP's overarching policies on safeguarding include: a) our policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Discrimination and Abuse of Authority which applies to all UNDP personnel; b) the Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse which applies to both UNDP and external personnel (e.g. vendors, suppliers and implementing partners); c) UNDP's Legal Framework for Addressing Non-Compliance with UN Standards of Conduct and d) UNDP's Policy on Protection Against Retaliation. During 2023, UNDP's response continued to focus on: a) prevention; b) reporting and response; c) support to victims/survivors and d) accountability with the following overarching objectives:

- To reduce the incidence of sexual misconduct.
- To ensure cases are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- To ensure proper safeguards are embedded into all UNDP's operations and programmes.
- To minimize and mitigate SH and SEA risks.

All UNDP Country Offices participated in our annual PSEAH survey providing a rich source of data to take stock of progress and lessons learnt. The survey results have been shared across the organization and have also informed the reporting below:

#### **1. SEA and SH reporting mechanisms are safe, accessible, and survivor-centered**

##### **1.1. Safe, accessible, gender and child-sensitive mechanisms for reporting SEA and SH are in place and are victim/survivor-centered.**

UNDP's systems and processes for reporting and responding to sexual misconduct are now well established and in line with best practice in terms of being safe, accessible, gender and child sensitive and victim/survivor centered. In practice, all allegations of SEAH are given high priority from the intake stage. UNDP's Sexual Misconduct Team (SMT) of investigators are involved early on and are responsible for communicating with victims/survivors. The SMT will immediately assess the needs of the victims/survivors to identify any support needed and ensure support is received.

All UNDP personnel are obliged to report incidents of sexual misconduct through the relevant reporting mechanisms. Individuals outside of UNDP can also report any incident of sexual misconduct by UNDP personnel or an external party. Any sexual misconduct incidents are formally reported by email, phone or online referral form where they are handled by a team of three dedicated sexual misconduct investigators trained in handling these sensitive cases. Victims/survivors of **sexual harassment** can also reach out to the office of the Ombudsperson, the Ethics Office (who advise and support victims/survivors with retaliation concerns), UNDP's staff counsellors, or the harassment focal point in the Office of Human Resources (OHR). These services are also confidential. The objective is to create as many options as possible to encourage people (both internal and external) to report in whichever way they feel most comfortable. OAI and the Ombudsperson's office work closely with UNDP's staff counselling team to ensure that relevant psycho-social support is offered where needed. For SEA victims, working with our PSEAH Focal Points, the SMT helps to identify available counseling services and refers victims to those services where needed. Additional information on reporting mechanisms for external personnel are detailed **under Section 1.2**.

OAI has received 55 cases in 2022 and 2023, including 31 in 2022 (16 cases of SH, 12 of SEA, and 3 of Sexual Assault (SA)) and 24 cases in 2023 (13 cases of SH, 7 of SEA, and 4 of SA). Of the total 2022-2023 cases, investigations were opened for 24 cases. Of these, 8 were substantiated by OAI and 6 were closed as unsubstantiated following an investigation. For 10 cases, the investigation is still on-going. Women remain the most vulnerable. In 2022 and 2023, where victims of sexual misconduct were identified by OAI, 100% of the subjects were male, while 98% of victims were female (while recognizing that men may be less likely to step forward to report).

The PSEAH survey results indicate that there is a high level of awareness across UNDP about SEAH and how to address it with 100% of respondents confirming that UNDP personnel know what to do if something happens both in terms of reporting and accessing support. 96% confirmed that their senior managers are actively involved in actions to prevent and address SEAH. This is good news, but clearly there remain issues of trust and fear among victims/survivors when considering whether to come forward to report, for example, individuals may be scared about their own safety and security, or are concerned about stigma, or fear that retaliation may lead to loss of employment. Tackling this issue will continue to be a high priority.

## **1.2. Community engagement and awareness raising on PSEA is carried out in each community receiving and/or affected by United Nations assistance**

UNDP Country Offices are required to inform local communities of UNDP's standards of behavior on PSEAH and how to report should they witness or experience sexual misconduct. Community sensitization and awareness mechanisms can include individual and group discussions, communication campaigns, and stakeholder response and feedback mechanisms.

Our survey shows that 69 Country Offices have proactively taken action to raise awareness among local communities about UNDP's PSEAH standards and have put in place a range of reporting mechanisms for example complaint boxes, WhatsApp messaging services or hotlines; formal Project Grievance Mechanisms, and UNDP/UN GBV cluster/focal points. Given communities are often not able to distinguish between various agencies, beneficiaries are encouraged to report any instance of SEA to any member of the UN, who is then responsible for reporting it to their head of office for onward transmission.

## **2. Investigations are survivor-centered, timely, and result in appropriate accountability measures**

### **2.1. Investigations are victim/survivor-centered including by keeping the victims/survivors informed and supported, in line with their wishes.**

Throughout the investigation process, OAI's team of investigators will ensure that the needs of the victim/survivor are put first, including keeping them fully informed of what is happening as the investigation progresses, and ensuring that they get the advice and support they need throughout. If the victim/survivor at any point does not wish to proceed with the investigation, this decision is fully respected.

For UNDP personnel, there are six in-house counsellors available to provide dedicated and confidential advice and support. For SEA victims/survivors, the Country Office is responsible for ensuring access to local support services – for example, medical, psychosocial, and legal advice as well as shelters if there are safety concerns. **See also paragraph 5.1.**

### **2.2 Investigations are carried out in a timely manner and appropriate accountability measures are taken.**

All reported incidents of sexual misconduct involving UNDP personnel are investigated in accordance with the OAI Investigation Guidelines and other applicable administrative issuance/s. If the allegations are substantiated, UNDP will pursue disciplinary or other administrative actions against the perpetrators, and depending on the violation, refer the case to local authorities for possible criminal prosecution.

There are strong sanctions for UNDP personnel found guilty of sexual misconduct. UNDP staff have been dismissed, UNVs, Individual Contractors (ICs) and vendors have had their contracts terminated. In these cases, their names are placed in Clearcheck and they are banned from working for the UN in the future. UNDP has placed 23 names in Clearcheck since its launch in 2018.

All sexual misconduct cases are tracked through UNDP's confidential case management system and reported to the UNDP Associate Administrator and Administrator. OAI's Annual Report to the Executive Board includes an overview of all sexual misconduct cases and their outcomes.

Recognizing the importance of progressing these cases quickly, all SEAH investigations are prioritized, taking an average of 6 months to be completed. SEAH cases are also prioritized at the disciplinary stage.

## **3. Adequate safeguards and appropriate actions ensure the effective tackling of SEA when working with implementing partners**

UNDP sets high standards on PSEAH for all its partners and staff. These mandatory standards and requirements are included in our project documents (which partners sign) as well as other program and commercial instruments including for ICs and Service Contract (SC) holders. All Country Offices are required to reach out to their Implementing Partners (IPs) to raise awareness on PSEAH and provide guidance and support, e.g., providing resources that IPs can use to raise awareness in their organizations, including a template PSEAH policy document and template training materials.

OAI does not have the mandate to investigate SEA cases involving third parties (for example an IP employee who may have abused a beneficiary). When we are made aware of these cases, the Country Office will bring the matter to the IP's attention and ask them to investigate it directly, while keeping UNDP fully informed of progress including on support for the victim/survivor. The Country Office and OAI are available to provide advice and support to the Implementing Partners where needed.

### **3.1. Implementing Partners have adequate PSEA safeguards in place and action is taken related to sexual exploitation and abuse**

It is mandatory for Implementing Partners (IP) to be assessed using the Partner Capacity Assessment Tool (PCAT). The PCAT is currently being updated to include eight questions related to SH and SEA based on the core standards in the UN Implementing Partner Protocol. The PCAT is applicable to all partners, including IPs and Responsible Partners (RPs), in all contexts including crisis contexts. It also applies to Grantees for determining eligibility to receive a grant. The PCAT is required for projects regardless of size. This capacity assessment is intended to provide UNDP with the necessary assurance of a Partners' organizational capacities on both SEA and SH, determine monitoring and support activities, and serve as a baseline for tracking progress in line with the standards of the United Nations IP Protocol and UNDP's own standards on SEA and SH.

In 2023 the corporate Taskforce on PSEAH rolled out new guidelines on how to do capacity assessments of IPs on SEAH. A corporate "Ask Us Anything" session focused on working with IPs on SEA & SH requirements, including PCAT, was held with strong turnout among country office colleagues, and over 20 country offices were provided with advice on request. Our survey shows that 66 country offices have assessed at least 25% of their IPs. But these assessments are not currently available online. In 2024 the PCAT will be digitized as part of our corporate planning system (Quantum+) which will allow more detailed analysis to be done on all capacity assessments in the future. This remains a challenging and high priority area of work for the Taskforce with Country Offices.

## **4. Efforts to address SEA and SH across the organization are continuously strengthened including through reinforced capacity, evidence based and risk informed approaches.**

### **4.1. Regular SEA and SH risk assessments inform prevention and response strategies.**

Integrating robust safeguards across all UNDP operations and programs is critical. As such, SH and SEA have been incorporated into UNDP's enterprise risk management (ERM) system. In 2021, a country-level risk assessment tool was introduced. Building on this, a dedicated and streamlined risk assessment tool was developed in 2023 to pinpoint SEA risk factors at the project level, complete with recommended risk mitigation strategies.

In 2023, UNDP approved new criteria to identify high risk projects and portfolios, so that targeted support can be provided. One such criteria is when cash or food is provided directly to vulnerable people, through cash for work or any other types of initiative. This was included, in part, due to the increased SEA risk of these types of projects. Special monitoring and support arrangements, and additional guidance, will be explored for these types of initiatives, with a focus on protecting vulnerable people from SEA.

Our survey shows that in 2023, 50% of our Country Offices had conducted SEA risk assessments for at least 25% of their programs and projects and documented these risks in relevant risk registers. This is a challenging issue which we will continue to prioritize in UNDP's updated Strategy and Action Plan for 2024-2025.

#### **4.2. PSEA/SH focal points and/or dedicated PSEA/SH Specialists are appointed at HQ, regional and country level.**

Out of 126 UNDP country offices, 124 have dedicated PSEAH focal points (FP) with direct access to senior management. However, only 37% of these FPs currently have access to a dedicated PSEAH budget – something seen as a high priority by the FPs. We are actively investing time and resources into comprehensive training programs for these FPs, empowering them to provide effective local guidance. This includes ensuring that all Country Offices have robust PSEAH Action Plans in place to guide action, monitor progress and achieve tangible results. Notably, in 2023, 98% of offices had PSEAH Action Plans in place.

The Respectful Workplace Facilitators (RWFs) program, conducted in partnership with the Ombudsman's Office, serves as a confidential resource for individuals experiencing harassment. The program continues to yield positive outcomes, with 72 RWFs already trained across 40 country offices managing just under 100 cases.

The Corporate Taskforce on PSEAH chaired by the Administrator's Special Adviser for Corporate Initiatives in the Executive Office (ExO) is responsible for providing support to HQ, regional and country offices. The Taskforce's work is guided by a corporate Strategy and Action Plan reviewed and agreed to by the Administrator's Executive Group. The Chair of the Taskforce works full time on safeguarding issues and is supported by a full time Global PSEAH Focal Point, as well as the members of the Taskforce which includes OAI, the Ethics Office, the Bureau for Management Services (BMS)/OHR, BMS/Office of Legal Services, ExO/Corporate Performance Unit, BMS/Security, Communications, Gender, UN GLOBE, Staff Council, Ombudsman's Office and five Country Office representatives. Each region has an additional PSEAH Regional Focal Point based at HQ.

#### **4.3. All staff and related personnel complete the mandatory in-year [refresher] training and/or briefing on PSEA and SH.**

UNDP has mandatory training courses for all personnel on prevention and response to SH, SEA and Ethics. As of December 2023, 95% of staff had completed the course on Ethics and Integrity, 96% on SEA and 94% on SH. These courses provide information and guidance on UNDP's standards on PSEAH and Ethics, including actions personnel are expected to take in response. In addition, specialized 'scenario based' training and guidance is provided to Country Offices and Business Units across the organization upon request, with over 40 country offices having received such assistance in 2023. In 2023, 175 Focal Points participated in ten webinars (in all UN languages) on PSEAH. All PSEAH Focal Points and other staff working on PSEAH issues (around 242 active participants) are members of an interactive MS Teams space which is used daily to share best practices, get advice from experts and access information. A weekly one-hour on-line session for these staff with experts from HQ has become the 'go-to' space for colleagues seeking advice and support. In 2024-2025, there will be a renewed focus on training for senior managers.

#### **4.4 Reference checking and vetting for prior misconduct is systematically carried out as part of recruitment processes.**

The screening of personnel for past SEAH violations is an integral part of UNDP's recruitment process, encompassing the following measures:

- Job candidates are required to self-declare any prior involvement in sexual misconduct and provide consent for the disclosure of any such information by former employers during the verification of references. If individuals are found to have lied in their application their appointments or contracts will be terminated.
- UNDP ensures that all UNDP SH/SEA perpetrators are included in the UN ClearCheck database and has submitted 23 former personnel since the database launched in 2018.
- UNDP vets all international and national staff against ClearCheck and has expanded the screening against ClearCheck to include Personnel Service Agreement holders and other personnel. Over 450 UNDP HR officers have been trained in the use of ClearCheck. In 2023, there were 10,367 screenings against the database, totalling 22,374 screenings since the inception of the project.
- Mandatory reference checks are conducted.
- PSEAH clauses are integrated in contract agreements.

UNDP is exploring the use of the inter-agency [Misconduct Disclosure Scheme](#) adopted by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), including in discussions with UNHCR.

### **5. Quality, victim/survivor-centered support is operationalized**

#### **5.1. Assistance for victims/survivors of SEA and SH is provided in accordance with established protocols and standards [including the UN Victims Assistance Protocol, victim/survivor-centered approach, and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Child Protection (CP) referral pathways]**

Where a UNDP personnel member is involved in sexual misconduct, UNDP has a responsibility to provide assistance and support to the victim/survivor as soon as information about them is received.

For sexual harassment, please refer to **paragraphs 1.1 and 2.1 above**. For SEA, victim/survivor assistance can be provided through already established local gender-based violence (GBV) referral-pathways where these exist or other providers that are active locally (eg child protection services, local medical institutions). Additional forms of assistance may be needed during the investigation, for example psychosocial support during and after an investigative interview; safeguarding during the investigation processes, including providing shelter, and keeping the victim informed on the status of their cases. Our survey shows that in 2023, around 90 UNDP Country Offices have identified local support providers to offer medical, psychosocial, and legal assistance to victims/survivors of SEA, such as national or local gender-based violence centers. 60 of these were identified through inter-agency networks, in line with the UN Wide Guidance from June 2023 and noting that the RC is taking on increasing responsibility for this work.

#### **5.2. The implementation of the UN Victims Assistance Protocol is strengthened at country level**

Country Offices are encouraged to proactively engage with their national counterparts to put in place capacity-building projects that would help to establish or strengthen victim assistance

services locally or nationally. Partnerships with and capacity building for institutions engaged in the investigation of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse are also critical for advancing the implementation of the Protocol and are strongly encouraged. Working through the PSEA network on these issues under the leadership of the RC is critical to avoid duplication and fill gaps – including ensuring that a quality victim/survivor centered assistance mechanism is operational. This is a challenging area, and the Taskforce has instigated a working group to develop additional guidelines and toolkits for Country Offices to support them in this work.

## **6. Interagency coordination and collaboration on PSEA and SH are strengthened**

### **6.1. Entity actively contributes to the improvement of inter-agency coordination and collaboration on PSEA at country-level, including through the development and implementation of UNCT PSEA Action Plans and participation of the PSEA focal points in the inter-agency PSEA coordination structures**

Collaboration among UN agencies at the country level on SH and SEA is critical. Our survey shows that in 2023 117 Country Offices were part of a UN PSEA Network, with 88% of these networks meeting frequently, and 95% reporting regularly to the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator. 95% of these networks have well-defined work plans, and 39% have a dedicated budget, a figure consistent with the previous year. While predominantly UN-based, many PSEA networks include representatives of NGOs, government entities, and other collaborative partners.

### **6.2. Entity actively participates in and contributes to the work of PSEAH coordination structures at global level [including the SEA Working Group, IASC PSEAH Technical Advisory Group, and the Executive Group on Addressing SH]**

At the corporate HQ level, UNDP participates in the CEB High-Level Committee for Management (HLCM) Working Group on SH, and the UN PSEA Task Force led by the UN Office of the Special Coordinator (OSC). We are also members of various technical working groups, e.g., the Implementing Partner Protocol Working Group (IPPWG), the Technical Working Group to Develop a PSEA government cooperation framework (TWG), and the Technical-Level Working Group - Trust Fund in Support of Victims of SEA by UN personnel.

## **7. Culture change that addresses the root causes of SEA and SH is advanced**

### **7.1. Organizational culture and behavior change to end sexual misconduct are actively promoted and form an organizational priority**

Since 2014, UNDP requires all its managers and relevant staff to include a gender equality or a gender parity goal in their individual performance plans. In addition, there is a mandatory people management goal, focusing on ‘Building an Enabling Workplace’ which includes indicators such as creating an inclusive and respectful work environment free from harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority. The goal emphasizes the elimination of biases, ensuring equal opportunities for all, supporting innovation and learning, fair recruitment and promotion practices based on objective measures, understanding and leveraging people’s talents and empowering and enabling teams to perform optimally with a positive work experience. Commitments on PSEAH and on gender are also included in the Compacts between the Administrator and the Bureau Directors.

In 2023, UNDP's Gender Seal programme was implemented in 86 offices, with 75 offices successfully completing their certifications. Additionally, 11 offices were engaged in the renewal process, accounting for 70% of all country offices. Among the Gender Seal's seven areas, emphasis was placed on the Enabling Environment, where COs worked towards implementing specific criteria promoting a gender equal organizational culture. This included deepening the understanding of intersectionality, gender parity at all levels, and meaningful implementation of PSEA/SH policies.

## **7.2 Staff perception and engagement surveys inform the actions to improve the organizational culture on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH)**

For more than two decades, UNDP's bi-annual Global Staff Survey (GSS) has been the main mechanism for measuring employee engagement and workplace experiences in UNDP, including collecting feedback from personnel on the quality of their working environment. Last year, UNDP deployed a more robust listening architecture called "UNDPListens" which replaced the GSS with several shorter organization-wide, centrally run surveys looking into specific elements of the working environment. The results of the Engagement Survey from June 2023 show that, although the overall difference in engagement between men and women did not reach the significance threshold, there were some noteworthy variations in specific dimensions. For example, women rated their satisfaction with some aspects of the working environment including workload, continuous improvement and communication, lower than men. As part of UNDPListens, UNDP is revamping its exit interviews to collect more feedback on work in the organization and insights on where UNDP can improve further as an employer,

UNDP's annual PSEAH survey of its Country Offices provides a rich source of data to review progress, learn lessons, identify challenges, share good practice and inform our corporate approach going forward. In addition, all staff are part of the UN Secretariat's SEA survey.

## **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**

### **Strategic update**

In October of 2023, UNFPA welcomed its new Global Coordinator on PSEAH. In addition, during the Midterm Review of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, a new PSEAH Specialist Fixed Term Appointment at the P4 level has been proposed, reflecting the commitment of the agency to strengthening its institutional PSEAH systems. With the addition of the PSEAH Coordinator and the proposed PSEAH Specialist position, the PSEAH Unit is now drafting a new organization-wide 2-year PSEAH Strategy, grounded in three key pillars: evidence-driven prevention and response; embedding accountability and survivor-centered principles and standards; and building systems-level organizational and culture change. The Strategy identifies strategic shifts (an enabling shift, an implementation shift, and a performance shift), and offers "Planning Paradigms" outlining what PSEAH efforts can be achieved based on staffing and resourcing. This Strategy draws from progress and learning over 2023, and will be implemented from 2024 - 2025. As part of this overarching approach, UNFPA has identified several possible strategic initiatives which - with appropriate resourcing - can elevate UNFPA's thought and technical leadership role at the UN System and IASC level. In addition to these specific project-level concepts, UNFPA is supporting multiple InterAgency efforts, including the



harmonized operationalization of the UN Protocol on Allegations of SEA Involving Implementing Partners and the development and finalization of the PSEA Government Cooperation Framework; supporting the further operationalization and application of the IASC Victim/Survivor-centered Approach (particularly in the development of visualization of the “Survivor’s Journey”), and in developing a “Funding Models” reference note for the IASC Technical Advisory Group on PSEAH. A copy of UNFPA’s PSEAH Action Plan is attached as Annex B as requested by Executive Board decision 2022/2.

To better address staff and personnel understanding and capacity on PSEAH, UNFPA is assessing its current resources and learning portal to identify opportunities to enhance knowledge exchange and learning around PSEAH, and to create a new PSEAH “Core Learning Package.” The updated Portal and the Learning Package will reinforce guidance, standards and approaches that are grounded in technical good practice and will also promote uniformity and systematic application of endorsed and evidence-based technical resources across all Business Units (BUs) within the Organization.

At the urging of the Executive Board, and to supplement the ClearCheck system, UNFPA has initiated the process of piloting the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme (MDS). A concept note has been drafted, and the Organization has identified focal points from DHR, and the Legal Unit, with the PSEAH Unit leading the pilot and ensuring promising practices are captured. The PSEAH Unit has facilitated consultations with the Office of the Special Coordinator on PSEAH, UNHCR (which has also initiated an MDS pilot), and the MDS Coordinator within the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) Alliance. UNFPA is in the process of confirming the pilot locations for the MDS, and will identify 2-3 “research questions” which will be used to capture learning and contribute to global efforts to remove perpetrators of SEA from UN and NGO employment circulation.

Note on Current Reporting: The content in this Information Note reports progress against relevant benchmarks and indicators, based on information collected by the PSEAH Unit in consultation with Country Offices and PSEA Focal Points. Additional inputs were provided by the Office of Audit and Investigation Services (OAIS), Division for Human Resources (DHR), and the Policy and Strategy Division (PSD). As part of its priority workplan actions, the PSEAH Unit will be establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation system, to support the organization with a higher reporting rate across all the new uniform template benchmarks.

## **1. SEA and sexual harassment reporting mechanisms are safe, accessible, and survivor-centred.**

UNFPA has established global confidential reporting mechanisms to report wrongdoing, including SEA and SH, which is managed by OAIS. The confidential web-based helpline, which allows for anonymous reporting, is available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Systems to protect those who report are outlined in the Organization’s Policy on Protection against Retaliation for Reporting Misconduct or for Cooperating with an Authorized Fact-Finding Activity.

UNFPA submits all reports of SEA in the UN public tracker and implements the UN-system wide updated guidance on sharing of information on SEA allegations (including those involving Implementing Partners) at the InterAgency level with the senior-most UN official. In 2023, a joint training session by OAIS and the PSEAH Unit was delivered to all PSEA focal points providing guidance on survivor-centered principles, reporting obligations for various scenarios (SEA committed by UNFPA personnel, by other UN organizations’ personnel, by IP personnel, by an

unknown subject), InterAgency reporting Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and how to report safely and appropriately to the senior UN Official, to donors, or to national authorities.

### **1.1. Safe, accessible, gender and child-sensitive mechanisms for reporting SEA and sexual harassment are in place and are victim/survivor-centered**

85% of Country Offices that were surveyed reported having safe, accessible, gender and child-sensitive, and victim/survivor-centered mechanisms for reporting SEA and sexual harassment.

Of these mechanisms, 18% are UNFPA-specific; 33% are InterAgency; and 49% are both UNFPA and InterAgency.

### **1.2. Community engagement and awareness-raising on PSEA is carried out in each community receiving and/or affected by United Nations assistance**

79% of Country Offices that were surveyed reported carrying out community engagement and awareness-raising on PSEA. Of these, 31% were UNFPA-specific; 26% were InterAgency efforts; and 43% were both UNFPA and Inter-Agency.

## **2. Investigations are survivor-centered and timely, and result in appropriate accountability measures**

UNFPA annually publishes the disciplinary measures and related actions taken following substantiated allegations of SEA and SH, and which are also updated in the public iReport portal. The purpose of this publication is to achieve an increased level of transparency in the administration of issues of conduct, to inform personnel of the practice of UNFPA in taking action on such allegations, and to ensure that personnel are informed about common examples of sexual misconduct and related consequences. While data and information on actual allegations of SEA and SH will be reported by OAIS to the Executive Board (under “Sexual Misconduct”), UNFPA saw an increase in reporting of 37% from the preceding year. This increase can likely be attributed to efforts to create a safer, more responsive and enabling reporting system, and to efforts across the Fund to increase awareness on how to report, and obligations for reporting violations.

UNFPA recognizes that the concept of “accountability” has many dimensions: including in efforts to approach culture and organization change, to be accountable to the feedback, input and lived experiences of staff and community members, to be accountable in ensuring holistic services and entry points for reporting are safe and accessible, and in the manner in which we respond to reported incidents. All credible allegations are thoroughly investigated by OAIS which submits its investigation reports to the Legal Unit to determine the disciplinary measures., and the legal team to determine disciplinary measures. Both entities maintain transparent communication with survivors over the course of the investigations, and once disciplinary actions are determined. To ensure these investigations are survivor-centered, UNFPA investigators are able to access professional development opportunities (such as through the Core Humanitarian Standards [CHS] Alliance Investigation Qualification Training Scheme), or through direct professional backgrounds in law enforcement, prosecutorial work, or human rights-related investigations..

### **2.1 Investigations are victim/survivor-centered including by keeping the victims/survivors informed and supported, in line with their wishes**

Of cases which progressed to full investigation, OAIS notified victims of the closure of the matter in 100% of the cases. 44% of UNFPA's investigators have been trained on survivor-centered investigation procedures.

## **2.2 Investigations are carried out in a timely manner and appropriate accountability measures are taken**

Completed cases of sexual misconduct were closed on average 11.3 months after receipt (slightly faster than the Investigations Manual Guidance standard of the recommended 12-month investigation timeline). 66% of cases investigated by OAIS had a disciplinary measure/sanction issued by UNFPA. For the remaining cases (33%), the disciplinary process is still ongoing. Similarly, 66% of such cases were recorded in ClearCheck and in the remaining 33%, the disciplinary process is still ongoing.

## **3. Adequate safeguards and appropriate actions ensure the effective tackling of SEA when working with implementing partners**

UNFPA continues to progress towards strengthening partner capacity to prevent and respond to SEA. In 2023, 92% of UNFPA's Civil Society Organization (CSO) partners were assessed either by UNFPA workplan managers with technical support from the PSEA Focal Points, or by another UN entity. In addition to the partner assessments, UNFPA's workplan managers and PSEA Focal Points dedicate substantive efforts to training or supporting IPs with understanding their obligations to address SEA across all sectors of programming. UNFPA continues to take an active role in the InterAgency working group on the UN Protocol on Allegation of SEA involving Implementing Partners, which works to bring a coordinated and harmonized approach to the operationalization of the IP Protocol, and to the rollout of the PSEA Module in the UN Partner Portal.

UNFPA investigates incidents of SEA reported by or about its implementing partners, as needed. Based on the investigation report, UNFPA's Implementing Partner Review Committee (IPRC), in consultation with OAIS, the Legal Unit, Policy and Strategy Division and the PSEAH Coordinator, determines whether to require additional accountability or risk mitigation measures be put in place and/or institute sanctions proceedings. Sanctions in response to ineffectual actions by the IP or a classification of "ineligible for partnership" could include suspension, termination or forgoing future partnerships with the respective IP.

### **3.1. Implementing partners have adequate PSEA safeguards in place and action is taken related to sexual exploitation and abuse**

Of those 92% that were assessed, partner capacity was determined to be:

44% full capacity

42% medium or low capacity

5% no contact with beneficiaries

0.31% ineligible for partnership (e.g. Core Standard 8 was assessed as "No")

8% rating unavailable (not yet migrated to the UNPP)

## **4. Efforts to address SEA and sexual harassment across the organization are continuously strengthened, including through reinforced capacity, and evidence-based and risk-informed approaches**

UNFPA conducts or contributes to global or organizational staff surveys (including through the Office of the Special Coordinator on Ending SEA), and by incorporating SEAH as part of the UNFPA Edge Survey or staff Resource Group surveys to identify and meaningfully address staff concerns on SEA and SH. In 2023, general accountability and staff wellness efforts were the primary focus of the Integrity Group (DHR, Ethics, OAIS, the Ombuds Office, Legal Unit, and PSEAH Unit) including a particular emphasis on addressing sexual misconduct, adherence to IASC and UN Systems technical standards on PSEAH, and assurance of staff accessing support.

As part of their scopes of work, PSEA Focal Points support program and country office leadership with understanding and identifying risks of SEA in their respective contexts. PSEA Focal Points working in those settings in which there is also an established PSEA Network (for this reporting period, this represents 22% of country offices who responded to the survey), participate in these risk assessment and mitigation approaches at the InterAgency level as part of that Network. Also within their terms of reference, PSEA Focal Points assess the capacity of Implementing Partners (reported under Outcome 3), support management and leadership with identifying priority actions to address SEA, ensure staff and community members are aware of their conduct obligations and how to report; and ensure that PSEA and GBV referral pathways are in place and clearly communicated to ensure survivors of SEA are able to safely access support and information.

Identification of SEA risks is included in UNFPA's Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework, as part of the 'safeguarding' risk category. In light of the unacceptable consequences of SEAH on survivors and the integrity of the Organization, and as stated in its risk appetite statement, UNFPA has zero appetite for safeguarding risks, including SEAH, and is committed to eliminating the likelihood or impact of these risks. Country Offices are required to develop their PSEA risk registers and identify relevant context-specific risk responses, based on the guidance outlined in the ERM.

All UNFPA staff and personnel are required to complete the online PSEA course – a mandatory stipulation for all new and incoming personnel. In addition, staff and personnel – with a particular emphasis on management – are strongly encouraged to complete the sexual harassment-focused online course, 'United to Respect.' Under guidance from UNFPA's Legal Unit and Office of Audit and Investigations Services, known perpetrators of SEAH are entered into the ClearCheck system by the PSEAH Unit, while all incoming recruits are screened by DHR for previous sexual misconduct using the same system.

As part of its obligations to the Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, UNFPA certified that 100% of its managers met their management compliance requirements. Specifically, in 2023 100% of UNFPA's heads of Regional, Country and Liaison Offices, and of all HQ Divisions certified that they had fully and accurately reported all allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to UN personnel and implementing partners; ensured that all UNFPA personnel in the respective Business Units had undertaken the mandatory online training on PSEA; and had appointed a PSEA Focal Point.

In 2023, to ensure support to UNFPA staff and personnel who have either witnessed SH, or have had it perpetrated against them, the Integrity Group established a terms of reference for a Sexual Misconduct Support Focal Point within the Organization. This position is currently maintained by the Global PSEAH Coordinator, who is available to staff and personnel impacted by internal sexual misconduct. The Focal Point position is designed to help facilitate access to

information and support with how to report, what services and additional resources are available, and how staff and personnel can access them.

#### **4.1. Regular SEA and sexual harassment risk assessments inform prevention and response strategies**

89% of Country Offices that were surveyed reported that regular SEA and sexual harassment risk assessments inform their prevention and response strategies. Of these, 34% are UNFPA-specific; 28% are InterAgency efforts; and 38% are both UNFPA and Inter-Agency.

#### **4.2. PSEA/sexual harassment/focal points and/or dedicated PSEA/sexual harassment specialists are appointed at headquarters, regional and country levels**

100% of Country Offices have appointed PSEA Focal Points.

UNFPA has 27 dedicated PSEA staff or personnel across country office (including 3 FTA positions in Myanmar, Sudan and Ethiopia); and 12 dedicated PSEA consultants.

1 P5 FTA, 1 P4 Temporary Assignment, 2 P3 Consultants at Headquarters (the “PSEAH Unit”) Sexual Misconduct Support Focal Point (occupied by the Global PSEAH Coordinator) was established within the PSEAH Unit in the Office of the Executive Director.

#### **4.3. All staff and related personnel complete the mandatory in-year [refresher] training and/or briefing on PSEA and sexual harassment**

100% of staff completed mandatory online PSEA course. 72% of managers completed “United to Respect” on protection from sexual harassment

#### **4.4. Reference-checking and vetting for prior misconduct is systematically carried out as part of recruitment processes**

7 subjects added to ClearCheck in 2023

100% of candidates were vetted for prior misconduct

### **5. Quality, victim/survivor-centered support is operationalized**

The operationalization of survivor-centered support is core to UNFPA’s PSEAH mandate and approach. Global data suggests that anywhere from 91% - 99% of incidents of SEAH across the aid sector and all organizations go unreported. UNFPA’s recognition of the global trends of SEAH as significantly under-reported across all contexts has reinforced the need to continue to promote accountability in response to reported incidents, while also ensuring that reporting mechanisms are safe and accessible, that prevention remains a priority, and SEAH risks are continuously analyzed and mitigated. While OAS ensures that all credible allegations are investigated promptly in alignment with the Victim/Survivor-centered Approach and the UN Victim’s Assistance Protocols, the PSEAH Unit also ensures that all aspects of response to SEAH are survivor-centered - ensuring that even those survivors of SEAH that may be unwilling or unable to safely report are able to access support. This includes advocacy for funding towards GBV programming, PSEA Focal Points’ work in utilizing and socializing GBV referral pathways, and strengthening GBV programming across ROs and COs to ensure it is relevant for, and safely accessible to, SEA survivors who may choose to access support, but who do not fully disclose their status to service providers. At the global level, in 2023 UNFPA established the Sexual Misconduct Support Focal Point (maintained by the Global PSEAH Coordinator) and

finalized the SEA Survivor Support Module to be integrated into the IASC GBV Case Management Guidelines and GBV Information Management Systems.

### **5.1. Assistance for victims/survivors of SEA and SH is provided in accordance with established protocols and standards**

88% of Country Offices that were consulted reported that assistance for victims/survivors of SEA and SH is provided in accordance with established protocols and standards

\* The public iReport Dashboard indicates that 2 incidents of SEA implicating UNFPA personnel in which the survivors are marked as “unidentified.” In these cases, it’s possible that a report was submitted without identifying the survivor or in which the survivor was not reachable or accessible, in which cases a referral to further support or services is not possible.

### **5.2. The implementation of the UN Victims Assistance Protocol is strengthened at country level**

76% of Country Offices that were surveyed reported the implementation of the UN Victims Assistance Protocol per the InterAgency PSEA Network SOPs.

## **6. Inter-agency coordination and collaboration on PSEA and sexual harassment are strengthened**

UNFPA is meaningfully committed to engagement with, and the success of, InterAgency global and country-level Networks and working groups. UNFPA contributed to the development of the new IASC PSEAH Victim/Survivor-Centered Approach (adopted by the IASC in June 2023), funded the Coordinator of the Expert Panel on SEAH Investigations; and is providing leadership and technical support on the survivor-centered workstream of the Expert Panel. Also in 2023, UNFPA completed two projects funded by the Secretary-General’s Trust Fund in Support of Victims of SEA (in DRC and South Sudan). These projects aimed to provide holistic support for victims of SEA, and others at risk of SEA, in SEA-permissive humanitarian hubs.

At the field level, in 2023, UNFPA either hosted or funded 6 InterAgency PSEA Coordinators. The majority of UNFPA’s Country Offices (97%) that responded to the survey reported that they actively contribute to the improvement of InterAgency coordination and collaboration on PSEA at the country level, including through the development and implementation of United Nations Country Team PSEA action plans. Notable examples of UNFPA’s support to and engagement with PSEA Networks includes contribution to the design of the Network Action Plans; capacity building efforts targeting IP staff; Women’s Security Training; and UNFPA leadership of a country-wide PSEA “deep dive” review.

### **6.1. Entity actively contributes to the improvement of inter-agency coordination and collaboration on PSEA at country-level, including through the development and implementation of UNCT PSEA Action Plans and participation of the PSEA focal points in the inter-agency PSEA coordination structures**

100% of UNFPA’s Country Offices and Regional Offices have PSEA Focal Points  
97% regularly participate in PSEA Networks  
39% chair the InterAgency PSEA Network

### **6.2. Entity actively participates in and contributes to the work of PSEAH coordination structures at global level**

UNFPA is an active member of the OSCSEA PSEAH Working Group; the IASC PSEA Technical Advisory Group; and the CEB Executive Group on Addressing Sexual Harassment in the UN System.

UNFPA funded the coordinator of the Expert Panel on SEAH Investigations; developed the SEA Survivor Support Module for the IASC GBV Case Management Guidelines and GBVIMS; and completed two projects with the SG's Trust Fund in Support of Victims of SEA

## **7. Culture change that addresses the root causes of SEA and sexual harassment is advanced**

UNFPA is committed to a culture of safety, dignity, equality, and respect for staff and beneficiaries. Recent global research suggests that the presence of female staff contributes to perceptions of safety by staff and the communities it serves.<sup>1</sup> UNFPA is committed to supporting efforts that promote protection from violence, abuse or harassment and which build gender parity. For the last three years, UNFPA has met or exceeded all of the standards of the System Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP). The SWAP ensures accountability around gender mainstreaming in UNFPA. Within UNFPA's Strategic Plan's Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency (OEE) indicators, UNFPA tracks the percentage of female staff among international professional and national staff. UNFPA is committed to gender equality through the EDGE Assessment, which is a globally recognized certification for gender equality. The certification comes with an action plan enabling the organization to more intentionally act on furthering inclusion at all levels, especially in terms of gender.

UNFPA regularly organizes personnel perception and engagement surveys, including the Global Staff Survey (GSS) and the Edge Survey (on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion), all of which include core questions on SEA and SH, staff perceptions of UNFPA's "speak-up culture," and organizational capacity to respond to sexual misconduct. DHR conducts a global staff survey every two years, using the year in between to appropriately respond or address the findings of the survey. The next GSS is planned to be conducted in 2024. In 2023, the DEI team conducted the Edge Survey (including SEA and SH-related questions), and UNFPA's Integrity Group conducted two all-personnel webinars to provide information on support resources, options available to report and address sexual misconduct; the investigative process, and protection against retaliation. Within InterAgency fora, UNFPA also participates in the annual survey of the Office of the Special Coordinator on SEA and the annual survey organized by the CEB Executive Group on Addressing Sexual Harassment in the UN System, the findings from which are shared back with UNFPA for action and opportunities to contribute to culture change efforts.

### **7.1. Organizational culture and behaviour change to end sexual misconduct are actively promoted and form an organizational priority**

2241 female personnel employed within UNFPA Country Offices

% of female per staffing category: 55% of Professional and Director-level staff; 47% of GS staff; 54% of national professional officers; 62% of UN Volunteers; 46% of Service Contract holders

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<sup>1</sup> *EmpoweredAid: Transforming Gender and Power Dynamics in the Delivery of Humanitarian Aid*; Global Women's Institute, George Washington University. 2021

## **7.2. Staff perception and engagement surveys inform actions to improve the organizational culture**

1 UNFPA “global” staff survey conducted in 2023 (the Edge Survey)

2 UNFPA All-personnel “webinars” on measures to address sexual misconduct conducted in 2023 (facilitated by the Integrity Group)

2 InterAgency global surveys on SEA or SH conducted in 2023 (OSCSEA global survey on PSEA, and the CEB Executive Group survey on SH)

## **United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS)**

### **Introduction**

This background note provides an update on UNOPS actions to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and sexual harassment in its policies, procedures, and operations. Preventing and responding to such sensitive issues is a core priority for UNOPS. As per the Executive Board request, UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS have developed a uniform template, to better track year-on-year progress against indicators, allow for enhanced comparison of reports, and gain a more strategic understanding of the results, impact and organizational culture change achieved through their efforts and activities. A copy of UNOPS’ PSEAH Action Plan is attached as Annex C as requested by Executive Board decision 2022/2.

Since the last comprehensive update provided to the Executive Board in June 2023, UNOPS has engaged in organization wide efforts to further strengthen its policy, governance, prevention and response for addressing SEA and sexual harassment. 2023 showed an increased focus on the protection against sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (PSEAH) across the organization starting at the strategic level with the launch of the UNOPS PSEAH strategy, 2023-2025. The strategy focuses on three priority areas: (1) capacity-building for accountability; (2) victim-centered approach; and (3) integrated risk management with implementing partners, and private sector contractors, suppliers and vendors.

While it is early to evaluate the longer-term impact of this strategy, in the first year UNOPS had a 76 per cent increase in cases of sexual misconduct being reported. It is clear that increased investment has been instrumental to making an impact. This includes strong action such as inclusion of PSEAH at the strategic level including a new victim-centered strategy and strong leadership engagement; targeted efforts at building trust in reporting systems; and consistent messaging on the principle of zero tolerance to inaction on reports with implementing partners, contractors, suppliers and vendors.

This work is strategically positioned as a catalyst to the wider organization’s culture transformation and therefore remains a high priority for UNOPS. This cross cutting work is fully supported by the Executive Office and led by the People and Culture Group (PCG) with a strong horizontal collaboration across the organization to ensure a comprehensive approach. While UNOPS applauds the progress made this far, there is still some work to be done and there is commitment from leadership to do more. UNOPS will continue to work towards greater impact and effectiveness in interventions, and to promote an inclusive organizational culture where people and communities feel safe to speak out using a victim centered approach. To reflect this commitment, UNOPS has expanded its strategic results indicators for 2024 as follows:

1. Share of annual PSEAH action plans in place



2. Percentage of UNOPS personnel who feel that if they reported a case, of misconduct the agency would take appropriate action
3. Completion of mandatory PSEAH training
4. Share of PSEAH risk screenings involving implementing partners and infrastructure projects are completed (new indicator for 2024 to be reported on in 2025)
5. Share of field offices where PSEAH victim services are mapped and made available (new indicator for 2024 to be reported in 2025)

## **1. SEA and sexual harassment reporting mechanisms are safe, accessible, and survivor-centred**

### **1.1. Safe, accessible, gender and child-sensitive mechanisms for reporting SEA and sexual harassment are in place and are victim/survivor-centred**

UNOPS understands that building trust is a priority for greater impact as demonstrated by the ongoing review and overhaul of the 'Speak Up' whistleblowing mechanism. This review was initiated in 2023 by the Executive Office and is led by the Ethics Office with collaboration from Legal, Investigations, Internal Grievances, Victim Advocacy & Support and PSEAH functions. The review is intended to drive an effective and holistic overhaul, with emphasis on building trust and collaboratively finding solutions to issues identified through previous internal and third party reviews and stakeholder discussions. This involves reviewing policies and processes, and establishing a mechanism to achieve a simple, people-centric, robust, and confidential speak-up and whistleblowing mechanism. The initiative will ultimately reshape how reports are received through the UNOPS Speak Up portal.

In addition to the global portal, in every country office UNOPS has PSEAH focal points who are supported in receiving reports from personnel and community members. UNOPS ensures that the focal points have the right skill sets and tools to handle sensitive complaints and escalate them appropriately using a safe, confidential and victim-centered approach.

### **1.2. Community engagement and awareness-raising on PSEA is carried out in each community receiving and/or affected by United Nations assistance**

To further strengthen UNOPS impact in communities, local stakeholder consultation is part of the project planning and design process. SEA has been introduced in those consultations to increase awareness of the issue among community members. To further its engagement a significant project for this year is to create a Health, Safety, Social and Environmental Safeguards framework that responds to a variety of concerns from communities raised on UNOPS projects. This is to prevent projects from inadvertently causing harm to the environment and the communities that they serve and support including sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated upon community members. The target for 2025 will be for all new projects to have a clearly defined reporting mechanism and community awareness strategy, coordinated with existing Inter-agency systems to ensure an integrated approach.

## **2. Investigations are survivor-centered and timely, and result in appropriate accountability measures**

### **2.1. Investigations are victim/survivor-centered, including by keeping victims/survivors informed and supported in line with their wishes**

In line with the UNOPS victim-centered approach, the Internal Audit and Investigations Group (IAIG) continues to prioritize cases of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment with specially trained investigators and shortened case review durations. It also ensures that appropriate victim support services are provided and all victims are notified of the outcome of the investigation.

The IAIG continues its coordination with other United Nations organizations on these issues through its membership in the United Nations Representatives of Investigation Services and by attending conferences organized by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the United Nations Chief Executives Board task force on addressing sexual harassment in the organizations of the United Nations system.

## **2.2. Investigations are carried out in a timely manner and appropriate accountability measures are taken**

Timeliness of investigations remains a high priority for the IAIG. By the end of 2023, the Group had closed 18 of the 26 cases of sexual misconduct after an average duration of 57 days. Six of the eight cases still open at the end of the year had been open for less than two months. The remaining two, which were handled by an implementing partner and by another investigative office, had been open for eight months.

## **3. Adequate safeguards and appropriate actions ensure the effective tackling of SEA when working with implementing partners**

### **3.1. Implementing partners have adequate PSEA safeguards in place and action is taken related to sexual exploitation and abuse**

In accordance with wider UN priorities and the UNOPS PSEAH Strategy, UNOPS has operationalized the Protocol in the *Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Capacity Assessment of Implementing Partners: Requirements*. From mid-2023, it is mandatory to conduct an assessment of the implementing partners' capacity to address PSEA as per UNOPS requirements. This capacity assessment is in alignment with the United Nations Harmonized Implementation Tool and the UN Protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving implementing partners. UNOPS personnel required capacity-building and technical support in carrying out PSEA capacity assessments of implementing partners in 2023, and over one-hundred and thirty (130) UNOPS personnel were trained in the protocol and the implementation tool. UNOPS prioritized the roll-out in Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) priority countries and worked to support offices in conducting the assessment of new implementing partners.

UNOPS joined the United Nations Partner Portal in November 2023 and will operationalize the digital PSEA module in 2024. This will enable UNOPS to report on the Implementing Partners Protocol Working Group (IPSWG) indicators in 2024. At present, assessments are tracked locally and still require a mechanism for UNOPS to provide complete and reliable data on the percentage of assessments completed. It is expected that UNOPS will be in full compliance with reporting requirements on implementing partners in 2025.

UNOPS continues to work with other United Nations system organizations on all aspects relating to PSEA and implementing partners; participating regularly in the IPPWG; and attending the 2024 meeting in Rome.

## **4. Efforts to address SEA and sexual harassment across the organization are continuously strengthened, including through reinforced capacity, and evidence-based and risk-informed approaches**

#### **4.1. Regular SEA and sexual harassment risk assessments inform prevention and response strategies**

Given the UNOPS operating model, risk assessments are primarily project-focused. Risk assessments are conducted depending on the type of engagement and mandatorily covered under Health, Safety, Social and Environmental Safeguards. All infrastructure projects are required to identify and include a number of PSEAH-mitigating activities to respond to identified risk levels.

UNOPS has strengthened the integration of PSEAH into its sustainable procurement approach through the Delivering Responsibility in Vendor Engagement (DRiVE ) programme. DRiVE includes a sustainability assessment, inspection and a corrective-action planning programme for its suppliers to ensure that they operate responsibly and in accordance with high standards of integrity in line with the United Nations supplier code of conduct. DRiVE assesses supplier sustainability across 10 different areas within their organization, including PSEA and sexual harassment. This collaborative approach with the private sector is critical to achieving the changes and improvements needed for vendors and suppliers to be able to prevent and respond to SEA and sexual harassment, a sector often omitted from other risk-management systems.

#### **4.2. PSEA/sexual harassment/focal points and/or dedicated PSEA/sexual harassment specialists are appointed at headquarters, regional and country levels**

PSEAH focal points continue to play a key role in operationalizing both the UNOPS PSEAH Strategy, as well as local PSEAH Action Plans. UNOPS has at least one PSEAH focal point in each country office or multi-country office in all the regions it operates. The focal points play an important role in ongoing capacity-building for all personnel, and in rolling out UNOPS risk assessments. UNOPS has developed performance indicators for focal points to ensure this role is given the required time, as well as to allow the focal points an opportunity to receive feedback and recognition from management through PSEAH-specific objectives in their annual performance plans.

The PCG continues to provide regional and country offices technical support on their PSEAH efforts. Guidance and resources are collected and shared through a newly designed intranet page on PSEAH, which contains all relevant materials including guidance on how to implement the PSEAH strategy at the local level, and links to support services and reporting channels.

Resourcing for PSEAH specialists at the project level remains a challenge and UNOPS continues to guide business development teams to request funding for such resources, especially in high-risk countries. Increased communication and awareness of the importance of having these resources to donors and funders remains a priority and continues to be an ongoing exercise. In parallel, the UNOPS internal PSEAH Working Group continues to promote greater coordination and knowledge-sharing on the effective prevention of and response to PSEAH and meets regularly to discuss strategic and operational issues related to the implementation of the PSEAH strategy.

#### **4.3. All personnel complete the mandatory in-year [refresher] training and/or briefing on PSEA and sexual harassment**

UNOPS has achieved a high rate of 96% uptake for the mandatory SEA online training. Analysis and adoption of some elements of the annual United Nations survey on SEA have been incorporated to enhance the training curriculum and ensure that gaps in knowledge identified through the survey are reinforced. UNOPS continues to offer other types of training and capacity-building activities such as refresher training for personnel at both headquarters

and the country level. These are jointly led by a PSEAH focal point and the PSEAH Coordinator. UNOPS continues to offer additional training on the victim-centered approach and investigations and ethical behavior. In 2023 UNOPS is piloting its first UNOPS New Leaders Induction Journey which had a session on responsibilities around PSEAH, to equip new leaders with the relevant skills to manage such issues.

#### **4.4. Reference-checking and vetting for prior misconduct is systematically carried out as part of recruitment processes**

As requested by the Executive Board, UNOPS has reviewed its implementation of the SEA Clear Check initiative. It is important to note UNOPS' commitment to Clear Check as it was one of the first United Nations organizations to implement it on 1 April 2019. In 2023, UNOPS conducted 7,122 checks for ICA contract holders and 240 checks for staff contract holders via Clear Check.

Pursuant to decision 2023/9, UNOPS has joined the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme (MDS) in January 2024 and is committed to pilot the roll-out of this new vetting system in the Middle East and Asia regions this year. This will allow UNOPS to learn and adapt the process as it rolls out the vetting scheme in all regions.

#### **5. Quality, victim/survivor-centered support is operationalized**

##### **5.1. Assistance for victims/survivors of SEA and SH is provided in accordance with established protocols and standards [including the UN Victims Assistance Protocol, victim/survivor-centered approach, and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Child Protection (CP) referral pathways]**

In 2023, the UNOPS Victim Advocacy and Support Specialist provided support to five (5) individuals who had reported allegations of SEAH. One (1) SEA allegation was found to be outside the UNOPS mandate, and referral was made to in-country victim/survivor support. The four (4) remaining cases related to sexual harassment continue to be monitored including possibilities of referring some cases for crisis and long-term counselling, other mitigative and support initiatives.

##### **5.2. The implementation of the UN Victims Assistance Protocol is strengthened at country level**

Forty-five (45) percent of UNOPS country offices now have a gender-based violence/child protection referral pathway mapped. Specific referral channels continue to be shared with offices as part of the PSEAH refresher training and focal points are encouraged to engage with the United Nations country team's PSEA Network to ensure that the information remains updated while observing the United Nations Victims Assistance Protocol.

UNOPS will be making accessible for all personnel a global directory of victim/survivor assistance services. Currently data collation in all locations is in progress and should be completed during the course of the year.

#### **6. Inter-agency coordination and collaboration on PSEA and sexual harassment are strengthened**

##### **6.1. Entity actively contributes to the improvement of inter-agency coordination and collaboration on PSEA at the country level, including through the development and implementation of United Nations country team PSEA action plans and participation of the focal points in inter-agency coordination structures**

At the country level, UNOPS focal points participate and contribute to the United Nations country team PSEA networks, action plan, training and capacity initiative and risk assessments. At Headquarters, UNOPS is supporting a new initiative in the co-creation of a PSEAH working group with representatives from all UN organizations at UN City in Copenhagen, Denmark, to address issues that affect all personnel and visitors. The initiative intends to raise awareness and access to available reporting mechanisms.

## **6.2. Entity actively participates in and contributes to the work of PSEAH coordination structures at the global level [including the SEA Working Group, the IASC PSEAH technical advisory group, and the Executive Group on addressing sexual harassment]**

In 2023 UNOPS engaged in a number of initiatives to increase system-wide collaboration efforts with UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Women and UNICEF. The collaboration resulted in the development of a unified reporting template, a first in the UN system, to allow organizations to report across specific outcomes. UNOPS welcomes this standardized approach to reporting and the experience of working with other organizations as it allows learning exchanges with its sister agencies. UNOPS hopes to initiate similar learning platforms with UNDP and UNFPA to continue to improve and learn from each other. In parallel, UNOPS continues to contribute and participate in inter-agency forums such as: the newly formed Executive Group to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment in which the UNOPS ASG and Deputy Executive Director for Management and Policy is a member of; the Working Group on the United Nations IPP; the United Nations SEA Working Group and the IASC PSEAH Technical Advisory Group. Increasing engagement and participation is anticipated as the UNOPS PSEAH team and expertise grows.

## **7. Culture change that addresses the root causes of SEA and sexual harassment is advanced**

### **7.1. Prioritization of organizational culture and behavior change initiatives to reduce sexual misconduct**

UNOPS recognizes that its organizational culture plays a critical role in tackling SEA and sexual harassment and has taken a number of steps and actions since May 2022 to shift and transform the organizational culture. Here are a few examples that UNOPS leadership has committed to implementing in 2024 as part of the organization culture change journey:

#### **Tone from the top**

- Strengthen implementation of the restated strategic plan 2022-2025, embracing United Nations values and emphasizing impact, quality, and service to partners and beneficiaries.
- Cascade communications to ensure alignment of messaging across all leadership and management levels of the organization, inspiring and instilling new behaviors.

#### **Accountability**

- Develop and deploy a new code of conduct for personnel.
- Overhaul and revamp the whistleblowing process.
- Strengthen platforms for expressing complaints and concerns, and timely resolution of issues.
- Strengthen application of the accountability framework across the organization.
- Enforce consistent measures for non-compliance with policies and ethical standards, across all levels of the organization.

### **Future proof culture**

- Identify the desired behaviors that embrace the values of our organization and support implementation of the strategic plan.
- Ensure that desired behaviors are role-modeled, starting from the top and cascading through the organization. Along this journey, UNOPS will continue to assess gender parity, and particularly gender equality in leadership positions.

Addressing gender inequality and discrimination is another important aspect of organizational culture change. This continues to be a priority for UNOPS especially at senior levels and is essential for combating sexual misconduct. The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) strategy catalyzed the organization to reach gender parity globally in 2021, and has moved UNOPS closer to gender parity in senior roles (43%) at the end of 2023.

### **7.2. Staff perception and engagement surveys inform actions to improve the organizational culture**

As agreed with the Executive Board, UNOPS will continue doing pulse surveys to measure personnel engagement. The Pulse Surveys will measure and track perceptions regarding reporting misconduct and perceptions about the organization's ability to respond appropriately when concerns are raised. Clear action plans will be designed from each survey to respond to the issues raised, thereby improving personnel's trust in the reporting and response mechanism.