

**UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS EXECUTIVE BOARD
SECOND REGULAR SESSION**

**BACKGROUND PAPER ON RESPONSE
TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (SEA) AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT (SH)**

I. Update by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Since the start of the COVID crisis, UNDP has seen a significant drop in sexual misconduct reporting - only 6 reports received as of 14 August 2020 (2 SEA, 3 SH, 1 sexual assault (SA)) compared to 19 reports this time last year. This is a concern, but perhaps not surprising given the majority of UNDP personnel have been teleworking since March, and it has been more difficult to engage with communities in the field.

Nevertheless, UNDP's efforts to prevent and tackle SH and SEA have intensified to ensure the momentum gained over the last two years is not lost. The Administrator and his senior management team of ASGs have continued to raise the issue at global and regional townhall meetings and the SH/SEA Task Force, under the Administrator's direction has focused on implementing our corporate Strategy and Action Plan (2020-2021) in the 4 priority areas of a) prevention, b) reporting and response, c) victim/survivor support, and d) accountability. Taking into account the impact and constraints of COVID-19, in 2020 the Taskforce is focusing on:

1. Strengthening country capacities to prevent and respond to SEA and SH;
2. Improved access to reporting mechanisms and quality assistance to victims/survivors;
3. Building SEA and SH safeguards into UNDP programmes and projects, with a special emphasis on strengthening the accountability of Implementing Partners; and
4. Ensuring accountability for action through performance management and annual certification.

Sexual Harassment

While there has been a drop in the allegations of SH in the workplace, globally there has been a disturbing surge in cases of domestic violence directly related to the lock down. Although the perpetrators may not be members of UNDP, personnel remain vulnerable. All personnel have been reminded to alert management when they themselves experience abuse or become aware of other colleagues in such situations so that action can be taken. Resources that have been made available to personnel include:

- counselling services through the Office of Human Resources in UNDP and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security's (UNDSS) Critical Incident Stress Management Unit (CISMU);
- externally managed independent helpline, which was recently extended;
- new guidance for staff and managers on how to deal with situations of domestic violence, including identifying local gender-based violence institutions that can provide support on the ground.

UNDP continues to roll out the pilot programme of Respectful Workplace Facilitators (RWFs) launched in 2019 under the umbrella of the Ombudsman's Office in 23 Country Offices. RWFs are trained in conflict management skills and serve on a voluntary basis as a confidential resource for anyone experiencing any form of harassment – including sexual harassment - abuse of authority, discrimination or conflict in the workplace.

Two P3 level staff members specializing in sexual misconduct started work in the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) on 8 February and 30 June 2020. There are now three full-time OAI investigators working primarily on sexual misconduct cases.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

The current lockdown has also meant that it has been more difficult to get out to the communities we support to raise the issue and ensure that those that are suffering from this abuse are able to report. However, we continue to work closely with our sister agencies, building on the work we have already done including:

- Providing specific training for country offices on how to handle SH and SEA during COVID-19 and on how to raise the profile of SH and SEA with our implementing partners;
- supporting our newly appointed UNDP PSEA focal points in 24 high risk countries to help them find opportunities to reach out to communities even during this most difficult time. We look forward to training the next group of PSEA focal points once the lock down has eased;
- Rolling out a new PSEA training package for UN personnel and Implementing Partners including delivering training webinars for our country offices.
- Raising the profile of SEA issues with senior management responsible for designing our COVID-19 programme responses to ensure these risks are properly taken into account.
- Ensuring the mandatory on-line SH/SEA training is completed by all personnel.
- Continuing to work with the SEA Working Group led by the Office of the Special Coordinator on various SEA related initiatives including options to pilot the new incident reporting form, e-IRF.

In July, UNDP ran a comprehensive survey on what action country offices are taking in response to SEA (including taking into account the COVID-19 crisis). 98 of 130 Country Offices responded, providing us with, for the first time, a rich source of data to inform our thinking and approach.. Data is still being reviewed but some key findings include:

- 53% of respondents believe SEA is a serious risk in their duty station and 60% believe that COVID-19 has increased this risk;
- 98% confirm that UNDP leadership is actively involved in SEA prevention work; 1 out of 5 countries already have a joint inter-agency PSEA coordination mechanism in place; 60% have a UNDP PSEA mechanism in place; and 95% confirm there is a UNDP PSEA focal point in their office (24 are in high-risk duty stations);
- 93% confirm that UNDP personnel are well informed about SEA standards and prevention measures;
- 40% confirm that SEA is properly reflected in the risk logs of UNDP programmes/projects, including those programmes/projects related to the current COVID-19 crisis;
- 40% report that discussions with Implementing Partners have been organized to discuss SEA standards and their needs. Work with Implementing Partners to identify and address SEA risks is on-going;
- 41% confirm that community-based complaint mechanisms are already in place;
- 71% confirm that local victim/survivor support service providers (e.g. national or local gender-based violence centers) have been identified to assist victims/survivors of SEA.

Looking ahead

To learn lessons and help inform our approaches going forward, UNDP also conducted a review of the 69 SH, SEA and SA reports received in 2018-2020, given that we had a significant increase from an average of 6-7 reports a year up to 2017, increasing to 32 reports (12 SEA and 20 SH) in 2018 and 31 reports (11 SEA, 16 SH, 4 SA) in 2019. This review is still underway but initial findings include:

- Women remain most vulnerable. Of the 69 sexual misconduct cases received, 98.5% of the subjects were male. Of the 25 SEA cases received, 61.5% of victims were female; 26.9% male and 11.6%

unknown. Of the 39 SH cases received, 93.4% of the victims were female, 4.1% male and 2.5% unknown. Of the 5 SA cases (for 2019 and 2020 only), 83.3% of the victims were female, 16.7% male.

- 70.7% of SH complaints received were made against staff; 21.9% against a Service Contract/Individual Consultant (IC) holder; 2.5% against a vendor and 4.9% unknown.
- 36% of SEA complaints received were made against FTA type contract holders; 40% IC/SC/LTA contract holders.

With remote work likely to be a prominent feature of the future of work, even post-COVID-19, there might be an additional risk of an increase in cyber harassment and abuse. There has been no data on this yet, however we are keeping this under close review.

Again, this information will help inform our thinking and planning going forward.

We anticipate that, as the COVID crisis hopefully eases, our efforts at prevention of SH/SEA will ramp up to address what will likely be an uptick in activity. In the meantime, we will continue to implement our current strategy and action plan with a focus on:

- i. raising awareness about SH and SEA among UNDP personnel, beneficiaries, and implementing partners;
- ii. identifying and strengthening national and community-level mechanisms for complaints and victim support;
- iii. enhancing capacity to identify and address risks of SH and SEA in all aspects of UNDP operations; and
- iv. effectively investigating and taking action against perpetrators in all cases of SH and SEA.

In implementing these measures UNDP is committed to be even more outward and forward looking, e.g. involving non-UN partners in task forces, doing more outreach, translating messaging into action and deepening trust in the reporting process.

II. Update by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

UNFPA is committed to nurturing a safe and trusted environment, which safeguards anyone in contact with the organization. Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (PSEAH) remains a key priority for UNFPA also during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Impact of COVID-19

As seen in previous public health emergencies, the outbreak of a pandemic increases the risks of gender-based violence. Disruptions to livelihoods, coupled with isolation measures, exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. Access to information on protection mechanisms may be limited. Complaint and reporting channels and services may be compromised. Women and children, in particular, face increased protection risks.

UNFPA has taken several immediate measures in response to the pandemic, including:

- Operational guidance and technical support to all UNFPA country offices to ensure continuity of PSEA processes;
- Dedicated sessions on PSEA during COVID-19 for all UNFPA PSEA focal points;
- Consultations with selected interagency PSEA networks in high-risk duty stations to provide tailored support during the crisis; and

- Communications to all staff to reinforce zero tolerance for all sexual wrongdoing, including sexual harassment in digital and online communication.

COVID-19 has compounded existing challenges but not fundamentally affected the 2020/21 workplan. With the exception of face-to-face trainings, which have been substituted - to the extent possible with virtual modules - work is progressing as planned.

2020/21 Priorities and Workplan

Over the past two years, UNFPA significantly strengthened its institutional PSEAH framework. A detailed progress update was provided within the UNFPA Integrated midterm review and progress report on the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 (DP.FPA/2020/4 Part 1).

The Fund's priority now is to ensure effective functioning of these measures on the ground. To this end, and jointly with its UN partners, UNFPA is currently implementing a range of actions across the following strategic areas:

1. Strengthen country capacities and structures:

- UNFPA focuses on capacity building and training of its country offices, and provided dedicated sessions to all PSEA focal points and heads of offices in 2020.
- Due to its leadership role in the area of GBV, UNFPA personnel are currently leading or co-leading interagency PSEA efforts in 14 priority countries. Capacity strengthening focuses particularly on those operations. There remains, however, a critical need for sustainable investment in interagency mechanisms, including appointment of full-time PSEA coordinators to manage country-level networks.
- Improving access to reporting and complaints mechanisms remains of critical importance. To this end, UNFPA contributed to the development of an electronic incident reporting form to facilitate intake of allegations. UNFPA's implementation of the tool will commence in September 2020.

2. Strengthening implementing partner accountability:

- In July 2020, UNFPA rolled-out the implementing partner PSEA Assessment. This harmonized interagency tool has been developed jointly with UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR. It is in line with the minimum standards of the United Nations Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse involving Implementing Partners and intended to give UN entities assurance of partners' organizational capacities on PSEA and determine monitoring and support activities.
- UNFPA is operationalizing the tool in a phased approach starting with non-governmental partners operating in high-risk environments.

3. Improving assistance to victims of sexual wrongdoing:

- UNFPA is currently conducting a mapping exercise of services available to victims of sexual wrongdoing. The mapping aims at identifying availability and gaps in services and will serve as a baseline to improve access to quality assistance.
- Work in this area is undertaken in close collaboration with the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

Continued communication remains an integral part of UNFPA's PSEAH work with over 30 general and targeted sessions for managers and personnel held in 2020. Close collaboration among UNFPA's internal

stakeholders ensures a holistic approach to all forms of workplace abuses and improved clarity of roles and responsibilities. The PSEA online training remains mandatory for all new recruits; it will be complemented in 2020 by smaller, context specific sessions in country offices. A dedicated PSEAH microsite, accessible to all personnel, has relevant, up-to-date information and resources on PSEAH.

In September 2020, UNFPA will conduct a knowledge survey to assess impact and effectiveness of the measures taken, identify remaining capacity gaps and adapt its approach as necessary.

In January 2021, UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem will assume the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Championship on PSEAH. Building on the work of previous Champions and considering its unique expertise, UNFPA will focus on key priority results to strengthen a victim-centered approach to the humanitarian sector's response to sexual wrongdoing.

III. Update by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

UNOPS has taken the following actions.

1. Strengthened country capacities:

- PSEA focal points were appointed in nine offices (Jordan, DR Congo, Central African Republic, Haiti, South Sudan, Myanmar, UNMAS Mali, Palestine, and Water and Energy Cluster) to implement the agenda to combat SEA.
- Meetings with all PSEA focal points were organized to understand the current progress in the PSEA Action Plan implementation.
- PSEA focal points participated in an inter-agency training session hosted by UNFPA.
- PSEA focal points network was established on the UNOPS intranet to share guidance and learning opportunities.
- New communication channels for PSEA focal points were established to facilitate informal communication between them and strengthen the network.
- PSEA awareness-raising posters, No-Excuse card, and a Risk Management Toolkit were distributed globally. They remain accessible on the UNOPS intranet.
- A global webinar series in English, French, and Spanish for the HR practitioners in the field were conducted in July 2020 chaired by Diversity and Inclusion Specialist on Enabling Environments - Standard of Conduct including PSEA. Around 100+ participants attended.
- The HQ PSEA Taskforce is adapting and will distribute the relevant content from the checklist to Protect from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse during COVID-19 shared by the IASC.

2. Strengthened accountability of Implementing Partners:

- The UNOPS Sustainable Procurement Framework was implemented in January 2020. As part of this UNOPS conducts due diligence assessment of its suppliers through the Delivering Responsibility in Vendor Engagement ([DRiVE](#)) programme, which includes a PSEA related enquiry to provide safeguarding through downstream engagements.
- Also since January 2020, all suppliers responding to a tender for Long Term Agreement (LTA), Invitation To Bid (ITB) and Request For Proposal (RFP) for goods and services above \$50,000 must complete the DRiVE Supplier Questionnaire which includes one question on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: "Does your company have a mechanism for preventing, reporting and investigating cases of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse?"
- The intent to collect data on the existence of PSEA prevention/reporting/investigation mechanisms for UNOPS potential suppliers is to assess the potential risks related to PSEA in relation to our

procurement activities, and also to raise the suppliers' awareness on the importance of PSEA for UNOPS. This exercise is built on a specific clause (§28) in the [General Conditions of Contract \(GCC\)](#) of all UNOPS contracts to help prevent SEA. It helps UNOPS understand what mechanism the supplier has in place for preventing, reporting and investigating cases of SEA, and therefore the maturity of the management system they have in place.

- UNOPS maintains a [dashboard](#) of the collected data for further analysis and action, for example in conducting background checks, and identifying gaps to close with voluntary corrective action by the supplier (for further details, please see page [6](#) and select Question #17, for an overview of question text and response options).
- As a next step, UNOPS will seek to deploy globally a similar approach for its Implementing Partners, building on the due diligence assessment piloted in selected UNOPS grant support management programmes.

3. Improved access to quality assistance:

- The size and exposure of UNOPS to SEA risk were limited due to the fact that only a small portion of UNOPS portfolio (13% in 2018/2019) was in the humanitarian sector and within this segment, UNOPS activities were of a support services nature to humanitarian actors, rather than working directly with beneficiaries. This had an impact on the actions we could take to provide improved access to quality assistance for the victims of the SEA.
- UNOPS has adopted a victim-centred approach and implemented the measures recommended at the UN System-level to protect victims of Sexual Harassment and victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- Our PSEA field focal points started to work or will be working with inter-agency task forces to ensure victims are connected with the local resources to provide the necessary support.