



Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse:

A Practical Toolkit for
United Nations Senior Leaders
in-Country



**United
Nations**

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Foreword

Sexual exploitation and abuse violate everything that the United Nations stands for. Such heinous acts, when committed by United Nations personnel, destroy the trust underpinning our work and limit our ability to fulfill our mandates towards the people and communities we serve. We must spare no effort to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse while putting the rights and dignity of victims at the centre of our work.

In 2017, the United Nations launched a comprehensive strategy to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, placing strong leadership at the heart of our efforts to eliminate this scourge from our organization. As senior UN leaders, you play a pivotal role in translating these commitments into concrete actions, promoting and upholding the highest standards of integrity in our work. Your leadership sets the tone, and it is essential that this commitment cascades through all levels of management, fostering a culture of respect and responsibility.

This toolkit is designed to provide clear and practical leadership tools to implement prevention strategies and programs to protect from sexual exploitation and abuse. Let us lead by example and commit to confront sexual exploitation and abuse head-on with the urgency that it demands.

António Guterres

Secretary-General of the United Nations

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Any queries regarding the translations will be handled by the OSCSEA (oscsea@un.org).

Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the UN
Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OSC-SEA)

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“Combatting SEA demands more than a mere strategy. It requires a strong, personal, and unwavering commitment to confronting the problem on a regular basis at all levels of management.”

—UN Secretary-General

UN Global Town Hall, 1 February 2024

Introduction

Why this toolkit?

Senior leaders play a vital role in translating global commitments on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) into tangible actions on the ground. Their proactive engagement is paramount for driving change and upholding the highest standards of integrity and accountability within the United Nations (UN) in the countries where the UN operates, fostering an environment where sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) are not tolerated.

However, initial research conducted by the Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the response to SEA (OSC-SEA) for this toolkit confirmed the **lack of practical guidance available for senior leaders** regarding their roles and responsibilities for PSEA. This was further confirmed by interviews with UN senior leaders, including Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators (RCs/HCs) and country representatives (country representatives) of UN agencies, funds, and programs (AFPs). While many senior leaders understand their significant responsibilities and want to do the right thing on PSEA, they often lack clarity on how to effectively engage with this complex and multifaceted issue in diverse contexts. This toolkit aims to bridge this gap.

Who is the toolkit for?

The toolkit is tailored for UN senior leaders operating at the country level, including RCs, HCs, Heads of Mission (HOMs), deputy special representatives of the Secretary-General (DSRSGs), as well as country representatives of AFPs. Other

types of senior leaders may also find its content beneficial, including:

- Senior leaders of implementing partners of the UN, including government institutions, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and local civil society organizations.
- Senior leaders/commanders of military and police components of peacekeeping and political missions.
- Senior leaders of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (refugee coordinators) in refugee operation contexts.¹
- Senior leaders working at the regional or sub-regional levels.

Additionally, managers and staff who support senior leaders, like chiefs or heads of senior leaders' offices and safeguarding, development, human resources and other related personnel may also find the content useful, as it can strengthen their understanding of what is expected from senior leaders and help them better support these leaders in successfully fulfilling their duties.

This toolkit is also highly relevant for all personnel with expertise and specific responsibilities for PSEA tasks. This includes dedicated PSEA experts, such as interagency PSEA coordinators and PSEA officers, as well as personnel whose roles include but are not exclusive to PSEA, such as PSEA focal points and members of the conduct and discipline team (CDT) in mission settings. This wide range of personnel with expertise and dedicate responsibilities for PSEA are referred to as PSEA personnel throughout this toolkit.

¹ In a refugee setting, the refugee coordinator holds collective responsibility for PSEA, similar to the RC/HC's roles and responsibilities in development and humanitarian contexts. (IASC, [Guidance Note. Inter-Agency Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Referral Procedures](#), September 2023).

What is in this toolkit?

The toolkit is structured around six key action areas, reflecting the specific actions senior leaders are expected to take in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities on PSEA. These six areas are consistent with UN policies and systems on PSEA, including [the Secretary-General's Strategy on PSEA \(2017\)](#) and [the Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for PSEA](#).²

For each action area, the toolkit provides:

- A clear rationale for why leadership is needed.
- How-to guidance on what senior leaders should do to fulfill their PSEA responsibilities.
- Practical tools to support senior leaders undertaking PSEA-related tasks.

Moreover, the toolkit offers resources on key topics covered in the toolkit for country-level implementation of PSEA.

How does the toolkit address different types of senior leaders and contexts?

It is important to understand that different types of senior leaders have distinct roles and responsibilities regarding PSEA. This means that they have distinct individual responsibilities based on their exact positions and the internal policies of the individual entity they represent (e.g., mission, RCO/HO, AFP). As leaders of entities that are part of the UNCT/HCT, all senior leaders also hold shared collective responsibilities on PSEA. This toolkit recognizes these different roles and types of responsibilities where possible. It consistently emphasizes the **need for senior leaders to assume leadership on PSEA both as part of their individual entities and collectively** as part of the UNCT/HCT. It is complementary to existing policies and guidance on PSEA.

While SEA can occur in any context where the UN and its partners are providing aid to people in need, including development, humanitarian and mission settings, the methods and prevalence for exploitation and abuse may differ based on the systems and resources in place. Thus, **different contexts require customized approaches to SEA response and prevention**. The toolkit draws attention to context-specific considerations or actions when relevant.

² Relevant policies also include [UN Management and Accountability Framework](#) and the [Policy on Accountability for Conduct and Discipline in Field Missions](#).

Key Information on SEA:

- SEA occurs when staff and related personnel from the UN and partner agencies commit sexual misconduct against a member of the local population.³
- SEA is never allowed and is always considered serious misconduct that can lead to immediate termination of contracts and potential criminal prosecution under national law, among other consequences, depending on the severity of the misconduct and category of personnel. Perpetrators may also be in violation of international law, including human rights, humanitarian, and criminal law.
- SEA can occur in any context where the UN is active, as its presence may lead to power imbalances that can be exploited. During emergencies, the lack of security and access to basic services can exacerbate the situation, increasing local populations' dependency on outside support and heightening the risk of SEA.
- Gender is an important factor to consider in SEA as victims/survivors are predominantly women and girls, though boys and men may also be vulnerable. Most perpetrators are men.
- There are no exceptions to the prohibition of sexual activity with children. Sexual activity with individuals under 18 is strictly prohibited, regardless of local laws related to age of consent or cultural norms. Mistaken belief in a child's age is not a defense.
- Staff members aware of incidents of SEA are obliged to [report](#). Failure to report is also considered misconduct.
- The UN has a zero-tolerance, which establishes that SEA is always prohibited and that inaction is unacceptable. However, zero tolerance for SEA does not mean that zero cases should be reported.
- SEA is a distinct issue from Sexual Harassment (SH), which typically occurs within workplace settings between staff members, whereas the victims/survivors of SEA are programme participants or members of the local community. Both SEA and SH are forms of sexual misconduct that are prohibited by the UN and its partners. This toolkit focuses on SEA.

³ Sexual exploitation means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Sexual abuse means actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. ([ST/SGB/2003/13](#))

ACTION AREA

1

**Demonstrate
Leadership
on PSEA**

Why it matters

As a senior leader, you face a multitude of tasks, with PSEA being just one of them. It can be challenging to fully manage those tasks and grasp PSEA's place within organizational and program priorities amidst competing demands. PSEA also intersects with various other issues like compliance, safeguarding, gender-based violence (GBV), sexual harassment (SH), child protection (CP), accountability to affected populations (AAP) and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). More complicated still, responsibilities for addressing SEA are often shared across different programs and operations.

Despite these complexities, making progress on PSEA significantly relies on your active engagement as a senior leader. This is because of your central responsibilities across all aspects of PSEA in-country and because personnel, partners and others look to you for guidance and as a role model.

What to expect

In this section, you will learn:

- How to develop and lead a team that is committed to a strong PSEA approach.
- How to foster an organizational culture that promotes respect and accountability and empowers individuals to uphold the UN's PSEA standards and policies.
- How to recognize, plan and follow through on your core PSEA leadership tasks.

Core responsibilities of UN senior leaders

- Create and maintain an environment that prevents SEA.
- Ensure that protection from SEA is integrated into humanitarian, development and mission coordination structures.
- Ensure that a country-level action plan to address SEA is developed and implemented.
- Ensure that a quality, victim-centered reporting and assistance mechanism is operational.

Source: [Frequently Asked Questions on Inter-Agency PSEA. IOM's lessons learned from PSEA implementation in-country](#)

What to do

Here are specific actions you as a senior leader can take to demonstrate strategic leadership on PSEA:

- **Lead by example** by consistently adhering to UN standards and principles in all your actions and decisions. This means treating everyone with respect and dignity, regardless of their background or situation, and being aware of any existing power imbalances, taking care not to exploit them. It also means prioritizing direct engagement with communities and amplifying their voices and perspectives on PSEA and demonstrating personal commitment to fulfilling all your PSEA duties, both as a leader and as personnel. For instance, this includes actively participating in mandatory PSEA trainings and communicating this commitment to other personnel to ensure their participation.
- **Showcase personal commitment to PSEA** through actions and words to emphasize that SEA is never acceptable and that you would never engage in it, quietly condone it or turn a blind eye to it when it occurs. Showcasing your commitment also involves speaking openly and clearly about your commitment to PSEA whenever feasible. For example, this can include participating as a speaker in PSEA training sessions, highlighting the importance of PSEA in various speeches and dialogues (even if the primary topic is not specifically dedicated to PSEA) and encouraging and engaging in open discussions and awareness raising efforts on PSEA with personnel, partners, donors, communities, and other stakeholders (see [Action Area 2](#)).
- **Promote and discuss with personnel the importance of zero tolerance for misconduct and failure to report.** To do this you can encourage personnel and partners to reflect on what they can do individually and collectively as the UN and/or a specific entity/ office/team to reinforce their commitment to the zero tolerance policy and promote open communication to ensure that personnel, partners and community members can safely and easily report concerns or incidents.
- **Develop a clear understanding of your PSEA-related roles and responsibilities.** You can start by thoroughly reviewing the responsibilities outlined in UN policies and guidelines (See [Tool 1](#)), as well as any additional policies from your individual organization. You can also engage in peer-to-peer dialogues (formal and informal) with other senior leaders to exchange perspectives on best practices and lessons learned to inform your approach to successfully fulfilling your PSEA responsibilities.
- **Grow your PSEA-related leadership skills** by reflecting on your personal strengths and areas for growth in the context of the specific country or region you work in. To this end you can create a personal PSEA action plan to help you clearly identify the specific actions you are taking (plan to take) to be a strong and effective leader on PSEA and to hold yourself accountable for fulfilling your planned tasks (see [Tool 2](#)).
- **Integrate PSEA into your organization's strategies, plans, and programs.** To do this, you should thoroughly review the UN country-level PSEA action plan⁴ to identify relevant priorities and collaborate with relevant PSEA personnel to align these priorities with upcoming initiatives in your entity (e.g., mission, UNCT/HCT, AFP). Similarly, you should oversee efforts to integrate and coordinate support for victims/survivors of SEA into GBV, CP, and AAP services. Another important step is supporting relevant program managers across (sub)sectors to integrate PSEA risk identification and management into program planning and implementation.

⁴ All UNCTs/HCTs are required to develop a UN country-level PSEA action plan (see [template](#)), according to the MAF.

Practical tools

TOOL 1 CHECKLIST OF SENIOR LEADERS' PSEA RESPONSIBILITIES (IN-COUNTRY)

This tool provides a checklist organized by action area to help you as a senior leader understand and fulfill your mandatory PSEA responsibilities according to UN policies and guidance, including:

- The [Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse \(SG Bulletin\)](#)
- The [UN Management and Accountability Framework \(MAF\)](#)
- The [Policy on Accountability for Conduct and Discipline in Field Missions \(Policy for field missions\)](#)
- The [Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA \(MOS-PSEA\)](#)
- The United Nations Updated Guidance Note: Requirements and procedures for all United Nations entities for sharing information for sharing information on sexual exploitation and/or abuse related to United Nations staff and related personnel and implementing partner personnel with the most United Nations senior official in country, 8 June 2023) (OSC-SEA guidance note).

UN Senior Leaders' PSEA Responsibilities Checklist

DEMONSTRATING LEADERSHIP

For all senior leaders

- Create and maintain an environment that prevents SEA and take appropriate measures for this purpose. (SG Bulletin, MAF).

ADVOCATING AND RAISING AWARENESS

For all senior leaders

- Promote and advocate for UN fundamental values, standards, and principles, including PSEA. (MAF)⁵

For RCs/HCs

- Annually certify to the Secretary-General that you have fostered communication and collaboration among UNCT/HCT members. Ensure that as a minimum, you communicate to them the importance of promptly reporting all allegations transparently and the necessity of mandatory SEA prevention training for personnel and partners. (MAF)

⁵ The Minimum Operating Standards for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (MOS-PSEA), created by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), are a mandatory set of requirements designed to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by UN entities and partners.

STRENGTHENING PSEA SYSTEMS

For all senior leaders

- Implement the requirements for your entity and its implementing partners to establish safeguards and take appropriate actions related to SEA, in accordance with the Minimum Operating Standards for PSEA (MOS-PSEA).

For RCs/HCs

- Lead the development of a collective country-level PSEA strategy and action plan to promote a systematic response to SEA, identifying trends, risks, capacities and gaps. (MAF)
- Ensure that the UNCT has a strategy to provide assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. (MAF)

For UNCT/HCT members

- Contribute to the development a collective country-level PSEA Action Plan. (MAF)
- Contribute to the development of an annual update of the country level PSEA Action Plan, providing formal feedback to RC/HC on existing policies and procedures relating to accountability for PSEA by implementing partners, service providers, or suppliers. (MAF)
- Oversee the implementation of the collective PSEA Action Plan. This includes: 1) actively addressing PSEA issues when raised in UNCT/HCT meetings; 2) establishing and supporting the effective coordination and functionality of a PSEA network; 3) ensuring that the UNCT/HCT has a strategy to fulfill its accountability to provide and facilitate assistance and support to victims/survivors of SEA. (MAF)

For HOMs

- With the assistance of your Chief of Staff (COS) where applicable, ensure that discipline is maintained in the field mission. This entails that activities to prevent the occurrence of misconduct are carried out, including on occasions with your direct involvement. (Policy for Field Missions)
- Report to the Secretary-General on the implementation of measures taken to address misconduct in field missions, including the implementation of the Secretary-General's three-pronged strategy to address sexual exploitation and abuse. (Policy for Field Missions)

UN Senior Leaders' PSEA Responsibilities Checklist

OVERSEEING CASE MANAGEMENT

For all senior leaders

- Take appropriate action in cases where there is reason to believe that SEA has occurred, in accordance with established rules and procedures for dealing with cases of staff misconduct. (SG Bulletin)
- Promptly inform the Department of Management of its investigations into cases of SEA, and the actions your entity has taken as a result of such investigations. (SG Bulletin)
- Promptly inform the most senior UN official in country (usually the RC/HC) of any allegations of SEA involving UN staff, related personnel, and implementing partners. (OSC-SEA guidance note)
- [For individual entities] follow up and investigate SEA allegations concerning their personnel, as well as the provision of support and assistance to victims/survivors and protection for PSEA. (MAF)

For RCs/HCs

- Communicate to UNCT/HCT the importance of reporting all allegations to their respective entities with diligence and transparency. (MAF)

For HOMs

- Ensure that information or complaints of possible misconduct are promptly reviewed and, if warranted, referred for investigation. (Policy for Field Missions)
- Mandate the conduct of investigations by field mission's personnel, where applicable, and to review and endorse the findings of such investigations, where appropriate. (Policy for Field Missions)
- Ensure that field mission's investigations are conducted promptly and professionally (excluding those undertaken by UN Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)). (Policy for Field Missions)
- When investigations are completed, ensure that appropriate follow-up actions including public awareness activities are taken, if within your authority, or recommended for actions at Headquarters (HQ). (Policy for Field Missions)
- Support efforts by the UNCT in relation to remedial actions in instances involving SEA. (Policy for Field Missions)

RECRUITING AND SUPPORTING PSEA PERSONNEL

For all senior leaders

- Appoint an official, at a sufficiently high level, to serve as a focal point for receiving reports on cases of SEA. (SG Bulletin).

For RCs/HCs

- Ensure that PSEA is coordinated at the country level, advocating for a dedicated PSEA Coordinator and PSEA focal points where needed. (MAF)

GENERATING AND ALLOCATING RESOURCES

For RCs/HCs

- Advocate for and prioritize adequate resources to enhance awareness of existing mechanisms to receive complaints and provide assistance to victims/survivors, as well as for establishing new mechanisms for these purposes if necessary. (MAF)

As HOMs

- Ensure that the field mission's personnel have the support necessary to carry out conduct and discipline related activities. (Policy for Field Missions)

Personal Action Plan on Advancing PSEA for [NAME] in [LOCATION], [MONTH/YEAR-MONTH/YEAR]

PRIORITY ACTIONS	RESOURCES (e.g., personnel, funding)	TIMELINE (Month/year)	CHECK-IN DATE (Month/year)	PROGRESS ACHIEVED*	SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES	NEXT STEPS
<p>SAMPLE 1: Review the UN PSEA country-level action plan before approval.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing from my PSEA focal point (FP) Assessment criteria (see Tool 6) 	[DATE]	[DATE]	Substantial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carefully reviewed the plan and shared suggestions for improvement on budgeting/funding with my PSEA FP, who will follow up with the PSEA network on needed adjustments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check back in with the PSEA FP in one month (DATE) to see what changes have been made.
<p>SAMPLE 2: Organize bi-monthly town halls with personnel on PSEA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logistics Technical support from PSEA FP 	[DATE]	[DATE]	Partial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only had one townhall so far in 6 months due to time constraints. Received positive feedback, but signaled need for training on SEA and SH. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with my logistics team and PSEA FP to move to a bi-monthly schedule. Follow up with my PSEA FP about training opportunities on SEA and SH so I can report on this at the next town hall.

*Progress levels (None, limited, partial, substantial, completed, N/A)

Personal Action Plan on Advancing PSEA for [NAME] in [LOCATION], [MONTH/YEAR-MONTH/YEAR]

PRIORITY ACTIONS	RESOURCES (e.g., personnel, funding)	TIMELINE (Month/year)	CHECK-IN DATE (Month/year)	PROGRESS ACHIEVED*	SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES	NEXT STEPS
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						

TOOL 2 PERSONAL PSEA ACTION PLANNING TOOL

This tool enables you as a senior leader to plan and implement specific, time-bound actions on PSEA that require your leadership and are essential for advancing PSEA in your context. This action plan template covers a one-year timeframe. However, you should plan to update it every six months to assess your progress and make any needed adjustments. In this way, the exercise also serves as a method of self-accountability by enabling you to evaluate your progress and where you might make adjustments to increase your effectiveness.

To identify the tasks you want to include in your plan, you can consider the six action areas outlined in this toolkit and also look at the specific responsibilities of senior leaders outlined in [Tool 1](#). You can also consult colleagues involved in PSEA both internally and externally to your organization or the UN. When selecting tasks to include in your action plan, be sure to consider the unique aspects of the context you work in, the amount of time you can realistically expect to allocate, and the financial and human resources available to support your efforts.

ACTION AREA

2

**Advocate
and Raise
Awareness
on PSEA**

Why it matters

“What is SEA? Why should I care?” You may have heard these questions from UN personnel, partners, government officials, donors and others. This shows that key stakeholders often do not understand the urgency of PSEA or what role they can play in supporting it. Overcoming this knowledge gap requires you as a senior leader to grasp the issue and know how to effectively engage and communicate with different audiences on PSEA.

While you may encounter some resistance or misunderstanding, your influential position as a senior leader offers you a powerful platform to elevate PSEA with internal and external decision-makers. If you get it right, your voice can drive essential organizational reforms and systemic change on PSEA, strip away the secrecy and shame that often mark the issue and ensure that funding and resources are readily available. Just as importantly, you can make a difference in upholding the rights of victims/survivors by ensuring a safe, transparent, timely and effective response to SEA allegations or cases.

What to expect

In this section, you will learn:

- How to gather information on relevant PSEA priorities and risks in your context.
- How to tailor messages to various audiences.
- Approaches and tips for advocating for PSEA effectively.

What to do

Here are specific actions you as a senior leader can take to advocate and raise awareness on PSEA:

- **Know about the PSEA priorities and challenges in your specific context.** A first step to attaining this knowledge is to review the PSEA policies, frameworks and key terms that are most relevant in your context. If available, you can consult the most recent PSEA country-level action plan and your organization’s PSEA action plan. You can also engage in open discussions with relevant colleagues, such as those working on CP, GBV, CRSV and AAP to obtain and review relevant risk assessments, program documents and security assessments. Reviewing the results of the annual staff survey on SEA is also an important step.⁶
- **Elevate key PSEA messages that align with UN policies and standards.** In your communications about PSEA you should highlight the UN’s core policies and priorities on PSEA, namely the zero tolerance policy and the responsibility to report all concerns and incidents. You can also champion other key themes that align with the UN’s values and policies on PSEA (as outlined in the [Secretary-General’s Strategy on PSEA](#), the [Secretary-General’s Bulletin on Special Measures for PSEA](#) and the [IASC Core Principles](#)) and reflect the UN PSEA country-level action plan and other key priorities.

⁶ The survey gathers information, thoughts and perceptions of PSEA from UN personnel worldwide. The results, both entity and country-specific, are shared with the RC and/or respective heads of agencies. It includes a multi-year trend analysis spanning the six years of the survey (2018-2023) and disaggregated data per location or entity. (See <https://www.un.org/en/delegate-delegate/annual-survey-concerning-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>).

- **Tailor messages to the specific audience you are addressing.** This means understanding who is in your audience (e.g., personnel, community members, victims/survivors, media etc.), understanding how and why PSEA is relevant to the audience, and choosing the right tone and delivery platform. (See [Tool 3](#)) For instance, when speaking with:
 - **UN personnel:** You can reiterate the zero-tolerance and other policies that apply to them, explain how these relate directly to their day-to-day work and personal lives (e.g., when hiring staff, when going out at night, when on leave), and communicate through small team meetings, at larger town hall sessions and/or through relevant electronic communications.
 - **SEA victims/survivors:** It is important to convey empathy for their suffering and provide honest and realistic information on the support the UN can provide and to host the dialogue in a venue that is safe, accessible and comfortable for the victim/survivor.
 - **The media:** You can use prepared messages or talking points that are agreed by the UNCT/HCT leadership to describe the UN's policies, services and actions that are in place for PSEA, including what happens when there is an allegation. (Note that you should adjust these prepared messages to the local contexts and update them regularly).
- **Create safe spaces for dialogue.** You should ensure that venues (e.g., town hall meetings, training sessions, workshops and bi-lateral meetings) that bring together relevant personnel and/or partners to address PSEA are designed to foster trust and openness and ensure that all participants feel safe to express their opinions. To create such safe spaces, it is important for you to encourage respect, non-judgmental listening and diversity of thought among all participants. You can do this by leading by example through your own actions and statements and by clearly establishing and communicating ground rules for the space. When appropriate

and feasible engaging a skilled facilitator can be a useful strategy.

- **Take a strategic approach to advocacy for PSEA by knowing the key priorities, target audiences and messages** (see [Tool 4](#)). This approach allows for targeted advocacy by seeking specific opportunities and planning your approach before meetings. Additionally, you can also leverage opportunities for integrating PSEA into broader discussions when relevant. To deepen your strategic approach, begin by familiarizing yourself with the advocacy objectives detailed in your UN country-level PSEA action plan; identifying the primary decisions-makers and thought leaders in your local context; and, determining the most effective tactics for your specific target audience(s) (e.g., bilateral meetings, media campaigns, preparing/sharing reports).

Practical tools

TOOL 3 SAMPLE PSEA MESSAGES FOR TARGETED AUDIENCES

This tool provides you as a senior leader with sample messages to effectively communicate about PSEA efforts within your country context. Organized by audience, it assists you in preparing tailored messages for various situations. Additionally, it offers guidance on adapting these messages to your local context. Often, it is beneficial to start your communications with a brief explanation of what SEA is.

TARGET AUDIENCE	SAMPLE MESSAGES
<p>UN PERSONNEL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UN has a zero-tolerance policy for SEA. SEA is strictly prohibited for all UN personnel and partners, regardless of the local legal or cultural age of majority or age of consent. SEA is never allowed. • You are obligated to report all concerns. All UN personnel are obliged to report concerns or suspicions of SEA. This can be done anonymously online. Failure to report is also considered misconduct. <i>[Tailor by describing the local reporting mechanisms]</i>. Never ask a victim/survivor to speak about details of the incident or investigate allegations yourself. • Addressing SEA requires the efforts of all UN personnel. All personnel need to speak up about inappropriate behavior of colleagues. <i>[Tailor by describing the roles of key personnel in your context]</i>.
<p>PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UN has high standards and so must you. We hold ourselves to a zero-tolerance policy for SEA and we expect you to adhere to these standards. • Preventing SEA is a shared responsibility. Let's work together to create a safe and respectful environment for our communities. <i>[Tailor by describing opportunities for collaboration]</i>. • You must take an active role; we are here to support you. We can assist in ensuring that your organization/personnel meet the required SEA standards. <i>[Tailor by describing what support you can offer]</i>.
<p>LOCAL COMMUNITIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection and assistance are always free. UN personnel may never request any sexual or other favors in exchange for any form of service or assistance. <i>[Tailor by describing what could constitute a favor in the local context]</i>. • UN personnel and partners are prohibited from engaging in SEA. Our personnel and partners are strictly prohibited from committing SEA. We have a zero-tolerance policy for these actions. Perpetrators will be punished. <i>[Tailor by sharing information from a relevant local case]</i>. • You have rights. You have rights as a community member, which the UN and our partners are obligated to uphold. You have the right to be treated with respect and dignity, as well as the right to know why the UN is present in your area and what it is doing. <i>[Tailor by giving examples of the specific rights that are relevant for the audience]</i>. • Report your concerns. You have the right to report any case or suspicion of SEA without fear of retaliation for you or your community. <i>[Tailor by describing local reporting mechanisms]</i>.

TARGET AUDIENCE	SAMPLE MESSAGES
VICTIMS/SURVIVORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I take your experience seriously. I am sorry this happened to you; it was not your fault. You are not alone, and we are here to support you during your recovery. <i>[Tailor by describing what support is available].</i> • Your safety and well-being come first. We have strict policies to ensure your identity remains confidential and to protect you from any retaliation or further harm. <i>[Tailor by describing the relevant protection measures].</i> • You are in control of your case. We encourage you to stay engaged in seeking justice for your case, though the decision to engage is fully your choice. Our role is to ensure your voice and views are heard and respected. <i>[Tailor by outlining the main choices for victims/survivors].</i>
DONORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are committed to upholding the zero-tolerance policy for SEA. We strictly prohibit SEA for all personnel and partners. We are also committed to transparency in our efforts to prevent and respond to PSEA. <i>[Tailor by sharing information about the PSEA activities].</i> • We use resources wisely. Each initiative is strategically developed and implemented to maximize our efforts to prevent and respond to SEA. <i>[Tailor by describing the results of programs donors supported in your context].</i> • Donor investments are needed to prevent and respond to SEA. For our PSEA work to continue, we rely on voluntary contributions. We hope you will consider partnering with us in this important effort. <i>[Tailor by sharing the specific details of the work you aim to fund and budgetary needs].</i>
MEDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEA can happen anywhere and at any time, yet situations of crisis, conflict and forced displacement pose the highest risks. <i>[Tailor by describing context-specific risk factors]</i> • Women and children are most often the targets of SEA, but boys and men can be targets too. Additionally, people with disabilities, sexual minorities and other vulnerable groups often face higher risks. <i>[Tailor by describing context-specific risk].</i> • The UN and partners have a zero-tolerance policy for SEA, which we take seriously. We prioritize supporting victims/survivors when incidents occur and holding perpetrators accountable. <i>[Tailor by describing local PSEA efforts].</i>

TOOL 4 TIPS FOR PSEA ADVOCACY

This tool provides tips for senior leaders to help guide and inform your PSEA advocacy efforts. Using these tips can help you as a senior leader create strategic and targeted advocacy approaches for advancing PSEA.

TIP 1: Know your advocacy objectives in advance.	To be effective in advocating for PSEA, preparation is key. It allows you to connect with the right decision-makers and ensures your message is both clear and impactful. It also allows you to capitalize on unexpected opportunities, as PSEA topics may arise spontaneously in meetings. To be prepared, start by identifying two or three specific advocacy objectives that align with the UN-wide and your organization's strategic direction(s) for PSEA and are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound). Building consensus on these objectives with the UNCT/HCT and relevant partners can build support for your goals. In addition to knowing your advocacy objectives, it is useful to know how to talk about them. To do this, you can use country-level data and/or compelling stories to communicate your messages – and remember to practice your delivery.
TIP 2: Unite voices for PSEA advocacy.	Advocacy on PSEA thrives when aid organizations speak with one voice. This is because joining with allies can increase the credibility of advocacy messages, amplify the potential for influence and allow for cost and burden sharing. To build an advocacy coalition, you can engage peer leaders and collaborate with other allies, such as donors, government authorities and local communities.
TIP 3: Use evidence.	When advocating for PSEA, it is important to use evidence and data to the extent possible to illustrate to decision-makers how your proposed actions are expected to mitigate the risk of SEA in your specific context. You can support your advocacy by drawing on data from sources such as the annual staff survey on SEA ⁷ , context-specific risk assessments and analyses of reported allegations and cases.
TIP 4: Put victims/survivors first.	Root your advocacy in the concerns, needs, and rights of victims/survivors, ensuring their priorities are always at the forefront of your efforts to drive change in policies, procedures, and practices (see Tool 8). You can do this by collaborating closely with PSEA personnel, service providers or others and directly engaging with victims/survivors to understand their perspectives and needs. When safe and possible, and with their informed consent, you can directly engage with victims/survivors yourself. Remember that part of your advocacy includes communicate victim/survivor perspectives back to other leaders.
TIP 5: Link PSEA to broader discussions on related topics.	Some stakeholders may not fully grasp the significance or scale of SEA. It is therefore crucial for you to proactively integrate PSEA issues into relevant discussions. For instance, when your entity, partners, or the UNCT/HCT are designing and developing new field programs, ensure that PSEA considerations are included to identify and manage potential risks and secure the necessary resources (see Action Area 6). Similarly, during emergency preparedness and response planning within your entity or at the inter-agency level, incorporate PSEA measures into the conversation, as SEA risks often intensify during crises.

⁷ See <https://www.un.org/en/delegate-delegate/annual-survey-concerning-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>

ACTION AREA

3

**Strengthen
PSEA
Systems
in-Country**

Key PSEA systems and measures

Prevention

- Prohibition of SEA in organizational policies
- Organizational clauses in contracts/agreements on PSEA
- Systematic vetting procedures
- Mandatory PSEA training for personnel and partners
- Awareness-raising on PSEA
- Risk assessments and mitigation plans

Reporting

- Mechanisms for personnel, communities and others to report SEA allegations
- Inter-agency community-based complaint mechanisms and networks (CBCM/CBCN in-country), where appropriate and feasible
- Whistle-blower policy

Assistance for victims/survivors

- Internal/inter-agency referral pathway
- List of available service providers
- Standard Operating Procedures for referral

Accountability and investigations

- Standard process for review of SEA allegations
- Dedicated capacity/resources for investigation(s)
- PSEA investigation policy/procedures

Why it matters

Establishing and strengthening robust systems to prevent, report, and respond to SEA across all countries where the UN operates is crucial. If such systems are weak or broken, there can be a scramble for the UN and its partners to act once a case occurs. You may have seen this type of scramble before — confusion about policies and procedures, a rush to provide services for victims/survivors or uncertainty about roles and responsibilities.

As a senior leader, it is ultimately your responsibility to ensure that the necessary systems (both within your individual entity and for the collective UN represented by the UNCT/HCT) are established and fully functioning — to avoid the scramble. While the technical aspects of the PSEA work may be handled by PSEA personnel and/or an inter-agency PSEA network, you as a senior leader have important responsibilities for cultivating strong and effective PSEA systems.

What to expect

In this section, you will learn:

- 1 How to develop and support the PSEA network and engage your peers.
- 2 How to create (or support the creation of) a realistic and effective UN PSEA country-level action plan.
- 3 How to understand the PSEA risk in your context and what you can do to support risk mitigation.

PSEA Networks⁸

Membership: includes representatives from UN entities, INGOs, and NGOs operating in-country.

Purpose: Coordinates PSEA activities at the technical level by facilitating information sharing and support among member organizations, while also monitoring progress and achievements in-country.

Structure:

- **PSEA chair and co-chair** take an active role at the network level in convening and managing network meetings and events and help coordinate and oversee the UN PSEA country-level action plan. At the senior level, they will ensure that PSEA is addressed as needed at UNCT/HCT meetings.
- **PSEA coordinator** works from an inter-agency position and supports and represents the PSEA network in coordination with the network co-chairs in the fulfillment of its responsibilities.
- **PSEA focal points**, representing each member organization, actively participate in information sharing on internal PSEA initiatives and coordination of activities under the UN PSEA country-level action plan and are responsible for technical support and coordination on PSEA within their organization under the leadership of their senior management.

Source: Adapted from [Terms of Reference in-Country PSEA Network](#)

What to do

Here are specific actions you as a senior leader can take to develop and strengthen PSEA systems in-country:

- **Develop and support the functioning of an in-country PSEA network**, ensuring that it has the necessary structures in place to thrive, including:
 - Clearly defined roles and responsibilities (based on an agreed [Terms of Reference](#)).
 - Clearly identified and agreed PSEA network co-chairs.
 - A full-time, interagency PSEA coordinator (see [Action Area 5](#)).
 - Clearly identified and active PSEA focal points designated from each organization operating in-country (including your own organization), including UN and non-UN partners.
 - A well-defined UN country-level PSEA action plan with specific objectives, clear roles and responsibilities, progress indicators, timelines, and resource allocation.⁹

Your role in providing support and oversight to the network should include:

- Requesting reports from and/or meetings with the PSEA coordinator or the co-chairs to verify that the structures are functioning as intended.
 - Providing strategic guidance and support to assist the network in addressing challenges or gaps.
 - Demonstrating support and leveraging your position of influence to champion the networks' initiatives by regularly attending the networks events.
- **Provide a forum for the PSEA network to give updates and hold discussions on high-priority issues.** An effective way to do this is to encourage the UNCT/HCT to make PSEA a standing agenda item at all meetings. Another option is to hold ad-hoc PSEA-specific meetings as issues arise that need

⁸ This technical, interagency PSEA coordination body can be referred to as a PSEA network, working group, or task force. Additionally, there may be sub-national coordination bodies.

⁹ See [2024 PSEA Country Action Plan Template and 2024 PSEA Country Action Plan – Checklist of Minimum Actions](#)

leadership attention. Additionally, you can liaise with the designated PSEA focal point from your organization to track progress of the PSEA network and jointly identify opportunities where you or your organization can contribute to advancing PSEA efforts.

- **Support the PSEA network in developing strategic priorities for PSEA.** This should be grounded in a thorough assessment of context-specific risks and existing resources (see [Tool 5](#)). This process can foster buy-in from all UNCT/HCT members as well as other relevant stakeholders. You can share these strategic priorities with the PSEA network to inform the UN country-level PSEA action plan (see below) and use them to inform related strategies and work of your own organization and the UNCT/HCT. You can also work with the network to periodically review and update the strategic priorities as necessary.
- **Engage peer leaders on PSEA,** highlighting the importance of PSEA and the benefits of an inter-agency approach to leverage each organizations' capacities, reduce risks, and optimize resource allocation. Bottom of Form
- For example, here are some actions to consider:
 - Talk directly with peers about the importance of PSEA and share your own experiences championing PSEA.
 - Invite other leaders who champion PSEA in your own and other contexts to share their experiences, challenges, and best practices.
 - Encourage all members of the UNCT/HCT to sign a commitment letter on PSEA, emphasizing a shared dedication to the cause and reminding them of their responsibilities.
 - Advocate for increased measures within your organization and with others for leaders to include PSEA actions in their individual performance evaluations.
- **Carefully review the UN country-level PSEA action plan (before signing off on it) and monitor its implementation thereafter.** To this end, you should examine the plan thoroughly and engage in discussions with relevant PSEA personnel and/or UNCT/HCT members to assess feasibility and expected effectiveness. It is also your responsibility, together with the focal point from your organization to ensure that this action plan ties in with your organization's strategic priorities and plans on PSEA. You can use the assessment criteria presented in [Tool 6](#) for this purpose. You should also establish a system for regular check-ins with a representative from the PSEA network to monitor progress on implementation of the action plan and collaboratively address any challenges that may arise.
- **Strengthen your organization's internal PSEA systems to meet the PSEA Minimum Operating Standards (PSEA-MOS).**¹⁰ This involves engaging your designated personnel for PSEA (e.g., PSEA focal point, PSEA officer, CDT/focal point, etc.) and/or other relevant staff (e.g., human resources, program managers) to assess and improve internal capacity, including vetting, training, reporting, victim/survivor assistance, and investigations. As a senior leader, it is also your responsibility to ensure that implementing partners adhere to these standards, including completion of the UN's SEA risk assessment and addressing any identified gaps.¹¹
- **Identify and reduce risks related to SEA in your context.** Here are some key actions to take:
 - on existing risk assessments to help you understand the most pressing risks in the context where you work.¹²

10 The MOS-PSEA provide a common set of requirements that all UN entities and partners must follow to address SEA.

11 For more information, see UN Implementing Partner PSEA Capacity Assessment, which provides the basis for the UN partner's "SEA risk rating" and the Interagency PSEA Implementing Partner Protocol Resource Pack, which aims to support partners in strengthening their PSEA capacities.

12 For instance, the annual survey on perceptions of PSEA among UN personnel can provide valuable insights on SEA risks in their country.

- In areas with heightened SEA risks,¹³ request relevant PSEA personnel to conduct a specific SEA risk assessments to support the development of tailored mitigation plans (see [Key Resources: PSEA risk assessment tools](#)).
- Request program managers, supervisors and/or risk assessment specialists to integrate SEA risks into program and operational risk assessments (and related tools), ensuring that the results inform prevention and mitigation measures.
- Support program managers, supervisors, commanders (if applicable) or other relevant personnel to conduct regular, unannounced audits in field locations to identify and manage risks of SEA, especially in areas identified to have elevated risks.¹⁴

Practical tools

TOOL 5 STEPS FOR PREPARING IN-COUNTRY PSEA STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This tool offers step-by-step guidance for you as a senior leader to support the in-country PSEA network (where it exists) in creating tailored PSEA strategic priorities for the specific country. These priorities can guide development and implementation of the UN country-level PSEA action plan and other strategies of the UNCT/HCT, while also serving as benchmarks to measure progress.

Step 1: Assess PSEA gaps and risks: Evaluate the country context to identify prevalent risks of SEA and any existing gaps in prevention and response measures. This risk assessment should consider existing risk assessments, if available. If there is no such risk assessment already available, it is important for you (with your team) to conduct one and use it to formulate relevant risk mitigation measures. (For examples of risk assessment tools, see [Key Resources](#))

Step 2: Assess the current capacities and resources available within the country to address SEA (e.g., country-specific policies, procedures and mechanisms, funding sources, existing capacities within organizations). Identify organizations and actors with ongoing initiatives related to PSEA, as well as related areas such as GBV, CP, AAP and CRSV. Ensure that you include an assessment of capacities in the following four core areas:

- Prevention (e.g., PSEA policies/codes of conduct, training, awareness-raising)
- Reporting (e.g., mechanisms for reporting incidents, accessibility of reporting channels)
- Investigations and disciplinary actions (e.g., procedures for conducting investigations, disciplinary measures for perpetrators)
- Assistance to victims/survivors (e.g., availability of support services, access to medical, legal, psychosocial, protection and other relevant services).

Step 3: Select strategic priorities. Based on the assessment of SEA risks, existing gaps, and available capacities, prioritize 3-5 key strategic priorities that demonstrate the greatest potential to address the identified challenges. Additional prioritization criteria may include potential impact, feasibility of implementation, and alignment with the UNCT/HCT's country-specific strategies and plans. It is also important to engage stakeholders in the selection process to ensure buy-in and alignment with broader objectives, and regularly review and adjust priorities as needed to maintain relevance and effectiveness.

Examples of strategic priorities include:

- Expansion of the reach of support services for victims/survivors of SEA, focusing on remote locations.

¹³ Criteria for heightened risk may include previous SEA incidents, remoteness, lack of staff supervision, sudden emergencies with rapid recruitment of personnel without proper vetting or training, and/or high vulnerability of population (or specific groups) due to emergencies or other factors.

¹⁴ During these visits, personnel can assess awareness of prohibited behavior, including understanding of reporting channels and the availability of awareness-raising materials on PSEA (e.g., posters, flyers). Additionally, they can engage directly with communities to assess awareness of rights (e.g., right to free assistance, access to project/program information, respectful treatment, reporting inappropriate behavior), prohibited conduct by UN personnel and partners, and procedures for filing complaints.

- Development of inter-agency standard operating procedures (SOPs) for community-based complaint mechanisms/networks (CBCM/CBCN) in-country.
- Appointment of a dedicated, inter-agency PSEA coordinator for the national (and sub-national) PSEA network.

TOOL 6 POTENTIAL CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING UN COUNTRY-LEVEL PSEA ACTION PLAN

This tool provides you as a senior leader with questions for consideration during review of the UN country-level PSEA action plan to assess its effectiveness and feasibility.

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
Integration of Key Components	<p>Does the action plan cover the key components of a PSEA country-level action plan, recognizing that these components will vary by context (e.g., humanitarian, development and mission settings)? The components include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention • Safe and accessible reporting • Victims' right to assistance • Accountability and investigations • PSEA country-level coordination structure (e.g., PSEA network)
Strategic prioritization	<p>Does the action plan focus on the most strategic priorities for PSEA in the specific country context, given the identified gaps and risks? (See Tool 5).</p> <p>Does the action plan effectively leverage opportunities to coordinate with existing strategies and plans of the UN and partners on PSEA and related areas (e.g., risk management, staff trainings, GBV, CP, AAP, gender)?</p>
Context-specific considerations	<p>To what extent does the action plan consider the specific needs, risks, and vulnerabilities of the target population and operating environment?</p> <p>Check relevant risks assessments and analysis.</p>
Integration of lessons learned	<p>How are lessons from the previous action plan(s), including progress made, challenges faced, and solutions identified, integrated into the new plan?</p> <p>Check previous action plan(s), where relevant.</p>

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
Victim-centered approach	Does the action plan prioritize a victim-centered approach, ensuring the rights, dignity, well-being, and safety of victims/survivors of SEA? Will it guarantee that support is available for all victims/survivors of SEA, in line with the UN Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse?) ¹⁵
Community involvement	Are communities sufficiently involved in implementing the action plan, for example by consulting them to ensure reporting mechanisms and prevention and response measures are effective?
Monitoring progress	Is there an adequate process in place for tracking progress on the action plan by the UNCT/HCT? What key indicators would the UNCT/HCT use to assess progress?
Feasibility	<p>Are the proposed activities and timelines outlined in the action plan feasible, considering available resources and operational realities?</p> <p>Is the action plan adequately budgeted for implementation? (see Tool 12)</p> <p>¹⁵ Each UN entity at the country level is responsible for assisting any victim/survivor affected by their personnel, including implementing partners, and should be prepared to allocate internal funds to address any gaps in services for victims/survivors. Also note that assistance should be provided to victims/survivors of SEA, regardless of their involvement in investigations. Refer to the Technical Note for more information on the implementation of the Protocol.</p>

ACTION AREA

4

**Oversee
Management
of SEA
Allegations**

Why it matters

As a senior leader, it is crucial for you to recognize the challenges complainants, who may also be victims/survivors of SEA, face when reporting allegations. Reporting allegations could mean reliving trauma, fearing retaliation and worrying about confidentiality. Given this, it is essential that the UN, and you as a senior leader within the UN, prioritize immediate and effective response to all SEA allegations. You have a critical role to play in ensuring that accountability is achieved, and that the UN maintains a safe environment for all individuals involved in each incident.

Though it is unlikely that you have a role in directly handling allegations or cases, as a senior leader, you bear the responsibility of overseeing the appropriate management of allegations and ensuring that your entity's responses to allegations align with the policies of the UN. Your leadership is also vital in fostering a victim-centered approach which prioritizes the rights and well-being of victims/survivors. Remember, the way the UN responds to allegations and handles cases impacts the extent to which personnel, communities and others trust the UN and its systems to function. It is your role to ensure this trust is warranted.

What to expect

In this section, you will learn:

- How to effectively oversee the handling of SEA allegations.
- How to implement a victim-centered approach.
- How to address gaps in the UN's response to SEA allegations.

What to do

Here are specific actions you can take as a senior leader to oversee the management of SEA allegations:

- **Familiarize yourself with your organization's policies and procedures for responding to reported SEA allegations and how they apply in your specific context.**¹⁶ You can request a briefing from those personnel responsible for knowing the appropriate procedures and referral processes. This briefing should cover the practical aspects of the response — clarifying various roles and responsibilities, identifying any expected challenges and reviewing protocols for handling sensitive case information. It can also be helpful to consult with regional and/or HQ level technical advisors (such as those working on PSEA, gender, safeguarding, AAP, etc.).

¹⁶ Also see: Updated Guidance Note: Requirements and procedures for all United Nations entities for sharing information for sharing information on sexual exploitation and/or abuse related to United Nations staff and related personnel and implementing partner personnel with the most United Nations senior official in country, 8 June 2023.

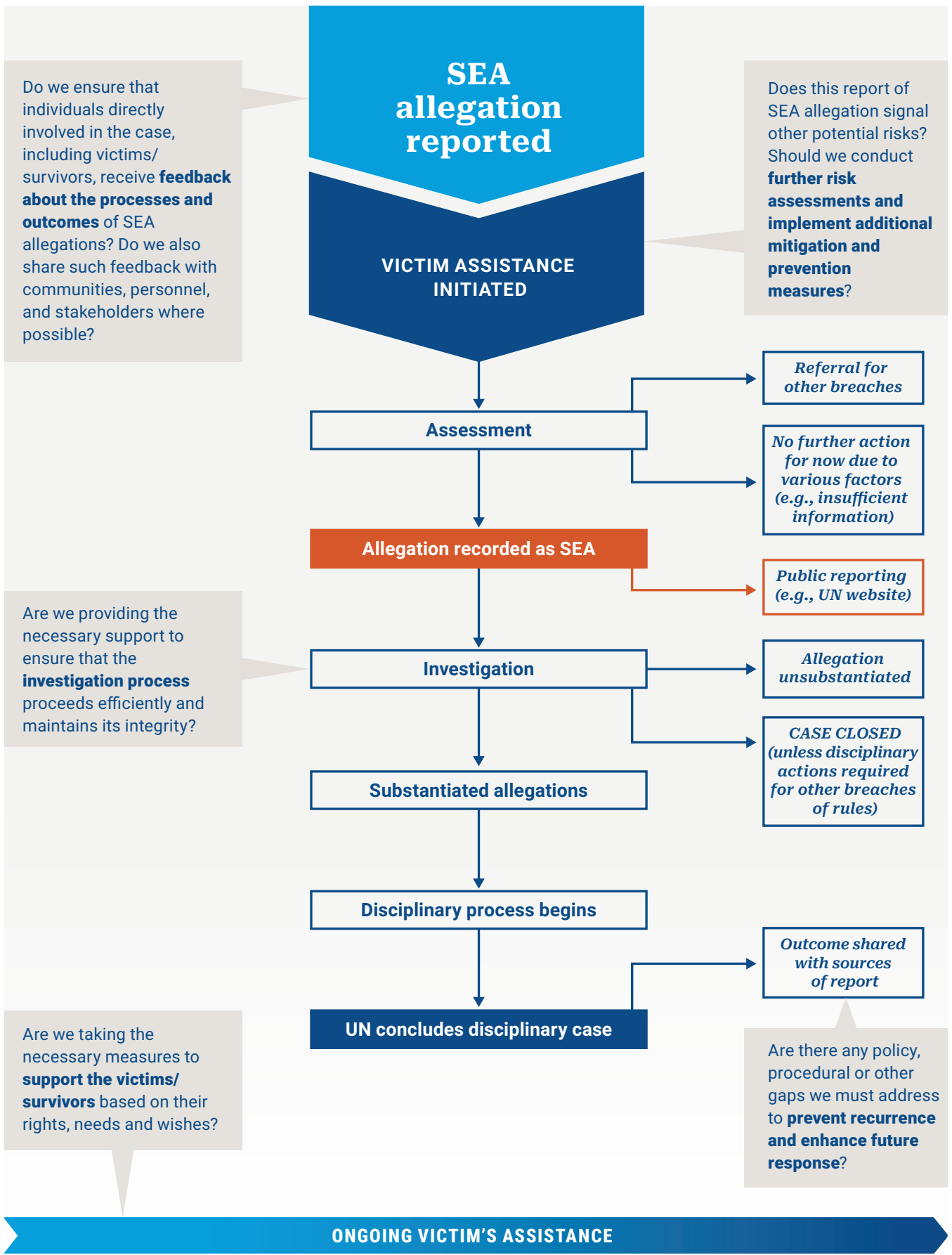
- Monitor the organization’s responses to reported SEA allegations.** As a senior leader, it is crucial for you to maintain regular communication with the personnel who handle the technical follow-up of SEA allegations to monitor progress (e.g., status of evidence gathering, status of referral for investigation, provision of support for victims/survivors.) By maintaining such oversight, you ensure that personnel effectively utilize appropriate organizational process and systems and that allegations receive the most timely follow-up possible. (See [Tool 7](#)) Meanwhile, you should also ensure that you are not inadvertently interfering in confidential investigations or other procedures while monitoring case status.
- Prioritize provision of support for victims/survivors of SEA.** Each UN entity at country level is accountable for providing overall assistance, protection and support to victims/survivors of SEA perpetrated by personnel of their organization, including implementing partners.¹⁷ To prioritize this, you should ensure all personnel and partners know their role in referring victims/survivors for assistance (this requires participation in mandatory PSEA trainings). This may require making unexpected budget allocations, conducting internal advocacy with other leaders in your organization and/or taking immediate disciplinary action — where it is within your authority — to suspend an alleged perpetrator during the investigation to ensure the protection of the victim/survivor. (see [Tool 8](#)).

Practical tools

TOOL 7 FLOWCHART FOR MANAGING REPORTED SEA ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING UN PERSONNEL: SENIOR LEADERSHIP OVERSIGHT

The graphic below illustrates the general process for managing reported SEA allegations involving UN personnel, highlighting instances where you as a senior leader have a role to monitor the process and provide oversight and accountability. It emphasizes your distinct responsibility in ensuring a well-managed response to each case, addressing policy or procedural gaps, and recognizing potential early warning signs for future risks. The flow chart in the middle of the graphic outlines the typical flow of a case, while the yellow bubbles contain questions for reflection by you as a senior leader.

¹⁷ See [UN Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) and [Technical Note on the implementation of the Protocol](#).



The victim-centered approach prioritizes the rights, dignity, well-being, and safety of victims/survivors of SEA, regardless of the alleged perpetrator's affiliation. By applying this approach, you can ensure that victims/survivors of SEA receive the support and respect they deserve while upholding their rights and avoiding (further) harm to all involved parties, including your own organization. This tool outlines direct actions you as a senior leader can take to implement this approach when addressing allegations or cases of SEA.

1. When publicly communicating about the case...

- Prioritize the privacy and dignity of victims/survivors by refraining from discussing potentially sensitive details or revealing identifiable information (e.g., address, unique physical traits).
- Use respectful language and tone when discussing the case in public or with external stakeholders.

2. When advocating on behalf of the victim/survivor ...

- Advocate for support initiatives based on the wishes and needs of victims/survivors, while respecting their right to refuse assistance or to change their views.
- Consider the full spectrum of support needs that victims/survivors are entitled to, including safety and protection measures, medical care, mental and psycho-social support, legal assistance, basic material needs/livelihoods, dignity kits, and support for children born of SEA.
- Ensure that all assistance and support, including transportation and accommodation, is provided free of charge to enable victims/survivors to access the assistance they need.

3. When engaging with actors directly involved in assisting the victim/survivor...

- Ensure that informed consent is obtained from the victim/survivor before any sharing of information.
- Share relevant and necessary information only with authorized personnel directly involved in the case, respecting the right to privacy and confidentiality of the victim/survivor.

Have questions? Unsure? Consult your PSEA expert or your UN Victims' Rights Advocate (where available) to prioritize the rights and well-being of victims/survivors.

ACTION AREA

5

**Recruit and
Support PSEA
Personnel**

Why it matters

How do you establish a community-based complaints mechanism? What steps do you need to take when handling the report of an SEA allegation? How do you effectively refer a victim/survivor to ensure they receive the services and support they need? These tasks require technical expertise as well as dedicated time and commitment to ensure they are done correctly. Without individuals who bring the necessary expertise and time, there is a risk that technical responsibilities will fall to you as the senior leader, or worse yet, of allegations being mishandled or overlooked, potentially leading to increased SEA risks.

As a senior leader you have a pivotal role in ensuring that your organization recruits or designates qualified personnel dedicated to PSEA and equips them with the necessary resources to succeed at their jobs. For example, within your individual entity this may involve recruiting or appointing a PSEA focal point or officer, while for inter-agency coordination this might entail recruiting an interagency PSEA coordinator to support the PSEA network. Additionally, your support is vital in providing high-level backing and maintaining open lines of communication with PSEA personnel.

What to expect

In this section, you will learn:

- How to support recruitment or designation of qualified personnel for PSEA roles.
- When you should take an active role in PSEA tasks or delegate responsibilities.

What to do

Here are specific actions you as a senior leader can take to recruit and support internal and inter-agency PSEA personnel:

- **Recruit or designate dedicated personnel for PSEA roles**, including in sub/field-offices to strengthen your organization's capacities to prevent and respond to SEA. This may require hiring for full-time PSEA positions, particularly in contexts with high SEA risk levels. When recruiting or designating dedicated PSEA personnel, ensure that candidates possess the necessary qualifications and experience to effectively fulfill the role. It is important to consider the many responsibilities these personnel may assume, such as training, raising awareness among personnel and partners, integrating PSEA throughout the organization's departments and programming, receiving and referring SEA allegations and actively participating in joint efforts through the inter-agency PSEA network (where it exists). (See Key Resources for the generic Terms of Reference for PSEA focal points which can be adapted for other dedicated PSEA positions.)
- **Strive to recruit a qualified, full-time, inter-agency PSEA coordinator**. This is important because coordinators are vital for carrying out mandatory PSEA tasks, overseeing the PSEA network, developing and sustaining long-term PSEA solutions, building institutional knowledge and continuity and promoting coordination. Hiring a full-time, interagency PSEA coordinator requires you to prioritize the following (See [Tool 9](#)):

- **Secure the necessary resources to cover this position on a continuous contract:** An interagency coordinator can be funded by multiple agencies contributing resources to cover salary and other related costs. (See [Action Area 6](#)) High-risk contexts may qualify for support from the IASC PSEA capacity project ([PSEACap](#)), managed by OCHA which deploys experienced PSEA coordinators for 2 years.
- **Seek qualified candidates:** Because of the need for the coordinator to engage a wide range of stakeholders (including high-level actors) and oversee inter-agency activities, hiring at the equivalent of P4 or P5 level is advisable. In some contexts (and in cases when resources are not available) hiring P2/P3 level or seeking other options may be reasonable alternatives, such as a UN Volunteer (UNV), a national officer, a consultant (see [Key Resources](#) for the generic ToR for PSEA coordinators).
- **Hire through an interagency mechanism:** Hiring the coordinator through an inter-agency mechanism is desirable because it is cost-effective, offers the coordinator a high level of independence (that can eliminate confusing reporting lines), opens opportunities for cross-agency PSEA initiatives and coordination and allows the coordinator to be in the same office as the RC/HC.
- **Provide training, resources and support to PSEA personnel.** Given the technical expertise required and the sensitivity of the issue, you should ensure PSEA personnel receive specialized training and how to fulfill their specific roles and responsibilities. PSEA coordinators should be familiar with the latest [PSEA coordinator deployment package](#) and participate in relevant trainings. PSEA focal points, officers, and other dedicated personnel should have clear Terms of Reference (ToRs) and their performance appraisals should include PSEA responsibilities. Additionally, PSEA personnel should have a direct line to your office. Moreover, you can strengthen their work by actively supporting their initiatives, such as speaking at events they organize, accompanying them to strategic meetings, and helping secure funds for their operating budgets. It is important to acknowledge their accomplishments and contributions to PSEA. Finally, you should maintain an adequate budget to carry out their tasks, including engagement with the PSEA network.
- **Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of PSEA personnel.** Building on their ToRs, you should ensure a clear division of labor for PSEA tasks between yourself and PSEA personnel. You can facilitate this by engaging in regular discussions with them to clarify expectations, while also allowing them to indicate areas where they may require assistance from you in fulfilling their PSEA-related responsibilities. This involves maintaining regular check-ins to exchange ideas, enhance collaboration and determine where/when your direct engagement might be needed. (See [Tool 10](#)).

Practical tools

TOOL 9 SELECTING A PSEA COORDINATOR

This tool helps senior leaders assist human resources personnel in selecting an inter-agency PSEA coordinator. It provides criteria and questions for consideration when evaluating candidates. Given the PSEA coordinator's direct reporting line to senior leaders, your involvement in the selection process is crucial.

ROLE:

Inter-agency
PSEA Coordinator

ROLE DESCRIPTION:

Supports senior leadership in coordinating and facilitating the collective PSEA efforts of the UNCT/HCT within a specific country, particularly through the inter-agency PSEA network.

CRITERIA	SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTION	SCORE (1-5, 5=highest)	COMMENTS
<p>Knowledge and experience in PSEA and/or safeguarding principles, policies, and practices</p>	<p>What experience do you have in implementing PSEA and/or safeguarding policies and procedures?</p> <p>What strategies would you use to ensure a victim-centered approach to addressing SEA incidents?</p> <p>What steps would you recommend to a senior leader in an organization facing reported incidents of SEA?</p>		
<p>Experience in coordinating and facilitating multi-stakeholder networks or coalitions</p>	<p>Can you describe a time when you coordinated a network or coalition involving multiple stakeholders? What were the key challenges, and how did you address them?</p> <p>How do you plan to engage members of the PSEA network that have varying capacities and interests in PSEA? Can you share successful strategies you have used before?</p> <p>How do you think senior leaders can contribute to coordinating the PSEA network and engaging stakeholders effectively?</p>		
<p>Strong communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to engage effectively with diverse stakeholders.</p>	<p>How would you work to engage stakeholders on PSEA within the country/regional context?</p> <p>In cases involving sensitive issues such as SEA incidents, how do you maintain transparency in communication while respecting confidentiality?</p> <p>Describe a situation where you had to persuade stakeholders to support a new initiative. How did you approach it?</p>		

ROLE:

Inter-agency
PSEA Coordinator

ROLE DESCRIPTION:

Supports senior leadership in coordinating and facilitating the collective PSEA efforts of the UNCT/HCT within a specific country, particularly through the inter-agency PSEA network.

CRITERIA	SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTION	SCORE (1-5, 5=highest)	COMMENTS
<p>Field experience in international development, human rights and/or humanitarian work, including UN system and global coordination structures?</p>	<p>Can you describe a specific professional field experience that has prepared you for the role of PSEA Coordinator?</p> <p>Where do you see opportunities to link PSEA with existing humanitarian, human rights or development initiatives in our context? How would you go about it?</p> <p>Can you describe your past experiences with the UN system or other global coordination structures? How do you plan to apply this experience to strengthen PSEA efforts in our context?</p>		
<p>Ability to develop and implement strategy/action plan on PSEA</p>	<p>What do you think are the essential elements of an inter-agency strategy or action plan on PSEA? How would you ensure buy-in and collaboration from diverse stakeholders?</p> <p>Can you describe a time when you were responsible for (or contributed to) developing a strategy or action plan? How did you approach the planning process?</p> <p>How would you measure the effectiveness of a PSEA strategy/action plan?</p>		

ROLE:

Inter-agency
PSEA Coordinator

ROLE DESCRIPTION:

Supports senior leadership in coordinating and facilitating the collective PSEA efforts of the UNCT/HCT within a specific country, particularly through the inter-agency PSEA network.

WHAT IF THE CANDIDATE DOES NOT MEET ALL THE CRITERIA? ASK YOURSELF:

How critical are the candidate's shortcomings to the role?

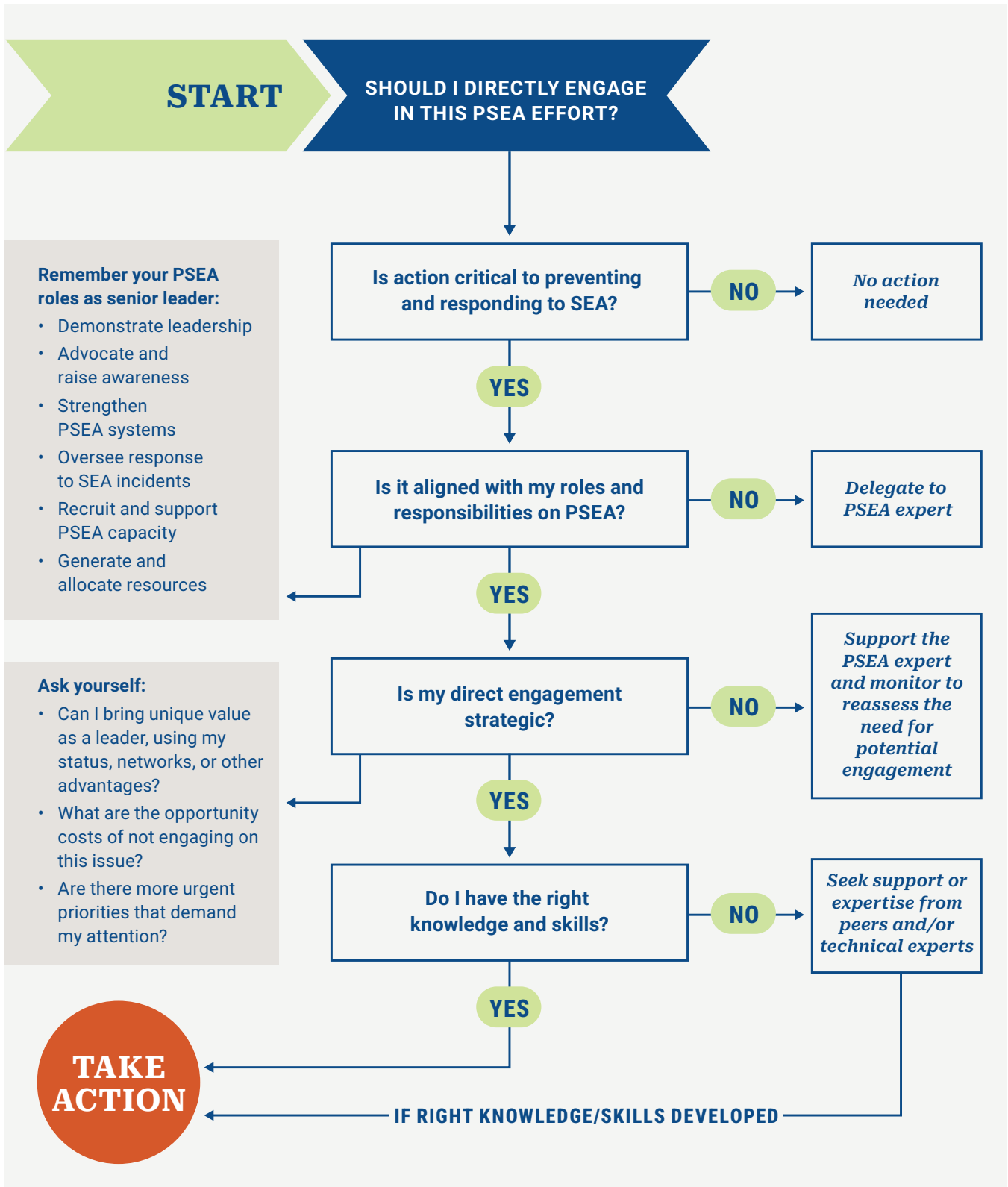
Can they learn and adapt?

Are there opportunities to adjust responsibilities?

Can specific training or mentorship programs address their gaps?

Is there potential to find a better fit, even if it requires re-posting?

This tool helps you as a senior leader decide when to directly participate in PSEA tasks or delegate to a dedicated PSEA personnel or other relevant colleagues.



ACTION AREA

6

**Generate
and Allocate
Resources**

Why it matters

In many development, humanitarian, and mission contexts there is a chronic lack of funding for sustained PSEA efforts. These funding shortfalls affect critical areas such as hiring qualified PSEA personnel, conducting risk assessments, and providing essential training. As a senior leader, it is your responsibility to take the lead in identifying, generating and allocating resources for PSEA. In doing so, you should be prepared to encounter challenges like limited donor interest and misconceptions about PSEA's importance. As you face such challenges, your commitment to cultivating donor understanding, exploring innovative funding approaches and prioritizing budgets will help pave the way for stronger and more resilient PSEA systems.

What to expect

In this section, you will learn:

- How to raise funds for PSEA.
- Strategies for leveraging existing resources for PSEA.
- How to plan a budget that can support the UN country-level PSEA action plan.

What to do

Here are specific actions senior leaders can take to generate and allocate resources:

- **Prioritize generation of dedicated funds for PSEA.** You can take several steps to generate dedicated resources for PSEA, each of which requires your understanding what potential funding sources might be available at national and international levels. To gain this

Sample of Expected PSEA Costs

Personnel Costs:

- PSEA coordinator & focal point
- Additional staff (e.g., MEAL, communications, consultants, trainers)

Project-specific Costs

- Travel & accommodations
- Trainings, workshops, events (venue & refreshments)
- Consultations & meetings
- Translation & interpretation
- Materials (design, printing & distribution)
- Data/case management
- Partner capacity-building
- Services for victims/survivors

General Operations Costs

- Portion of communications, supplies, equipment, vehicles, etc.
- Indirect Costs

knowledge, you (with support of appropriate personnel in your organization or network) can conduct donor research and engage in networking and monitoring of donor trends on PSEA in your country or region. You can also consider preparing key messages for donors, such as a business case for investing in PSEA that incorporates quantitative and qualitative country-based evidence. This will help you be prepared to conduct fundraising advocacy with potential donors. (See [Tool 11](#))

- **Leverage existing resources** by exploring creative modalities for funding PSEA. Some options include:
 - **Collaboration with individual agencies:** Exploring options for allocating funds from individual organizations for the inter-agency coordinator position or a specific inter-agency task. This may involve repurposing of unallocated resources.
 - **International funding mechanisms:** Exploring options with the PSEA network co-chairs in the agencies' HQs for costing through other international funding mechanisms, such as maintaining a CBCM/CBCN through an AAP budget, supporting SEA survivors through the GBV sub-cluster or exploring options through the Victim Trust Fund.
 - **Surge support:** Exploring options such as the [Standby Partnership \(SBP\)](#), a network of bilateral agreements between organizations and UN agencies to provide support to humanitarian emergencies.
 - **Pooled funding:** Exploring joint funding arrangements where contributions are collected from multiple agencies into a single earmarked fund that can support high-priority projects, including PSEA activities.
 - **Joint fundraising:** Consider two or more agencies submitting a joint funding proposal through the funding arm of individual member states or other donors for sharing of PSEA responsibilities across entities and/or through a PSEA network or other coordination structure.
 - **Cost sharing arrangements:** Arranging for members of the country team to contribute funds to cover joint PSEA expenses, such as the salary of the PSEA coordinator or the PSEA network budget. Cost-sharing can be voluntary or mandatory (e.g., assessed contributions).
- **In-kind contributions:** Shared activities that bring multiple agencies together to spread the human resource burden and draw on in-house capacity and in-kind contributions from individual agencies, such as conducting joint risk assessments, trainings and/or reporting on PSEA outcomes.
- **Engaging local governments:** Engaging local government entities to explore untapped capacities for certain activities, such as provision of assistance to victims/survivors.
- **Integrate PSEA funding into organizational strategies, projects and plans.** To do this, you can incorporate PSEA through other organizational processes, such project specific funding proposals (particularly those on related areas such as such as gender, GBV, CP, human rights, justice, CRSV, AAP and/or safeguarding), emergency preparedness plans and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) or the UN Development Assistance Plan (UNDAF). Regarding the HRP, PSEA can be represented as a cross-cutting theme across all sections or as its own individual chapter. While using the individual chapter method is an increasingly common approach, it does not integrate PSEA in the plans of each cluster, so is ultimately less desirable.
- **Ensure that activities for the UN country-level PSEA action plan are adequately budgeted by the PSEA network.** First you should understand the budget needs by considering various costs associated with personnel, project-related activities, overhead costs, and other pertinent expenses (see text box above). Second, you should advise the PSEA network to thoroughly assess each planned activity in the country-level action plan to obtain a realistic estimate of associated costs, and to track funding and in-kind contributions that have been secured. Finally, you (and the PSEA network) should identify funding gaps that require priority attention. (See [Tool 12](#)).

Practical tools

TOOL 11

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO FUNDRAISING AND DONOR ENGAGEMENT

This tool provides you as a senior leader with actions you can take for fundraising and donor engagement to generate support for PSEA efforts at the country level. You can undertake these steps together with relevant PSEA, development or other personnel.

STEP 1: Research potential donors

- Evaluate current donors to assess their potential interest in PSEA.
- Talk with colleagues to learn about PSEA donors, both locally and in other contexts.
- Attend donor conferences, humanitarian/development/human rights/peacekeeping fora and networking opportunities to connect with potential donors.
- Monitor trends in PSEA investments locally and globally, including on social media.
- Make a list of potential donors and/or donor groups. See this [sample template](#).

STEP 2: Engage potential donors

- Organize a donor briefing on the UN PSEA country-level action plan and/or your organization's plan (if available) and/or invite potential donors to join the PSEA network or participate in specific meeting(s).
- Keep potential donors informed of significant developments and initiatives on PSEA through bilateral meetings or invitations to public events.
- Share good practices and lessons learned with potential donors.

STEP 3: Share key messages with donors¹⁸

- Adapt and share key messages with donors, such as:
 - **Investing in PSEA is strategic and cost-effective and requires a relatively small initial investment to cover essentials like salaries and workshops.** The long-term benefits, including enhanced community protection and trust, make it a worthwhile investment.
 - **Sustaining PSEA programs with multi-year, continuous funding is a top priority.** This type of funding is crucial for covering the salaries of in-country PSEA technical experts and sustaining and strengthening in-country PSEA prevention, reporting and response systems.

STEP 4: Monitor success

- Ensure a robust monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) system is in place for any country-level PSEA action plan and other PSEA initiatives your organization is involved in.
- Use insights from monitoring to adapt approaches for continuous improvements.
- Compare the performance of initiatives under your leadership with other PSEA initiatives to assess your team's effectiveness.

STEP 5: Loop back – show results to donors

- Update donors on the outcomes and learnings from their investments through bi-lateral meetings and by inviting them to events and workshops.
- Regularly engage donors to discuss successes and challenges in initiatives they support.
- Share impactful stories and case studies showcasing results and human experiences.
- Express gratitude for donors' contributions publicly and privately (e.g., thank you notes, verbal gratitude, acknowledgements on printed materials, etc.)

¹⁸ Also see: [Key messages for donors on PSEA](#)

TOOL 12 TEMPLATE FOR BUDGET OF UN PSEA COUNTRY-LEVEL ACTION PLAN

This tool is relevant for you as a senior leader given your overall responsibility for overseeing the PSEA network and the UN country-level PSEA action plan. You can use this tool by sharing it with the PSEA network in your country, as it designed to help the network develop a realistic budget for implementing the country-level PSEA action plan and to identify potential funding gaps. It can be customized to address the specific needs and priorities of the PSEA network members. It includes sample items to provide guidance. Key information from this document, including identified funding gaps, can be integrated into the PSEA action plan.

BUDGET ITEMS	DESCRIPTION	LINE ITEMS	ESTIMATED BUDGET (in US\$)	FUNDING SECURED (in US\$)	FUNDING GAP (in US\$)	FUNDING SOURCE (incl. in-kind contributions)
SAMPLE 1: Training for personnel and partners	Roll out of PSEA training across priority states	Staff (trainer)	n/a	n/a	n/a	Seconded by IOM
		Training materials	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	To be determined
		Interpretation/translation	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0	To be determined
		Venue	n/a	n/a	n/a	UN/NGO offices
		Travel and accommodation	\$10,000	\$4,000	\$6,000	Pooled funding
SAMPLE 2: Awareness-raising campaigns	Develop, translate and disseminate materials with key PSEA messages	Staff (PSEA focal point)	n/a	n/a	n/a	PSEA Network: Awareness Taskforce
		Translation services	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000	To be determined
		Design and printing	\$12,000	\$5,000	\$8,000	Pooled funding
		Distribution	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000	To be determined
TOTAL EXPECTED COST			\$_____			
AVAILABLE BUDGET				\$_____		
FUNDING GAP					\$_____ (i.e., difference between costs and budget)	

Key resources

UN POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

[Secretary-General's Bulletin. Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#)

[Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System](#)

[Policy on Accountability for Conduct and Discipline in Field Missions](#)

[IASC Principals Statement on PSEA 2015](#)

[United Nations Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Involving Implementing Partners](#)

[Leadership in Humanitarian Action: Handbook for the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator](#)

Updated Guidance Note: Requirements and procedures for all United Nations entities for sharing information for sharing information on sexual exploitation and/or abuse related to United Nations staff and related personnel and implementing partner personnel with the most United Nations senior official in country

[The Military Aide Memoire: United Nations Measures against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Commanders' guide on measures to combat Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations military](#)

KEY WEBSITES ON PSEA

[United Nations PSEA Website](#); also see [tools](#)

[IASC PSEA Website](#); also see [resources](#)

[CAPSEAH](#) (includes practice, policies and standards on PSEAH)

[CHS Alliance Website](#) (includes PSEAH resources)

PSEA SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING AND IN-COUNTRY IMPLEMENTATION OF PSEA

[UN PSEA Country-Level Action Plan Template](#)

[Resources to Support PSEA Capacity Strengthening](#)

[Interagency PSEA Implementing Partner Protocol Resource Package](#)

[Manual on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#)

[PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions on Inter-Agency PSEA. IOM's lessons learned from PSEA implementation in-country](#)

[Country-Level Checklist on the Minimum Action Required on PSEA](#)

PSEA RISK ASSESSMENT TOOLS

[Joint SEA Risk Assessment Technical Note](#)

[Interagency Risk Assessment for SEA Toolkit](#)

[Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Management Toolkit \(Guidance for UN field missions\)](#)

[UNDP SEA Risk Management Tool \(Guidance for SEA risk management in country offices\)](#)

[SEA Risk Overview \(Index categorizing countries by their SEA risk level in humanitarian contexts\)](#)

[UN Implementing Partner PSEA Capacity Assessment \(also basis for partners' "SEA risk rating"\)](#)

VETTING OF PERSONNEL

Tools to prevent (re-)hiring of those guilty of sexual misconduct:

[Screening Database "ClearCheck"](#)

[Misconduct Disclosure Scheme](#)

[Project Soteria](#)

[Disclosure and Barring Service](#)

REPORTING MECHANISMS

[Guidance Note: Inter-Agency Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Referral Procedures \(IA SEARP\)](#)

[Reporting channels for United Nations entities](#)

ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS/SURVIVORS

[United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Technical Note on the implementation of the Protocol.](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions on the Scope and Duration of Assistance for Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nation Staff and Non-Staff Personnel](#)

INVESTIGATIONS

[Investigation Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. A Toolkit for Partners](#)

[Investigation Training Qualification Scheme \(Training course on SEAH investigations\)](#)

PSEA NETWORK, COORDINATORS AND FOCAL POINTS

[In-country PSEA Network, Generic Terms of Reference \(ToRs\)](#)

[Deployment Package for PSEA Coordinators](#)

[In-country PSEA Focal Point, Generic Terms of Reference](#)

[In-country PSEA Coordinator, Generic Terms of Reference](#)

*A great deal of thought has gone into developing this toolkit,
I hope you will find it useful.*

If you have any feedback, please feel free to reach out to me or to the team.

*Best wishes,
Christian*

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