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**PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL  
EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE AND  
SEXUAL HARASSMENT  
POLICY AND ACTION PLAN  
PSEA /SH  
2023**

**UNDP- Iraq  
2023**

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## Background:

In line with the Secretary-General's Bulletin "special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse" ([ST/SGB/2003/13](#)), UNDP adopts structures and procedures for ensuring compliance with the zero-tolerance policy. Standard operating procedures for UNDP beneficiaries and contractors will be in place for submission and receipt of complaints, and reporting.

[General Assembly Resolution 48/104](#) on the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence against women to include sexual harassment, which is prohibited at work, in educational institutions, and elsewhere (Art. 2(b)), and encourages development of penal, civil or other administrative sanctions, as well as preventative approaches to eliminate violence against women (Art. 4(d-f)). The [Beijing Platform for Action.](#), recognizes sexual harassment as a form of violence against women and as a form of discrimination, and calls on multiple actors including government, employers, unions, and civil society to ensure that governments enact and enforce laws on sexual harassment and that employers develop anti-harassment policies and prevention strategies.

In alignment with UNDP policies and commitments, as well as with our efforts to ensure that stakeholders work with a comfortable environment, UNDP Iraq will vigorously work at full capacity towards elimination of the culture of impunity that surrounds sexual abuse and harassment. UNDP Iraq believes that the policies, procedures, and special measures will work effectively only when the victims believe they will be heard, and the perpetrators suffer real consequences for their actions.

## Key definitions:

It is important to note that within the UN system there is a clear distinction between sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH).

**Sexual exploitation:** is defined by the UN as 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. As such, sexual exploitation is a broad term, which includes a number of acts described below, including transactional sex, solicitation of transactional sex and exploitative relationship.

**Sexual abuse:** is defined as the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. All sexual activity with a child is considered as sexual abuse. Physical intrusion is understood to mean sexual activity. Sexual abuse is a broad term, which includes a number of acts described below, including rape, sexual assault, sex with a minor, and sexual activity.

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is within the UN system understood as an assault (actual or attempted) against beneficiaries or other third parties in the local community.

**Sexual harassment (SH):** is by the UN defined in the “UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment” as any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment may occur in the workplace or in connection with work. While typically involving a pattern of conduct, sexual harassment may take the form of a single incident. In assessing the reasonableness of expectations or perceptions, the perspective of the person who is the target of the conduct shall be considered. Beyond UN regulations, the definition of sexual harassment is broader and does not require a link to the work environment.

## Guiding principles:

**Taking a system-wide approach:** Sexual exploitation and abuse are system-wide concerns that require a coordinated response. Victim protection should be at the forefront of preparedness and response.

**Building public understanding:** Effective communication that is clear, timely and transparent builds public understanding of and support for UN efforts to fight sexual exploitation and abuse. The UN needs to be proactive in conveying information on allegations, the status of investigations, support provided to victims (accounting for confidentiality) and disciplinary actions. It should routinely emphasize its commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of victims.

**Involving communicators early on:** Any allegation of SEA carries a high reputational risk that affects the entire organization. Relevant communications officers in countries and at headquarters must be alerted and prepared with “if-asked” messages as soon as allegations are received. Communicators must also be involved in coordinating and preparing public statements on allegations. Further, they must report any UN-related SEA allegations they find in the public domain to relevant UN officials. They should relay all related enquiries from media or other entities.

**Upholding confidentiality:** Maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of the alleged victim(s), witnesses and perpetrator(s) is vital to the safety, security and well-being of victims and witnesses. It is critical to the integrity of the investigation and the due process rights of the alleged perpetrator(s).

**Acting transparently:** The UN must be well prepared to transparently respond to credible allegations<sup>2</sup> It must convey information within the bounds of confidentiality to avoid the perception that information is being hidden, while adhering to regulations, rules and procedures. All public communications on specific allegations must reiterate that the UN takes the matter very seriously. It must explain steps to address the allegation and any support provided to the alleged victim. Factual information can be publicly provided if this does not compromise any investigation or breach the confidentiality or data protection and privacy rights of victim(s) or perpetrator(s). Communications officers must discuss information with UN investigators before issuing public statements.

## **WHAT CAN AND CANNOT BE SAID ON SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS**

In line with the Secretary-General's reporting mechanism for UN personnel, the UN can announce:

- Nature of allegation(s)
- Date of alleged incident and date of complaint
- Age, gender and number of victims
- Assistance provided to a victim(s), including to realize their rights and dignity
- Category of perpetrator

The UN must never announce the name of the victim(s) or witnesses or provide information that could help identify them.

UN agencies, funds and programmes and related organizations can identify the type of personnel involved (military contingent member, military observer, UN Police Officer, UN Volunteer, international or local civilian staff member, implementing partner), but they must not provide the name, rank/grade of the personnel, or their section, unit or post.

The UN can identify the country or mission where the alleged incident occurred but cannot give the specific location.

The UN can provide the status of any UN investigation (referral for investigation, under investigation, closed) but cannot give information about an ongoing investigation or judicial process before completion. The UN can state the type of assistance provided to the victim (medical, psychosocial, legal, protection, shelter, referral services or through a Trust Fund project) but cannot give specifics on the location, provider or detailed nature of assistance.

Beyond the allegations, it's useful to mention other steps the UN is taking, such as:

- Reinforcing SEA policies to staff
- Conducting additional training for civilian and/or uniformed personnel
- Promoting lists of places “off-limits” to UN personnel
- Imposing restrictions on staff in UN facilities or initiating curfews

## Communications Tools:

Different communications tools should be used to reach target audiences.

- **UN websites** could provide information on UN policies on preventing SEA and on how an individual can report allegations.
- **UN social media** platforms could also use share information on UN policies and practices.
- **Media outreach** may be necessary to reach national and international audiences, including donors.
- **Direct in-person community outreach activities** are suitable for groups without digital tools. participating in networks to prevent SEA. National staff who speak local languages and understand the culture must be included. Priority should be given to high-risk areas, such as settlements of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugee camps, and isolated villages
- **Posters, leaflets** or other materials on SEA policies should be clearly displayed in all UN premises.

## SEA content Analysis

In complex environments where the rule of law has been weakened, abuses of human rights, including sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), are more likely to occur. The risk of sexual exploitation and abuse rises when companies fail to address acts of sexual harassment or operate in environments in which gender inequality persists.

Iraq retained a low score of 154 out of 156 countries featured in GGI in 2021. Consequently, Iraq was not featured in GGI 2022. The Iraq constitution acknowledges that inclusion of women in all political activities are key to attainment of vision 2030. To that end the Government of Iraq is committed to prioritize gender equality and empowerment of women in the political space. Accordingly, awarded a 25% quota for women in parliament.

SEA has traumatic psychological, physical and social effects on survivors. In addition, it is likely to cause serious reputational, operational, financial or legal detrimental consequences for private security companies (PSC) that tolerate it. In Iraq, and in particular working with UNDP, stakeholders (beneficiaries and contractors) at all levels should actively contribute to, and be involved in develop policies on PSEA that reflect their views and expectations as well as local culture and operational realities.

Recognizing the risks posed by SEA, that UNDP beneficiaries and contractors have committed to operating to the highest standards, and to adopt adequate safeguards to prevent these types of abuse, UNDP-Iraq will carefully assess SEA risks and concerns before each operation through independent analysis and consultation with their stakeholders.

## Standard Operating Procedures on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) by aid workers directly contradicts the principles upon which humanitarian action is based and represents a protection failure. SEA inflicts harm on those whom the humanitarian community is obligated



to protect, as well as jeopardizes the credibility of agencies providing assistance. Humanitarian workers are expected to uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct at all times to protect beneficiaries of assistance and persons of concern. Sexual exploitation and abuse of affected populations is unacceptable and constitutes gross misconduct and will result in disciplinary action.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) on the other hand refers to a “particular form of gender-based violence that have been reported in humanitarian contexts, specifically alleged against humanitarian workers.” It refers “...to acts of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse committed by United Nations, NGO, and inter-governmental organizations (IGO) personnel against the affected population. Prevention from/of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) “is an important aspect of preventing GBV and PSEA efforts should therefore link to GBV expertise and programming - especially to ensure survivors’ rights and other guiding principles are respected.”

The United Nations has a zero-tolerance policy on SEA. In 2003 the Secretary General issued a Bulletin on “Special measures for Protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse,” which is binding on all UN staff. Every staff member or its implementing partners is expected to uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct at all times as required by the UN Charter, staff regulations and rules and other relevant guidelines and policies.

In recognition of the global concern over SEA, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has prioritized efforts to prevent and respond to these abuses at both the agency level and through collective efforts in the field. In 2002 the IASC adopted six core principles intended to set forth standards to prevent SEA:

1. Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.
2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defiance.
3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.

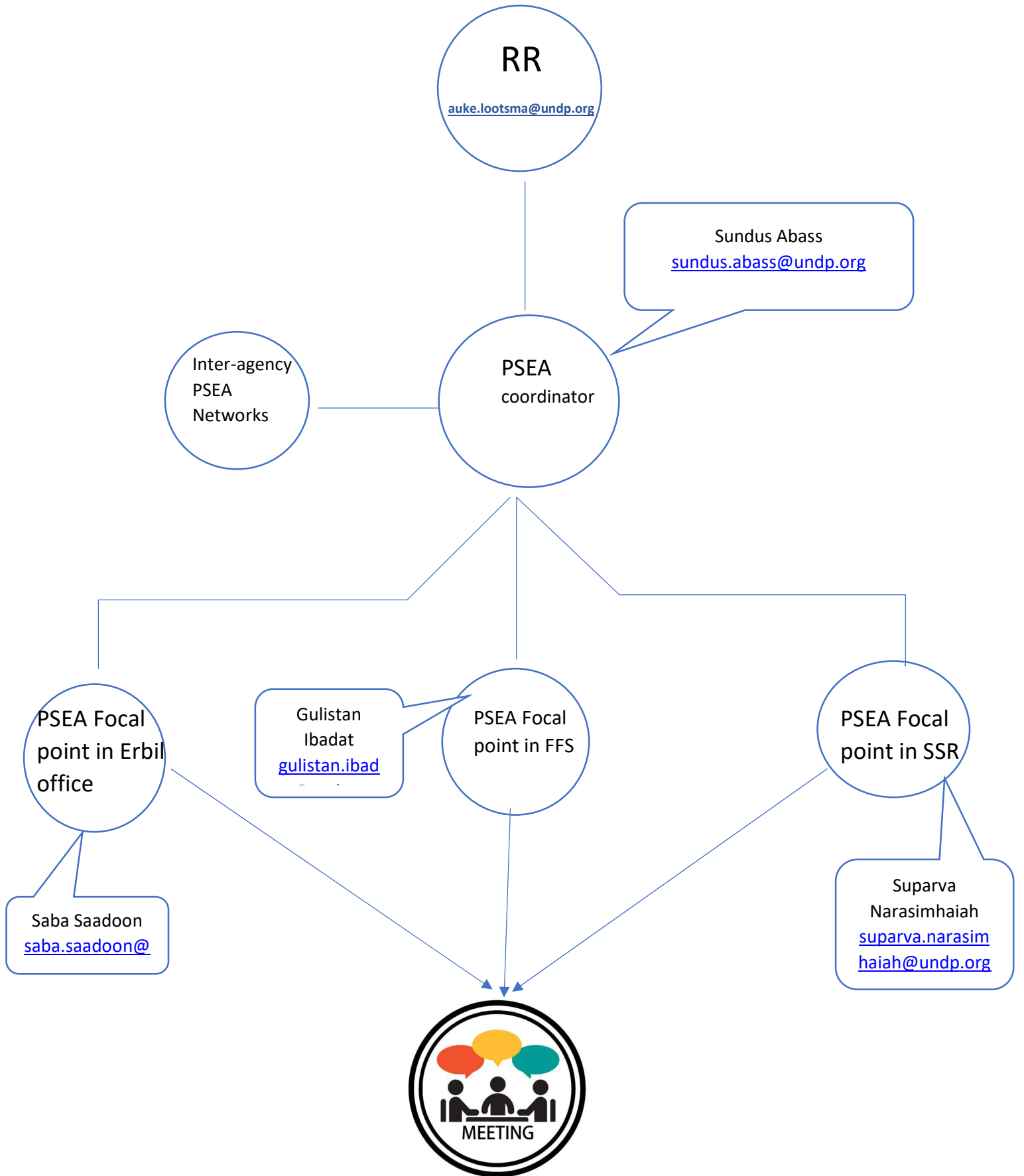
4. Sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.
5. Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.
6. Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct.

## **Structure Inside UNDP Country Office**

The Country Office Structure for PSEA is mapped out in the flow chart below in more detail. The structure outlines some of the main activities that have to take place, to achieve the main outcome (Outcome 1: ensured safe, accountable, and accessible reporting for every affected UNDP stakeholder). Activities for PSEA can also fit and be explained according to the three pillars of PSEA which are: 1) coordinating with partners, commitment of senior managers to PSEA; 2) engagement with and support of stakeholders to include awareness-raising and complaints mechanisms; and 3) effective prevention mechanisms, including effective recruitment and performance management.

The structure inside the country office will be responding to follow up on progress on PSEA. The Resident Representative (RR) of the country office will have a particular responsibility to support and develop systems that maintain an environment free from sexual exploitation and abuse. SEA focal points will be established in the UNDP country office to work with UNDP beneficiaries on preventing and responding to acts of sexual exploitation and abuse. The focal points are the primary body for awareness, prevention, coordination and oversight on PSEA by personnel beneficiaries of the UNDP providing humanitarian and development services to the communities. SEA Focal Points' responsibility is to ensure that PSEA systems are in place and

that the activities mentioned in the Terms of Reference for PSEA Focal Points are implemented. While the ToR includes numerous responsibilities as attached in the annex. There will be a monthly meeting for the SEA focal points to discuss and share current challenges on PSEA and finding pathways for solutions.



## Results Framework

This framework articulates the organization’s strategic commitment to preventing SEA within it’s working environment. The plan seeks to achieve the following key outcome with respective outputs through implementing several activities. The time framework is presented in below. As part of establishing a new policy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse of authority in UNDP – Iraq, and to strength existing UNDP PSEA system to better prevent, detect, report, and take action against personnel, who commit these inexcusable and abhorrent acts. The below action plan had been developed based on the recommendations and suggestions of UNDP staff association within their participation.

Output	Activity	Milestone				Responsibility
		2023				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
<b>Output 1. Ensure PSEA Sustainability in UNDP as a crucial element of its working environment</b>	<b>Activity 1.1</b> Ensure the UNDP’s internal guidance and Action Plan updated in line with agreed policy, are fully in place ,	X				PSEA Focal point under RR direction
	<b>Activity 1.2</b> Holding survey to measure staff awareness		x		x	PSEA Focal point and staff association
	<b>Activity 1.3</b> Holding sessions on PSEA reporting protocols for all UN staff			X		<b>PSEA Focal point under RR direction</b>

	<b>Activity 1.4</b> Developing flyer on PSEA/SH for all staff.				X	Communication team and PSEA focal point
	<b>Activity 1.5</b> Holding 3 Raising Awareness sessions for all staff including consultants		X	X	x	PSEA focal points
	<b>Activity 1.6</b> Developing flyer with messages on PSEA and SH for all staff.			X		Communication team and PSEA focal point
<b>Output 2. Building consensus with UNDP stakeholders on their roles in preventing SEA</b>	<b>Activity 2.1.</b> Revisiting administration (and HR) documents to ensure that UNDP beneficiaries are acknowledged and awarded of UNDP policy on PSEA.		X			PSEA and HR unit Operational manager
	<b>Activity 2.2.</b> Increase knowledge and awareness among UNDP beneficiaries		X	X		PSEA focal points , project managers
<b>Output 3. Laid the groundwork for an effective complaint and</b>	<b>Activity 3.1</b> Increasing accessibility of SEA complaint avenues through creating an		X	X		Under RR approval

reporting system	inside hotline of reporting.					
	<b>Activity 3.2.</b> Adopting a mainstreaming approach in training and workshops to ensure that PSEA messaging was incorporated will all working environments.		X	X	X	Senior management and project managers
	<b>Activity 3.3.</b> Work on outreach to beneficiaries and relevant partners on the standards of conduct expected of the UN personnel, ways to report SEA and seek support		X	X	X	PSEA focal points
	<b>Activity 3.4.</b> Holding session on PSEA reporting protocols for all UN staff		X		X	PSEA focal points
	<b>Activity 3.5.</b> Holding 3 Raising Awareness sessions for CO's consultants			X	X	PSEA focal points

## **Annex:**

### **Terms of Reference for in-country Focal Points on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**

#### **Role Description**

Under the auspices of his/her Resident Representative or Country Director, the in-country Focal Point for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) will coordinate the implementation of the Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13). S/he will undertake this both within UNDP and as a member of the in-country Network on PSEA.

The Focal Point designation is a role or "hat" and not necessarily a position. It can either be assigned to existing personnel or new personnel can be hired to carry it out. Whether the role is a full-time or part-time undertaking should depend on country-specific need.

#### **Major Tasks**

##### ***Internal duties and responsibilities***

Within UNDP, the Focal Point shall actively promote protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). In this regard, the Focal Point shall, where not already in place:

##### **Engagement with and support of local populations**

- Facilitate, in coordination with the in-country PSEA Network, awareness-raising in local communities on their rights, the fact that assistance to them is never to be conditioned on sexual favors and options for reporting incidents of SEA.

##### **Prevention**

- Ensure that the identity of the focal point is known throughout the entity and that contacts are made widely available.



- Provide awareness-raising material (such as “No Excuses”) and sessions on sexual exploitation and abuse for all staff and other personnel in UNDP on a regular basis, including for newcomers.
- In line with the updated implementing partner agreements, and in coordination with other entities, work with implementing partners to inform them of their SEA responsibilities.
- Make appropriate recommendations to management on enhancing prevention strategies. This could include collecting and analyzing information on actual/potential risk factors for vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse and elaborating measures to address them.
- Ensure that procedures to guard against hiring of persons who have a record of SEA offences are put in place and applied.

### Response systems

- In accordance with UNDP’s reporting procedures, ensure UNDP personnel are aware of how to report incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Be informed of any inter-agency reporting mechanisms in place, or of other entities’ reporting procedures, should an allegation of SEA concern another entity’s personnel.
- If a complaint is received by the Focal Point or any other UNDP personnel member:
  - Refer the complaints/reports immediately to the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigation.
  - Immediately refer complainants to a victim assistance mechanism, where established, so that they may receive the medical, psychosocial, and legal support they need or directly assist complainants to access immediate medical assistance and safety measures where needed. If a victim assistance mechanism is not yet in place, the Focal Point should seek to facilitate access to such support, as identified in UN General Assembly Resolution 62/214.

### **Management and Coordination**

- Assist the Resident Representative to fulfil his/her responsibilities in accordance with the SGB (*ST/SGB/2003/13*).
- Work with HR to ensure the most updated versions of contractual arrangements with non-UN entities and individuals are used. It is important to note that the majority of implementing partner agreements were updated in late 2018/early 2019 to include reference to SEA.
- Coordinate the UNDP's adherence to relevant monitoring/compliance mechanisms, including contribution to the annual report of the Secretary-General on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.
- Track all PSEA-related activities for UNDP and ensure that all information on PSEA-related activities is shared with relevant persons internally.
- Keep data on reported incidents for general reporting and further development of efforts to address SEA.
- Keep management up to date on PSEA measures taken and plans for future action.

### ***In-Country Network duties and responsibilities***

In the development of the mechanisms and procedures noted above, the Focal Point collaborates with the In-Country Network so as to promote consistency among entities and benefit from lessons learned.

As a participant in the in-country Network on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, the Focal Point works with other focal points in the Network to achieve the fulfillment of the Network's Terms of Reference. The Focal Point's contribution shall be in accordance with his/her expertise and position. (For example, a Focal Point who works with local populations in his/her daily activities might lead the Task Force's development of community-based complaints mechanisms.)

In addition to the above tasks, the Focal Point shall carry out any additional activities needed to address sexual exploitation and abuse.

### **Competencies and Experience**

The in-country Focal Point for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) shall be a staff member. The Focal Point needs easy access to senior

management so as to be able to effect change and therefore should normally be appointed at a P3 level or above).

The Focal Point shall have the following competencies and experience: Proven integrity, objectivity and professional competence; demonstrated sensitivity to cultural diversity and gender issues; fluent in relevant languages; demonstrated experience of working directly with local communities; proven communication skills. Upon appointment, the Focal Point shall undergo specific training on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, as soon as is feasible.

### **Support and Resources for the Focal Point**

Many of the mechanisms and procedures that the Focal Point is responsible for developing have already been developed by others, whether in country or elsewhere. As such, the Focal Point shall seek to benefit from preexisting tools and guidance so as to avoid duplication and “reinventing the wheel.” (See tools repository at [www.pseataaskforce.org](http://www.pseataaskforce.org))

The Focal Point can seek further support as needed from UNDP PSEA Focal Point at HQ New York at [psea.focalpoint@undp.org](mailto:psea.focalpoint@undp.org)

### **YouTube links:**

1. UN Official cries over allegations:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dX5DsNSiqU>
  2. Public opinion on UN’s response:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cn5gCuG2Pg>
  3. UN Envoy on Sexual Violence in Conflict visiting Iraq and Syria  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE5NqOHm-sl>
  4. Video showing statistics and consequences of child sexual abuse:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOhsoH9IQGY>
- To Serve with Pride Film available in English and Arabic on homepage of Global PSEA Task Force website:  
<http://www.pseataaskforce.org/>

Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance to beneficiaries.



يحظر تبادل الأموال أو العمل أو السلع أو الخدمات مقابل الجنس، بما في ذلك الخدمات الجنسية أو غير ذلك من أشكال السلوك المعين أو الاستغلالي. وهذا يشمل تبادل المساعدة المستحقة للمستفيدين.

Sexual exploitation and abuse is unacceptable. It constitutes gross misconduct and grounds for termination of employment.



ان الاستغلال والاعتداء الجنسي هو أمر غير مقبول إذ إنه يشكل سوء سلوك جسيم وبالتالي تتسبب في إنهاء التوظيف.

Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.



النشاط الجنسي مع الأطفال (الأشخاص دون سن 18) محظور بغض النظر عن سن الرشد محلياً. لا يعتبر الاعتقاد الخاطئ بشأن عمر الطفل دفاعاً.

STOP

Any form of discrimination or harassment, including sexual or gender harassment, as well as physical or verbal abuse at the workplace or in connection with work, is prohibited.



يحظر أي شكل من أشكال التمييز أو التحرش، بما في ذلك التحرش الجنسي، وكذلك الإساءة الجسدية أو اللفظية في مكان العمل أو فيما يتعلق بالعمل.

We have to call out sexual harassment out because only then can we start to make progress on it.



علينا أن نكشف حالات التحرش الجنسي لأنه عندها فقط يمكننا أن نبدأ في إحراز تقدم بشأنه.

Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes their code of conduct.



العاملون في المجال الإنساني ملزمون بتهيئة والحفاظ على بيئة تمنع الاستغلال والانتهاك الجنسيين وتعزز تنفيذ مدونة قواعد السلوك الخاصة بهم.

The above PSEA-SH messages were approved by senior management and designed by communications team and distributed in all UNDP's offices in Iraq.

# Need Help?



If you have experienced or witnessed discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment and abuse of authority, you are encouraged to contact, in confidence, your organization's formal/informal complaints mechanism.

1. For informal complaints, mediation, or confidential advice, please contact: [zena.ali-ahmad@undp.org](mailto:zena.ali-ahmad@undp.org)

a. The Country Office Focal Points on email: [sundus.abass@undp.org](mailto:sundus.abass@undp.org), [gulistan.ibadat@undp.org](mailto:gulistan.ibadat@undp.org), [suparva.narasimhaiah@undp.org](mailto:suparva.narasimhaiah@undp.org).

b. The Ombudsman's office on: [OmbudsMediation@fpombudsman.org](mailto:OmbudsMediation@fpombudsman.org)

2. For formal complaints, you may contact the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) via email: [reportmisconduct@undp.org](mailto:reportmisconduct@undp.org) or lodge the complaint online through the "Report wrongdoing" website: <https://intranet.undp.org/SitePages/Intranet.aspx>. Your PSEA Focal Points may assist you with information about the process.

3. If you prefer to discuss the matter with the Ethics Office, you can also contact the UN ethics office [ethicsoffice@un.org](mailto:ethicsoffice@un.org) or call the dedicated helpline: [+1-917-367-9858](tel:+1-917-367-9858).

4. Please also remember, your personal well-being is extremely important. Accordingly, you can also speak with a counselor at any time, and in complete confidence. The UNDP Occupational Safety, Health and Wellbeing focal point can be contacted at: [khatab.saeed@undp.org](mailto:khatab.saeed@undp.org)