

UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board

Information note on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

June 2025

I. Shared challenges, opportunities and collaboration

1. Programming on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (PSEAH) is a crucial yet underfunded aspect of development and humanitarian work. This includes limited resources for prevention efforts like sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) risk assessments, a shortage of PSEAH specialists and interagency coordinators, and reduced gender-based violence (GBV) services for victims and survivors. In-country PSEAH work is typically led by focal points who commit to these duties in addition to their regular responsibilities. UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS continue to seek opportunities to address this challenge across the system. It is essential that progress is not reliant on individual efforts but is shared by all personnel, starting with leadership and extending through all organizational levels – operational and programmatic. Achieving this requires a cultural shift to encourage long-term change, alongside concrete actions to enforce zero-tolerance policies.

2. Addressing these challenges requires collective work and collaboration, which are crucial for the success of PSEAH within the United Nations system and across individual entities. UNFPA, UNDP and UNOPS have adopted a collective approach as a core strategy, with collaboration spanning global and regional levels. In 2024, these organizations committed to various inter-agency working groups, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) PSEAH Technical Advisory Group, the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OSC SEA) Working Group, and country-level PSEA networks. These forums focus on joint advocacy, developing technical standards and practices, supporting humanitarian country teams (HCTs) and United Nations country teams (UNCTs) in implementing PSEA action plans and ensuring robust prevention, reporting mechanisms and survivor support referral pathways. Notably, all three entities are engaged in Workstream 5 of the United Nations Executive Group to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment, meet regularly to share learning from the pilot on the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, and contributed to the IASC Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Advocacy Note emphasizing the importance of maintaining focus on PSEAH despite funding shortfalls.

II. UNFPA strategic update

3. UNFPA has zero tolerance for any and all forms of wrongdoing. Senior management has continued to set a strong tone at the top on reinforcing its particular zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH). In 2024, the Executive Director and Executive Committee approved the first UNFPA Strategy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (PSEAH), built around three pillars: (a) evidence-driven prevention and response; (b) accountability and survivor-centred principles and standards; and (c) systems-level organizational and culture change. The Strategy also identifies strategic shifts (enabling, implementation, and performance), and four implementation objectives: enhancing UNFPA PSEAH systems; addressing SEA in UNFPA programmes; tackling internal SH; and establishing UNFPA as a leader on PSEAH. It offers “planning paradigms” to guide headquarters and field-level business units in making informed PSEAH funding and planning decisions.

4. As part of UNFPA commitment to being survivor-centred, accountable and evidence-informed, the organization’s key achievements in 2024 included a PSEAH Ideation Challenge to promote innovative solutions to address SEA and SH within UNFPA, fostering a culture of prevention, collaboration and accountability; updating its knowledge and learning hub; analysing SEAH reporting barriers to create safer, more survivor-centred reporting pathways; and launching the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme (MDS) across all six regions, with metrics to track progress and capture learning for broader United Nations system MDS considerations. In addition to the Ideation Challenge, to more effectively address knowledge gaps and promote learning, the Deputy Executive Director – Management led the global awards ceremony showcasing the winners of the Challenge; the

UNFPA Chief of Staff facilitated the UNFPA Global Change Dialogue on PSEAH: From Commitment to Accountability; and the PSEAH Unit, located within the Office of the Executive Director (OED), conducted two missions to the West and Central Africa and the Arab States regions.

5. The Executive Director further reinforced UNFPA leadership accountability to PSEAH in 2024, confirming full compliance to the Secretary General's Special Measures on Protection from SEA: affirming 100 per cent of offices, business units and divisions reported all allegations of SEA, completed the mandatory PSEA training, and had all appointed PSEA Focal Points.

6. Progress against outcomes and indicators to strengthen PSEAH across UNFPA is summarized below.

1. SEA and SH reporting mechanisms are safe, accessible and survivor-centred

7. UNFPA has established confidential reporting mechanisms for reporting SEA and SH, which are managed by the Office of Audit and Internal Investigation Services (OAIS). They include a secure web-based helpline, available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish, enabling anonymous reporting. These mechanisms are designed to be easily accessible to all personnel, affected populations and stakeholders, so that individuals can report concerns without fear of retaliation. Staff managing incoming reports have been trained on survivor-centred principles and standards, ensuring that those accessing these mechanisms are not exposed to any further harm.

8. According to the 2024 Global Staff Survey, 89 per cent of personnel know how to report SEA and SH. In other global surveys, while a small proportion of personnel noted they had either experienced or witnessed sexual misconduct, 63 per cent of them chose not to report it – a trend that is not unique to UNFPA and suggests that this is a system-wide issue. These findings align with the PSEAH Unit-led survey on SEAH reporting barriers, which identified fear of retaliation, lack of confidentiality and a lack of confidence that anything would be done as the top deterrents to reporting. Across all surveys, female personnel were less likely to report or feel safe doing so. Using evidence to understand these reporting barriers has equipped UNFPA with critical data that is being used to inform targeted actions that will directly and effectively tackle them.

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

- 89 per cent of regional and country offices have mechanisms for reporting SEA and SH at their duty stations;
- 98 per cent of these have reporting mechanisms that are at least somewhat safe, accessible and survivor-centred;
- 53 per cent have mechanisms that meet all key criteria.

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

- 87 per cent of regional and country offices implemented community engagement and awareness-raising on PSEA;
- 33 per cent conducted UNFPA-specific activities; 27 per cent participated in inter-agency efforts; and 40 per cent engaged in both UNFPA and inter-agency initiatives.

2. Investigations are survivor-centred and timely, and result in appropriate accountability measures

9. A survivor-centred approach is at the core of the investigative process of UNFPA. All credible allegations are thoroughly investigated by OAIS investigators who are equipped with specialized training on survivor-centred investigative practices, and bring expertise from law enforcement, prosecutorial work and human rights investigations. Survivors are kept informed throughout the process. Ensuring timely investigations is critical to upholding survivor confidence and accountability. UNFPA prioritizes efficiency while maintaining due process, striving to minimize delays that could deter reporting or prolong harm. In 2024, cases of sexual misconduct were

closed on average within 5.7 months, a significant improvement from 11.3 months in 2023 and well below the 12-month standard set by the Investigations Manual guidance.

10. Following thorough investigations, OASIS submits its investigation reports to the Legal Unit to determine disciplinary measures. Communication with survivors is ensured once disciplinary actions are determined. UNFPA annually publishes the disciplinary measures and related actions taken following substantiated allegations of SEA and SH, which are also updated in the public United Nations iReport portal.

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

- Of the cases that progressed to full investigation, OASIS notified survivors of the closure of the matter in 100 per cent of the cases;
- 84 per cent of UNFPA investigators have been trained on survivor-centred investigation procedures.

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

- Completed cases of sexual misconduct were closed on average 5.7 months after receipt;
- 100 per cent of substantiated allegations of sexual misconduct cases perpetrated by UNFPA personnel were recorded in Clear Check. Disciplinary measures were not applied, as the individuals had already separated from the organization at the time the investigation concluded.

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

11. UNFPA remains a leading participant in the inter-agency working group on the IP Protocol, contributing to a coordinated approach to its implementation and the use of the PSEA Module in the United Nations Partner Portal. The organization has fully operationalized the United Nations Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Involving Implementing Partners (“IP Protocol”) through its incorporation into the Policy and Procedures for Selection, Registration and Assessment of Implementing Partners.

12. UNFPA civil society organization partners were assessed for their PSEA capacities either by UNFPA workplan managers, with technical support from the PSEA focal points, or by another United Nations entity. For those partners that did not meet full capacity, UNFPA provided additional training to support partners in understanding their obligations to prevent and respond to SEA.

13. As needed and or determined necessary, UNFPA investigates incidents of SEA reported by or implicating its implementing partners. Based on the investigation report, the UNFPA Implementing Partner Review Committee (IPRC), consults with OASIS, the Legal Unit, the Programme Division and the PSEAH Coordinator to determine any additional accountability or risk mitigation measures to be put in place or whether to institute sanctions proceedings. Sanctions in response to ineffectual actions by the implementing partner or a classification of “ineligible for partnership” could include suspension, termination or forgoing future partnerships with the respective implementing partners.

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

- 98 per cent of implementing partners were assessed;
- Among those assessed, partner capacity was determined to be: 60 per cent full capacity; 17 per cent medium capacity; 16 per cent low capacity (IPs received training and support); 3 per cent no contact with beneficiaries (IPs received training and support); 4 per cent ‘missing’ rating.¹

¹ Note: a ‘missing’ rating means the implementing partner has been assessed but a rating was not added to the UN Partner Portal.

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

14. To reinforce its institutional capacity on PSEAH, during its most recent midterm review of the strategic plan, 2022-2025, UNFPA proposed the transition of a temporary assignment with the PSEAH Unit into a fixed-term appointment (FTA) position, to provide sustained support to this critical area of work. With final approval of the Executive Board, UNFPA expedited the recruitment of a PSEAH Specialist (P4 FTA), ensuring sustained expertise and guidance across its operations and its expansive network of over 250 in-country PSEA Focal Points. The organization also created an updated and evidence-informed Core Learning Package on PSEAH to promote more impactful learning efforts.

15. To further strengthen SEA risk management – integrated into the UNFPA enterprise risk management (ERM) framework – and advance risk-informed prevention and response, UNFPA updated the terms of reference for its PSEA Focal Points to include risk analysis and mitigation and piloted the contextualization of the IASC SEA Risk Overview (SEARO) Global Index in two country offices, ensuring a more tailored and contextualized approach to addressing SEA risks.

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

- 80 per cent of regional and country offices conducted an SEA risk assessment in 2024, either a UNFPA-specific or inter-agency assessment, or both;
- 68 per cent carried out a UNFPA-specific assessment;
- 59 per cent participated in a country-wide SEA risk assessment led at the United Nations country team (UNCT) level.

4.2. PSEA/SH focal points and/or dedicated PSEA/SH specialists are appointed at headquarters, regional and country levels

- 100 per cent of regional and country offices have appointed PSEA Focal Points (274 individuals);
- UNFPA has 10 dedicated PSEAH staff or personnel at field levels (Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Ukraine, Sudan, Syria and Zambia)
- At UNFPA headquarters, one P5 FTA, one P4 FTA, and two International Consultants (PSEAH Unit within OED), one General Service Administration personnel (shared with two other units in OED).

4.3. All staff and related personnel complete the mandatory annual training and/or briefing on PSEA and SH

- 100 per cent of staff completed the mandatory online PSEA course;
- 89 per cent of staff completed the course “United to Respect” on protection from SH.

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

- One subject was added to Clear Check in 2024;
- 100 per cent of candidates were vetted for prior misconduct through Clear Check;
- 100 per cent of candidates from all MDS-participating entities were vetted.

5. Quality, victim/survivor-centred support is operationalized

16. Survivor-centred support remains at the core of the PSEAH mandate of UNFPA. While OAIS investigates all credible allegations, in line with the survivor-centred approach and the United Nations Victim’s Assistance

Protocol, the PSEAH Unit ensures survivors – whether they report or not – can access support. The Sexual Misconduct Support Focal Point, a function carried out by the Global PSEAH Coordinator, plays a key role in facilitating survivor assistance. In 2024, UNFPA further strengthened its survivor-centred approach by advocating for increased GBV funding, reinforcing the role of PSEA Focal Points in utilizing GBV referral pathways and enhancing GBV programming to ensure safe and accessible support for SEA survivors. UNFPA finalized the SEA Survivor Support Module for the IASC GBV Case Management Guidelines, which is now available in English, French, Arabic, Spanish and Russian.

5.1. Assistance for victims/survivors of SEA and SH is provided in accordance with established protocols and standards – including the United Nations Victims Assistance Protocol, the victim/survivor-centred approach, and gender-based violence (GBV) and child protection referral pathways

- 88 per cent of regional offices and country offices reported that assistance for survivors of SEA is provided in accordance with established protocols and standards.

5.2. The implementation of the United Nations Victims Assistance Protocol is strengthened at country level

- 75 per cent of regional offices and country offices reported that the United Nations Victim Assistance Protocol is effectively operationalized.

6. Inter-agency coordination and collaboration on PSEA and SH are strengthened

17. UNFPA leveraged its GBV expertise and women's empowerment mandate to promote accountability, enhance evidence-informed approaches, and promote survivor-centred initiatives. In collaboration with the Office of the Victim's Rights Advocate, UNFPA co-leads the IASC Technical Advisory Group Practitioners' working group to provide recommendations on how to overcome challenges in the provision of assistance for survivors of SEAH. UNFPA also partnered with UN-Women to co-facilitate consultations with women-led civil society organizations across nine countries to inform the joint UN-Government PSEA Framework. Additionally, UNFPA leads Workstream five of the Chief Executives Board (CEB) Executive Group on addressing SH in the United Nations system, and dedicated resources to a consultancy to develop a framework and software that will enable the Executive Group to monitor progress and evaluate its impact on addressing SH.

18. Across its country and regional programmes, UNFPA either hosted or funded 13 inter-agency PSEA Network Coordinators across eight contexts, seven of which are classified as high-risk by the IASC. UNFPA also supported USG Saunders' visit to Ukraine; co-chaired the United Nations City PSEA Task Force in Copenhagen; led training and SEA risk assessments in Central African Republic; and co-led a deep-dive review in South Sudan that informed the national PSEA Strategy and Action Plan.

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

- 95per cent of the UNFPA PSEA Focal Points regularly participate in PSEA Networks;
- 37per cent chair the inter-agency PSEA Network.

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

- Co-leads IASC TAG Practitioner's Working Group;
- Active member of the OSCSEA PSEA Working Group;
- Leads Workstream five of the CEB Executive Group on addressing SH in the United Nations system.

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

19. UNFPA recognizes that effectively tackling SEAH requires a fundamental shift in culture – one that challenges individual mindsets, beliefs and behaviours while addressing systemic and structural factors that enable sexual misconduct, particularly gender inequality and abuse of power. To build trust and transparency, senior leadership prioritized psychological safety, fair processes and survivor-centred approaches. In 2024, the Integrity Group – comprising OAIS, the Ethics Office, the Legal Unit, the PSEAH Coordinator, the Division of Human Resources and the Office of the Ombudsman – continued to drive appropriate resolutions of workplace concerns, expand access to confidential reporting channels and strengthen support for affected individuals, particularly survivors of sexual misconduct.

20. In 2024, UNFPA reaffirmed its commitment to fostering a culture of safety, accountability, dignity, gender equality and diversity, which are core pillars of PSEAH. The organization achieved Equity, Diversity, and Gender Equality (EDGE) Move and EDGEplus certifications, affirming a strong framework of policies and practices that foster an inclusive and equitable workplace culture. UNFPA also endorsed the system-wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan (GEAP) and the Gender Equality and Inclusion Steering Committee at the Executive Committee level, reinforcing accountability for gender-related commitments and its commitment to an environment free from harassment and abuse.

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

- 2,457 female personnel employed within UNFPA offices, representing 52 per cent of the overall workforce;
- Percentage of female per staffing category: 57 per cent of Professional and Director-level; 47 per cent of General Service; 54 per cent of national professional officers; 67 per cent of United Nations Volunteers; 46 per cent of Service Contract holders.

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

- One UNFPA Global Staff Survey (including sections on SEA, SH and accountability);
- Two presentations to the Executive Committee on UNFPA results from the OSCSEA global PSEA Survey, and the CEB EG Global SH Survey;
- One UNFPA survey on accountability perceptions and barriers to reporting SEAH.

III. UNOPS strategic update

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

In 2022, UNOPS began a transformative overhaul of its speak up and whistle blowing process, which concluded in late 2024 with the launch of a new Whistleblowing Mechanism called the Integrity Portal. This new platform replaces the previous system Speak Up. The Integrity Portal is designed to be more user-friendly and accessible, providing relevant information, confidential guidance, and a secure channel for raising concerns or reporting misconduct. The system also allows for anonymous reporting, ensuring that individuals can report wrongdoing without fear of reprisal. This process also included the development of the first ever comprehensive Code of Ethics which marks a significant milestone in our ongoing cultural transformation and serves as a cornerstone for ethical governance across UNOPS.

In addition to the online Integrity Portal and other local reporting mechanisms, UNOPS trains its PSEAH Focal Points network, of approximately 200 members, to receive allegations in a victim-centered approach and refer them confidentially to the investigation unit. This ensures that victims are treated with sensitivity and respect throughout the reporting process. Furthermore, in 2024, UNOPS hired a second Victim Support Officer to provide confidential support to victims and others seeking guidance on the administrative justice process. This additional resource demonstrates UNOPS' commitment to supporting victims and ensuring that they have access to the information and resources they need to navigate the complexities of the administrative justice system, and feel supported and accompanied during this process.

Community engagement on PSEA is an area of priority for 2025 where we hope to standardize our approach to ensure all communities are informed of their rights and the mechanism to report misconduct.

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

76% of Focal Points that were surveyed reported having a local mechanism in place for reporting SEA and sexual harassment.

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

68% of Focal Points that were surveyed reported carrying out community engagement and awareness-raising on PSEA. This represents project specific activities as well as inter-agency.

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

The Internal Audit and Investigations Group (IAIG) continues its coordination with other United Nations organizations on these issues through its membership in the United Nations Representatives of Investigation Services and by attending the Meeting of Investigatory Bodies on PSEAH organized by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the UN CEB task force on addressing sexual harassment in the organizations of the UN.

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

The IAIG continues to prioritize cases of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment with specially trained investigators and shortened case review durations. IAIG also ensures that appropriate victim support services are provided, including the option of a referral to UNOPS Victim Support Officer. All victims are notified of the outcome of the investigation.

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

All IAIG Investigators, nine in total, handle sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment cases and eight have received specialized training. In 2024, the Group closed cases of sexual misconduct within an average of 3.3 months. All 2024

cases of SEA were reported to the Office of the Secretary-General. In 2024, IAIG also responded to five ‘Clear Check’ verification requests from other UN entities.

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

UNOPS remains committed to implementing and reporting on the UN Protocol on Allegations of SEA Involving Implementing Partners. To further strengthen these efforts, over 800 UNOPS personnel were trained in the Protocol and capacity assessment methodology throughout the year. Additionally, in 2024, UNOPS joined the United Nations Partner Portal (UNPP) and implemented the Joint Inspection Unit’s recommendations to harmonize PSEA efforts across the UN system using the UNPP.

Specialized clinic sessions designed and delivered to enhance UNOPS personnel's capacity to provide IPs with effective support on PSEA. Additionally, regional training sessions were conducted to familiarize staff with the UNPP partner portal, ensuring they can efficiently utilize this platform in their work with implementing partners.

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

In 2024, 77% of UNOPS’ current implementing partners underwent assessments to evaluate their capacity to prevent and respond to SEA.

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

UNOPS utilizes various mechanisms to collect and evaluate input on how to strengthen prevention efforts. In 2024, UNOPS welcomed the Office of Special Coordinator’s Annual PSEA Survey, using the results of this survey to inform action planning and special initiatives. UNOPS conducted a survey for all PSEAH Focal Points to request feedback on to support their efforts and what resources FPs need in order for them to successfully fulfill their critical role. Lastly, UNOPS conducted a risk analysis study across its operations to determine how to strengthen our risk management process. The findings of this analysis will inform a new risk management process in 2025, which aims to streamline and standardize how country or project-based risk assessments are conducted.

Given the UNOPS operating model, risk assessments are primarily project focused. All projects with a physical presence including infrastructure and mine clearance are required to identify PSEAH risks through a dedicated risk screening. Depending on the risk rating, projects are required to implement risk mitigation activities in their Action Plans. Certain contexts also require a country level risk assessment, particularly where donor expectations mandate such an exercise. UNOPS also participates in inter-agency risk assessments where relevant.

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

78% of Country Offices that were surveyed reported that risk assessments inform their prevention and response strategies. This represents both country wide risk assessments, project specific assessments and inter-agency assessments.

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

100% of Country Offices have appointed PSEAH Focal Points.

100% of UNOPS 6 regions have a dedicated PSEAH Lead.

UNOPS has 4 dedicated PSEAH staff or personnel across country offices.

UNOPS HQ PSEAH Team includes a PSEAH Advisor and a PSEAH Specialist.

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

97% of personnel completed the mandatory online PSEA course. In addition to the mandatory training, the PSEAH Team offers refresher training on an ad hoc basis. UNOPS launched a specific curriculum for managers in 2024 focused on small group discussion into the special roles and responsibilities that managers play in both prevention and response to sexual misconduct. A mandatory induction on PSEAH is required as well for all new country directors and managers.

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

UNOPS formally joined the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme (MDS) in February 2024, piloted in 3 regions for all contract modalities.

100% of candidates were vetted for prior misconduct

1 subject added to ClearCheck in 2024

7,961 SEA Clear Checks completed with zero hits

UNOPS conducted MDS checks on 39 applicants, resulting in 1 hit

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

In 2024, the UNOPS Victim Support and Advocacy Team expanded its services by establishing a second Victim Support Officer in the Latin America and Caribbean Region (LCR). A priority for the team has been to develop protocols to operationalize a standard internal approach to victim care aligned with the UN Victims Assistance Protocol. Standard Operating Procedures for Managing Victim Support Requests and Data Intake are now in place.

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

90% of Country Offices reported that assistance for victims/survivors is provided in accordance with established protocols and standards. 100% of the victims/survivors identified by IAIG were offered referrals to the Victim Support and Advocacy Team. 27 cases were referred to UNOPS Victim Support Services in 2024.

The services provided include psychosocial support (counseling), advocacy for workplace adjustments and guidance and support throughout the investigation. Referrals are made primarily through UNOPS' IAIG with the second most common referral being self-referral, indicating a positive trend of help-seeking behavior in-line with the Victim Centered Approach.

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

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

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

Inter-agency coordination is of critical importance, both operational and strategically for UNOPS, and we continue to cultivate successful partnerships with other agencies such as UNDP and UNFPA to deliver a more coordinated and efficient approach to prevention activities. In 2024, UNOPS demonstrated new leadership in inter-agency coordination, through Co-Chairing the Working Group on Private Sector and PSEAH together with UNDP. PSEAH Focal Points are required to actively participate in country PSEA Networks, and our corporate PSEAH Team supports interagency networks through technical assistance, such as training in the IP Protocol.

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

100% of UNOPS' Country Offices and Regional Offices have PSEAH Focal Points

97% of PSEAH Focal Points regularly participate in PSEA Networks

In 2024, UNOPS Chaired 3 Networks

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

UNOPS is an active member of the OSCSEA PSEAH Working Group; the IASC PSEA Technical Advisory Group; the IP Protocol WG, and the CEB Executive Group on Addressing Sexual Harassment in the UN System. Since 2024, UNOPS Co-Chairs the Private Sector/Commercial Partners and PSEA Working Group together with UNDP; and Chairs a sub-working group in the Learning and Training Working Group. UNOPS is a founding member of the new PSEAH Task Force in Copenhagen UNCITY, started in March 2024, providing the overall technical support to the Task Force.

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

UNOPS acknowledges that a profound cultural shift is imperative to dismantle the systemic root causes of sexual misconduct. To catalyze this change, UNOPS introduced a network of Cultural Ambassadors in 2024. These individuals are active change agents strategically positioned to connect leadership intentions with ground-level implementation. Each Cultural Ambassador undergoes rigorous training, is assigned to work with up to three managers, and is empowered to facilitate team discussions, interpret UNOPS new culture survey results, support action planning, and, most importantly, hold leadership accountable for cultural advancement. The Cultural Ambassadors program represents an innovative approach to fostering a culture of respect and accountability within UNOPS. By empowering individuals at all levels to actively participate in cultural change, UNOPS is taking a significant step toward creating a workplace where sexual misconduct is not tolerated.

UNOPS has integrated key cultural qualities such as mutual respect, trust, and speaking out against misconduct into the daily interactions of its managers and personnel. For instance, in 2024, managers were expected to incorporate a specific performance objective related to the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH).

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

Addressing gender inequality and discrimination is another important aspect of organizational culture change. This continues to be a priority for UNOPS especially at senior levels and is essential for combating sexual misconduct. The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) strategy catalyzed the organization to reach gender parity globally in 2022. In 2024, the following data points are significant:

51% of UNOPS workforce is female

45% of UNOPS workforce in management positions is female

7.2. Personnel perception and engagement surveys inform actions to improve the organizational culture

1 UNOPS "Culture & Engagement" Survey (replacing the previous Pulse Survey)

2 Inter Agency global surveys on SEA or SH conducted in 2024 (OSCSEA Survey on PSEA, and the CEB Executive Group survey on SH).

IV. UNDP strategic update

1. SEA and SH reporting mechanisms are safe, accessible, and survivor-centred

1. All UNDP personnel are required to report formal incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse and harassment (SEAH) through the Office of Audit and Investigations' (OAI) confidential channels available in 26 languages. The reports are handled by a team of sexual misconduct investigators trained in trauma informed investigations. Victims/survivors may also seek support from the Ombudsperson, the Ethics Office (which advises victims/survivors on retaliation concerns) and UNDP's in-house counsellors, for advice and psycho-social support. For SEA, UNDP Country Offices (COs) are required to inform communities about available reporting mechanisms (e.g. complaint boxes, WhatsApp messaging services, hotlines, Project Grievance Mechanisms, and UNDP/UN GBV cluster/focal points).

2. In 2024, there was a significant increase in both informal and formal reports from personnel and implementing partners, likely as a result of a surge in awareness raising/training for around 4,000 personnel globally over the last 12-18 months (see also section 4). Nevertheless, we recognise that there remain real concerns about retaliation, distrust in the system, the lengthy investigation process, and the perceived limitations in holding perpetrators accountable. Prevention remains a priority, while also ensuring swift and fair justice for victims.

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

- 122 COs confirm that personnel had been informed about how to report SEAH
- 81 COs have established SEA reporting mechanisms
- 70 COs confirm there is an interagency process to receive and respond to allegations

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

- 68 COs confirmed they had taken action to raise awareness among local populations
- 80 COs have taken action to inform local populations on local mechanisms to report SEA

2. Investigations are survivor-centred, timely, and result in appropriate accountability measures

3. All cases of sexual misconduct are immediately prioritised. Once an allegation is received, it is handled by investigators specialized in sexual misconduct and trauma informed investigations. The victim's needs are assessed from the first contact and continuously throughout the investigation. During the planning phase and throughout the investigation, security concerns are carefully addressed by the investigation team to the extent possible. For SEA, options for local victim support services are promptly evaluated, and investigators coordinate with local PSEAH focal points to ensure appropriate assistance. The team engages the security teams at the country, regional or global level, or with UNDSS to undertake risk assessments and take action to secure the safety of the victim/survivor. The investigators are obliged to keep the victims/survivors informed throughout the investigation. UNDP's new full time Victim Support Officer will work closely with the sexual misconduct investigations team to support victims/survivors.

4. UNDP does not have the mandate to investigate SEA cases involving third parties (for example an implementing partner employee who may have abused a beneficiary). In these cases, the CO brings the matter to the IP's attention for them to investigate directly while keeping UNDP informed, including on support to the victim/survivor. UNDP's investigations team are on hand to provide support as needed.

5. All sexual misconduct cases are tracked through UNDP's confidential case management system and reported to senior management. OAI's annual report to the Executive Board includes an overview of all sexual misconduct cases and their outcomes and disciplinary measures are published annually in the "UNDP Annual Report of the Administrator on UNDP Administration of Justice." UNDP submits all reports of SEA in real time to the UN Secretariat through the 'i-tracker' as well as in mandated public quarterly reporting and the SG's annual report on SEA allegations.

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

6. The process for informing victims/survivors of the outcome of their investigation includes:

- after assessment – either closed or moved forward for investigation
- after investigation – either closed or, if substantiated, the investigation report is transmitted for review to the Office of Legal Services (OLS) (in cases where the subject of the investigation is a staff member) or to the relevant UNDP Office (in cases where the subject of the investigation is non-staff personnel)
- after legal review and/or disciplinary process by OLS – either closed or administrative or disciplinary action taken (in cases where the subject of the investigation is a staff member) or by the relevant UNDP Office (in cases where the subject of the investigation is non-staff personnel)

2.2 SEAH investigations – cases are out in a timely manner and appropriate accountability measures are taken.

Table 1 - Total caseload received in 2023 and 2024

Year	SH	SA	SEA	Total	Cases carried over from previous year	Total Caseload
2023	13	4	7	24	22	46
2024	23	8	7	38	9	47

OAI received an additional 17 complaints of Sexual Misconduct which did not fall within the mandate of OAI, 10 concerned implementing partners and were referred to the relevant UNDP office and partner for further action; 7 were referred to other agencies for action.

Table 2 - Cases proceeding to investigation

Year	# investigations opened	# closed investigations	# substantiated investigations	# unsubstantiated investigations
2023	9	13	9	4
2024	19	8	3	5

[Figures do not include cases closed at assessment].

7. To note, OAI's data confirms that women continue to be the most vulnerable. In cases where victims of sexual misconduct were identified, 100% of the perpetrators were male in 2024 (compared to 91% in 2023), while 92% of victims were female (compared to 96% in 2023). However, it is recognized that men may be less likely to report. Of interest also, overall, around 1/3 of cases were closed in 2024 (either at assessment or investigation stage) due to lack of victim consent. Around 77% of cases (2023-24) involved some kind of power imbalance with the subject either being more senior than the victim/survivor or having a more 'secure' contract – clear examples of abuse of power.

8. In 2024, the average length of time for completion of sexual misconduct cases was 5.6 months. This is below the 12-month standard set by the UN Investigations Manual, and within UNDP's commitment to complete sexual misconduct cases within 6 months where possible. Where cases are substantiated, they are then passed to UNDP's Office of Legal Services for legal/disciplinary action as appropriate.

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

9. All UNDP's Implementing Partners (IPs) including commercial partners, contractors, and vendors sign agreements that include stringent PSEAH standards and requirements. HQ has developed ready-to-use tools for country offices to raise awareness with IPs including sample invitation letters, presentation materials, facilitator guides and other resources. This is accompanied by bespoke training for Country Offices. It is mandatory for all IPs/Responsible Parties/Grantees to be assessed on their capacity to prevent and respond to SEA using UNDP's Partner Capacity Assessment Tool (PCAT). In 2024, the PCAT was updated, to include eight PSEAH-related questions in alignment

with the UN's IP Protocol and the UN Partnership Portal. The PCAT has now been digitised as part of our corporate planning system (Quantum+) and is being rolled out across the organisation allowing for more detailed corporate analysis and tracking. We are also exploring further how we can share our assessments with the UN Partnership Portal.

10. For IPs assessed as having limited PSEAH capacity, UNDP formally notifies them in writing of their PSEAH responsibilities and provides information and awareness raising sessions on available capacity-strengthening resources. For IPs engaged in higher-risk program activities, a capacity-strengthening plan is developed and implemented to address gaps and ensure adherence to PSEAH standards.

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

- 88 COs have raised the issue of SEAH with their implementing partners
- 71 COs have assessed their IPs

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

11. UNDP's key SEAH risk assessment tools include: a) Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Policy which guides the organisation in identifying and addressing risks; b) SEAH Country Level Risk Assessment Tool; and c) SEAH Project Risk Assessment Tool. UNDP also utilizes the IASC Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Overview (SEARO) to prioritize training in high-risk countries. In 2024, training focused on how to use these tools, including scenario-based sessions tailored for project and procurement staff focused on identifying risks in complex environments. 2024 saw a significant increase in the number of COs that assessed and incorporated SEA risks into the risk logs of programmes.

12. Over the past 12-18 months, we have prioritized training for senior management in country offices, particularly newly appointed Resident Representatives (RRs) and Deputy RRs and our PSEAH Focal Points. This has helped to strengthen their relationships with nearly 100 per cent of these focal points now having direct access to senior management. In 2024, the proportion of PSEAH focal points with access to financial resources also increased reflecting a stronger budgetary commitment by senior management to PSEAH initiatives. On average, the PSEAH team in HQ receives 2–3 requests daily for advice and support from PSEAH Focal Points which demonstrates a high level of activity and responsibility. The PSEAH Community of Practice (300 active members) continues to serve as a hub for sharing information.

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

- 86 COs have assessed and reflected SEAH risks in the risk logs of their projects and programmes in line with UNDP's ERM

4.2 PSEA/SH focal points and/or dedicated PSEA/SH specialists are appointed at HQ, regional and country level

HQ/Regional

- UNDP's corporate PSEAH Taskforce Chaired by the Administrator's Special Adviser
- 7 Regional PSEAH Focal Points
- 10 PSEAH Focal points in five regional hubs

Country Office:

- 100% COs have a PSEAH Focal Point (or multiple focal points) in place
- 124 COs have a PSEAH Action Plan in place
- 86 COs have a PSEAH Task Team in addition to the PSEAH Focal Point
- 103 COs have clear TORs for the PSEAH Focal Point
- 62 CO PSEAH Focal Points have access to financial resources
- 116 COs confirm the PSEAH reports regularly to CO Senior management
- 52 COs have a Respectful Workplace Facilitator in place

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

Mandatory courses – completion rates

Year	Ethics & Integrity	SEA course	SH course
2023	90%	96%	94%
2024	93%	94%	94%

UNDP hosts its compliance training courses on Quantum Learning LMS, where courses are automatically assigned to all personnel. These courses appear as "Required" on the LMS landing page, and monthly personal notifications are sent as reminders for completion helping to foster compliance. Completion of all mandatory courses is a pre-requisite for admission to any other UNDP learning and development opportunities, including career and leadership development programmes, and it is strictly enforced.

13. In addition to the mandatory training, specialized scenario-based training was offered to UNDP Country Offices and Business Units upon request. In 2024, over 4,000 personnel, including senior management, were trained plus tailored training provided to 50 Country Offices to address specific PSEAH challenges.

- 127 COs (100%) say that all personnel have been informed of SH and SEA standards
- 125 COs confirm that all personnel have been informed about actions to prevent SEAH
- 122 COs confirm that all personnel have been informed about how to report SEAH

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

14. UNDP screens all personnel for past SEAH violations as part of its recruitment process through: the application form (if an applicant is found to have lied, then their appointment/contract is terminated); the Clear Check database; and mandatory reference checks. PSEAH clauses are included in all personnel contract agreements. UNDP is now piloting the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme (MDS) in five high-risk countries targeting all International Professional and National Officer recruitments. The pilot will be evaluated at the end of 2025.

Clear Check screenings to date include:

- 18,144 screenings in 2024 compared to 10,929 in 2023
- 40,118 since the database was launched in 2018
- 25 personnel submitted so far

5. Quality, victim/survivor-centred support is operationalised

15. OAI and the Ombudsperson's Office work closely with UNDP's staff counselling team to ensure that victims/survivors of sexual harassment receive appropriate psycho-social support. For SEA victims/survivors, in collaboration with PSEAH Focal Points, the sexual misconduct investigation team helps identify and facilitate referrals to available services in countries. UNDP's new Victim Support Officer will be a critical part of this process. UNDP country offices are encouraged to proactively engage with national counterparts and in-country PSEAH networks to establish or strengthen victim assistance services through capacity-building initiatives at the local and national levels.

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

- 81 COs identified local victim/survivor support providers to assist victims/survivors of SEA
- 60 COs used victim/survivor support providers established through a UN inter-agency process

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

16. In 2024, UNDP updated its PSEAH training materials for Country Offices to emphasise the victim-centred approach in line with the UN Victim Assistance Protocol including: a) the importance of prioritizing the needs, rights, and well-being of victims in all decisions and actions; b) the need for timely assistance as soon as an incident is reported; c) effective coordination between UN entities, local authorities, and service providers to ensure seamless support; d) strict protection of victims' privacy and personal information and e) the principle of non-discrimination to guarantee that all victims, have equal access to assistance.

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

17. In 2024, 100% of country offices participated in a UN inter-agency PSEA Network (compared to 92% in 2023). Victim support is coordinated at the inter-agency level in about half of UNDP Country Offices, ensuring a more unified and effective response. While these interagency networks are UN-led, many include representatives from NGOs, government entities, and other partners, strengthening collective efforts to prevent and respond to SEA. In 2024, we observed that government and NGOs played a particularly significant role in coordination efforts, especially in Africa.

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

- 112 COs report confirm there is an interagency PSEA coordinator and/or PSEAH network in country
- 127 COs confirm that UNDP is part of the interagency PSEAH network
- 42 COs indicate that the PSEA Interagency Network has a dedicated budget
- 18 COs indicate that Government is part of the PSEA Interagency Network

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

18. UNDP participates in the following interagency groups:

- CEB High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) Working Group on Sexual Harassment, and three of the five workstreams under this mechanism.
- Technical Advisory Group of the AISC on SEA
- UN PSEA Task Force, led by the UN Office of the Special Coordinator (OSC) UNDP is involved in 15 technical working groups, including chairing the Working Group on Engaging Commercial Partners, leading the Technical Working Group on Developing a PSEA Government Cooperation Framework (TWG), contributing to the training workstream and victim support working groups, as well as participating in the SGB Update Ad-hoc Workstream.

19. UNDP has co-led inter-agency efforts in developing training materials for UN Country Teams (UNCTs), and strengthening capacity-building across the system for instance by providing advice to inter agency coordinators in UNCT/HCT training

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

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

20. UNDP's Speak Up Culture Programme promotes an organizational culture rooted in civility, transparency, respect, and freedom from fear, where people have the tools to shape their employee experiences and create an environment where they can thrive. Through team experience sessions, self-reflection exercises, and a safe space framework, the Programme encourages personnel and leaders to engage proactively rather than retreat into silence. In 2024, the Programme was piloted in 12 UNDP Country Offices and is now being scaled up. Over 300 leaders have participated in UNDP's Leaders for 2030 Programme that provides senior leaders with essential management skills and reinforces leadership behaviours that actively counter harassment and discrimination, uphold fairness, and encourage ethical

decision-making. UNDP's Resident Representatives (RR) and Deputy Resident Representatives (DRRs) and all existing senior leaders have been offered additional virtual training on PSEAH to 'set the tone at the top' and to create a safe environment for all personnel.

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

21. In 2023, UNDP introduced *#UNDPListens*, a robust people-listening initiative that enables personnel to share frequent and targeted insights about their work experiences. The goal is to foster a dynamic dialogue between management and personnel, promoting better alignment of individual and organizational goals. To date, UNDP has successfully rolled out the annual Engagement and Inclusion Surveys, as well as the People Leadership Pulse. The Engagement Survey aims to gauge UNDP personnel's perceptions of their working experience and environment. The Inclusion Survey offers valuable insights into UNDP's progress in fostering an inclusive and respectful workplace, which is key for effectively addressing SEAH. The Inclusion score for 2024 was 75/100, and was complemented with more specific measures of belonging, trust and psychological safety in order to provide diagnostic signals to guide action. The next Inclusion Survey will include a separate section on harassment, including sexual harassment.
