

GUIDANCE NOTE ON PSEA AWARENESS RAISING WITH COMMUNITIES¹

Community awareness is a key SEA prevention activity, as it empowers communities with the knowledge to recognize risks, understand their rights, while strengthening trust, accountability, and communication between communities and organisations.

Organisations must ensure that awareness activities target and actively engage community groups, including women-led groups, youth, persons with disabilities, and elderly and members of the LGBTIQ+²

1. Objective of this note

This Guidance note aims to support humanitarian and development organisations in Myanmar to conduct community awareness and provide them with clear, consistent, and accessible information on PSEA, including the organisation's code of conduct, standards of staff and related personnel behaviour, available support services, and complaints and feedback reporting mechanisms, including the interagency PSEA hotline and email address.

2. Target audience and duration of the awareness raising sessions

Communities affected by the conflict or natural disasters should be targeted, in particular those facing high vulnerability or protection risks such as women, girls and boys, persons with disabilities, the elderly and LGBTIQ+ people.

The duration of a session should be a minimum of 30 minutes.

Designated PSEA Champions in communities can provide any support needed with the sessions, strengthen community ownership and understanding of power dynamics.

3. Key information and messages for dissemination

a) What is PSEA?

- SEA happens when someone uses their position of power or trust to obtain sexual acts or commits or threatens unwanted sexual acts against another person. This includes asking for sex in exchange for humanitarian assistance, money, services, or other benefits.
- PSEA means protecting people from sexual exploitation and abuse by aid and development workers.
- PSEA ensures that assistance is provided safely and respectfully.

¹ This guidance note was developed by PSEA dedicate staff from IOM, FAO, UNOPS and WHO for the use of the PSEA Network members and all humanitarian and development organisations in Myanmar.

² Bearing in mind the safety of LGBTIQ+ people in contexts where they may be exposed to discrimination and stigmatisation.

b) What are some examples of SEA?

- Asking for sexual acts in exchange for assistance, such as food, cash, shelter, or other support.
- Threatening to withhold, reduce, or stop assistance if someone refuses sexual advances or requests.
- Sexually abusing a community member.
- Engaging in any sexual activity with a person under the age of 18.

c) Who can commit SEA?

- SEA can be committed by anyone connected to the delivery of assistance, such as staff and affiliated personnel including volunteers, local contractors, consultants, or community mobilizers working for international and local organisations.
- SEA is never the fault of the victim/survivor or the community. Responsibility always lies with the person who commits SEA.
- Gender-based violence (GBV) occurring between community members is outside the scope of PSEA. However, survivors should be informed about and referred to appropriate GBV support and referral services in accordance with established procedures.

d) Who can be a victim/survivor of SEA?

Anyone in the community can be a victim/survivor of SEA. Some people may face higher risks due to their circumstances, including women, girls, boys, persons with disabilities, older persons, and LGBTIQ+ people.

Key messages

- Humanitarian assistance is **free**. No one should ask for sexual acts or any other favour in exchange for assistance.
- Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and safety.
- All organisations have **zero tolerance** for sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).
- Anyone can report a concern, including victims/survivors, witnesses, or other community members.
- Reports can be made confidentially or anonymously, where available.
- Reporting will **not** affect a person's eligibility to receive assistance.
- Retaliation against anyone who reports a concern is prohibited.

PSEA Network note on key messages is available at the following link:

https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/PSEA_Key_Messages_20Jul2026.pdf

e) Tips for inclusive PSEA awareness sessions³

- Engage existing community groups, including youth, disability, older persons', and LGBTQIA+ networks.

³ Children, adolescents, persons with disabilities, elderly and LGBTQIA+

- Involve trusted community members, such as teachers and community leaders (when feasible).
- Use simple, accessible, and culturally appropriate communication methods.
- Use child-friendly and disability-inclusive IEC materials (e.g. easy-to-read materials, pictures, sign language, or audio formats).
- Create a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment where everyone feels able to participate.

f) Key considerations for different groups

- Children and adolescents: Children can be targeted by perpetrators. If you notice a child receiving frequent gifts or special attention from an aid worker, pay attention to their safety and report any concerns.
- Persons with disabilities and older persons: They may face additional barriers to accessing information and reporting. Ensure information and reporting options are accessible and provide support when needed.
- Men, boys, and LGBTQIA+ people: Anyone can experience SEA. Everyone has the right to report concerns and receive support without discrimination.
- Everyone: Treat all people with respect and dignity, listen without judgment, and ensure no one is excluded from awareness activities.

g) Reporting a SEA related concern

- Report any SEA related concerns as soon as possible through the available reporting channels, such as community feedback mechanisms, complaint or suggestion boxes, or directly to staff of the relevant organisation.
- You can also report through the Inter-Agency PSEA Hotline: 09 405 149 616 by phone call, SMS, Viber, or WhatsApp, or by email at mmrpsea@unfpa.org
- You can report on behalf of someone else.
- If the victim/survivor does not wish to report because of fear or other reasons, you can still share the information you have and indicate that the victim/survivor chose not to report directly.
- You can report as a bystander/witness, and reports can also be made anonymously. It is encouraged to provide as much information as possible about the victim and the perpetrator to ensure appropriate support for the victim and to enable a proper investigation.

Key messages on reporting

- If you see, hear about, or suspect SEA, report your concern.
- Reporting is confidential – your identity will be protected.
- Reporting is free – there is no cost to make a report.
- Reporting is safe – your access to aid will not be affected.

What happens after reporting SEA?

- If you report SEA to an organisation or the PSEA Network, your report should be handled confidentially and taken seriously.
- The report should be reviewed through the appropriate procedures. If someone has experienced SEA, they should be offered available support as soon as possible. Where appropriate, the organisation should conduct a confidential investigation.
- If SEA is confirmed, appropriate action should be taken against the person responsible. Where possible and appropriate, the person who reported the concern and/or the victim/survivor should be informed of the outcome.
- You can still receive support even if you choose not to take part in an investigation. Your decision should be respected, and available services should remain accessible.

h) What to avoid during PSEA awareness raising sessions

- Do not be defensive or dismissive.
- Do not blame the victim/survivor or others.
- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Do not ask leading, probing, or investigative questions about a disclosure.
- Do not ignore concerns or disclosures.
- Do not share your own personal experiences.
- Do not collect detailed information about an SEA incident or investigate it yourself.
- Do not approach or confront the alleged perpetrator.
- Do not discuss or share disclosures publicly or breach confidentiality.
- Do not take any action that could cause further harm or discourage reporting.
- Respect privacy and confidentiality. Do not share personal information without consent when reporting on someone else's behalf.

i) Things to keep in mind

- Include community leaders (when feasible), women's groups or PSEA Champions, as they are often the first people victims/survivors approach to disclose concerns.
- Be aware of local social, cultural, political, and security dynamics, including gender roles, traditional leadership structures, ethnic diversity, and displacement-related risks.
- Concerns about abuse of power may involve community leaders or humanitarian personnel. Follow the appropriate reporting procedures and refer concerns through established reporting mechanisms, including the interagency reporting channels (PSEA Hotline: 09 405 149 616 by phone call, SMS, Viber, or WhatsApp, or by email at mmrpsea@unfpa.org).

Key resources and references

World Food Programme (WFP). *How to Mainstream Child Protection in Programme and Operations: Step-by-Step Guidance.* <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000169592/download/>

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). *With Us & For Us: Working with Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises.* 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/youthledaction/documents/iasc-guidelines>

UNICEF. *Child and Youth Participation Resource Guide.*
<https://www.unicef.org/youthledaction/resources-meaningful-youth-engagement>

World Vision International. *Guidelines for Child Participation.*
<https://www.wvi.org/child-protection> (Please verify this is the specific World Vision publication you intend to cite.)

Save the Children. *The Nine Basic Requirements for Meaningful and Ethical Children's Participation.* 2021.
<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/nine-basic-requirements-meaningful-and-ethical-childrens-participation>

United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS). *Consulting Persons with Disabilities Guidelines.* 2021.
https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_disability-inclusive_consultation_guidelines.pdf

World Food Programme (WFP). *Guidance Note: Consulting with Persons with Disabilities and their Representative Organizations at WFP.* 2022. https://executiveboard.wfp.org/document_download/WFP-139032

Empowered Aid (The Global Women's Institute). *Focus Group Discussion Guide on Distribution.*
<https://empoweredaid.gwu.edu/resources>