

IOM is committed to the protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) in all its work. Sexual exploitation and abuse occurs when someone providing services and assistance, including IOM staff and partners, abuse their position of power and trust for sexual purposes against a beneficiary (sexual exploitation) or commit an actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature by force or coercion (sexual abuse).

IOM seeks to prioritise safety and dignity in its programming and to ensure meaningful access, accountability, participation, and empowerment for all individuals it assists. Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) can occur in every type of programme where IOM and partners interact with affected populations, and assisted individuals, but each programme has its own set of distinct risks. **This Checklist supports Shelter and Settlements programmes and teams in reducing the risks of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in key sector activities**, including:

- Settlement Planning
- Distribution of shelter materials, essential household and personal items
- Shelter Construction & Rehabilitation.

It should be used in conjunction with the **Proposal Development SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist**, the **Beneficiary Registration, Targeting & Selection SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist**, as well as the **SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist for Partnerships** (as applicable), the **SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist for Activities Involving Data Management** (as applicable), and the **SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist for Cash-based Interventions** (as applicable).

There are important SEA risk considerations in Shelter and Settlements programmes:

1. Shelter and Settlements interventions typically require IOM and associated personnel to maintain proximity with beneficiaries and their families; interaction involving power differentials creates opportunities for SEA. Careful attention to these risks and implementation of strong risk mitigation measures are therefore necessary to ensure Shelter and Settlements activities are planned, coordinated, and delivered in a safe and dignified manner, avoiding harm to individuals, families and communities.
2. Shelter and Settlements programmes are frequently implemented in contexts of extreme vulnerability. The higher an individual's vulnerability, the more likely they are to experience SEA. Shelter and Settlements programmes must ensure that assistance addresses communities' needs as much as possible, and that links are established with complementary services and projects when these cannot be met only through Shelter & Settlements interventions. This approach helps to prevent potential gaps in coverage, address diverse needs, and minimize exclusion-related risks, ultimately contributing to reducing vulnerabilities and SEA risks.

Examples of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) situations in Shelter and Settlement programming

SEA can occur at different stages of the Shelter and Settlements programme cycle, and be perpetrated by a range of actors, including IOM staff, implementing partners, contractors, third party contract staff and service providers, as well as community actors supporting the activity:

1 Needs assessment and design of intervention

One of the staff organizing the focus group discussions to which I participated texted me after the meeting and said he would share the things I said during the discussion with others in the community if I did not agree to meet him alone in private".



2 Targeting, registration and selection and of beneficiaries

"A neighbor told me that the community leader assisting IOM in registering beneficiaries to receive the shelter said he would only register her family if she agreed to have sex with him".



"I am a young mother and widow, and I recently received shelter emergency assistance from IOM. The man who registered me has been visiting me at home since then. This makes me feel uncomfortable. I asked him to stop coming, but he said that being his "special friend" will help me get selected for more assistance from IOM in the future, otherwise, I may not be so lucky next time".



3 Intervention planning and preparation

"The local government official who is helping IOM organizing a shelter activity in the community told me that he would ensure that the residential shelter we received from IOM was placed in the best and safest location if I agreed that he marries my daughter."



"I heard that many women in the community fear coming to the IOM distribution planned for tomorrow. They said that the location IOM normally uses for distributions is far, poorly lit and that the activity is not well organized. They told me that there is only male staff on site and some of them flirt with young women beneficiaries".

4 Implementation & Monitoring



"There is a cash for work beneficiary of a shelter project who is often absent from the activities. Despite that, my IOM colleague who is responsible for monitoring the site has been marking her as present. I also heard rumors that he has been spending a lot of time at her house after working hours".

"I overheard an IOM distribution field assistant telling a pregnant woman that he could move her to the front of the queue for her to receive her assistance faster if she agreed to "please" him afterwards".



5 After the intervention

"The enumerator visited my house to ask about our satisfaction with the support we received. When my wife was alone, he entered our house and made sexual comments and advances to her. He promised that we would be selected for future support if she reported that we were happy with the assistance and if she returned his sexual advances".



"When the IOM enumerator came to ask if we were happy with the shelter repairs done by IOM, we reported that the workers often came to our house without permission and demanded sexual favors from us. The IOM enumerator said that the project had ended, and there was nothing that could be done about this situation".

CROSS-CUTTING RISK MITIGATION ACTIONS FOR SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMMING

WHEN?

● Needs assessment¹ & design of intervention.

● Project set-up

● Targeting, registration and selection of beneficiaries²

● Intervention planning and preparation

● Implementation & Monitoring

● After the intervention³

RISK MITIGATION ACTIONS

1. Check with HR (and the PSEA Focal Point) that all staff and related personnel involved in the project have been vetted, received mandatory training on PSEA and signed a Code of Conduct⁴.

WHEN?



2. Ensure the project budget includes financial resources for PSEA-specific interventions.

WHEN?



➤ For further guidance, please consult the **Proposal Development SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist**.

¹ For detailed guidance on SEA risk mitigation considerations for designing and implementing needs assessments with communities, please refer to the **Data Management SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist (DTM, IM, M&E)**.

² For detailed guidance on SEA risk mitigation considerations for beneficiary targeting, registration and selection, please refer to the **Data Management SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist (DTM, IM and M&E)**, and **Beneficiary Targeting, Registration and Selection SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist**.

³ For detailed guidance on SEA risk mitigation in post intervention/distribution monitoring, please refer to the **Data Management SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist (DTM, IM, M&E)**.

⁴ For more information on Human Resources pertaining to PSEA, please refer to section A2 (PSEA HR) of the **IOM's PSEAH Toolkit & Checklist**.

3. When engaging with communities to collect data, register, plan, implement and monitor activities by IOM and partners:

- Ensure gender balance in the recruitment of project staff, especially for frontline positions Δ
- Deploy gender-mixed teams of enumerators/facilitators/field staff to work in pairs (women and men) Δ
- Ensure facilitators/enumerators/field staff interacting with women are female Δ
- Train field teams on Protection concerns and how to safely handle potential SEA disclosures, including on sharing accurate information on services and/or how to contact the PSEA Focal Point⁵, and receive information on IOM's SEA reporting ([We Are All In](#) Platform or OIOintake@iom.int).
- Provide field teams with information to carry with them on a) available complaints and feedback channels; b) Protection/GBV services available in the target areas⁶; c) contact details of the PSEA Focal Point(s).
- Enumerators/facilitators and field staff wear badges and gear with logos at all times (except in contexts where this may create security risks to staff).
- Collect only information that will be used.
- Put in place data protection measures to restrict access to data⁷.
- Field teams provide information on PSEA and on complaint and feedback mechanisms.

WHEN?



*For further guidance on SEA risk mitigation in needs assessments, please consult the **Data Management SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist**.*

4. Consult vulnerable groups (women, persons with disabilities, elderly, etc.), using appropriate and safe methods⁸, on their needs and preferences (e.g.: who within the household/family should be the recipient of the assistance, most suitable delivery mechanism, average family size, shelter privacy requirements, etc.) and on any risks that may emerge from the assistance (e.g.: SEA, tensions within the household/community, etc.).

WHEN?



If problems and issues arise during field activities and involve women community members/beneficiaries, these are handled by more than one person, and in the presence of a female staff member if the beneficiary is a female.

WHEN?



5. When working with partners⁹:

- All contracts and MOUs signed with implementing partners, (financial) service providers, traders, vendors, government

counterparts etc. contain PSEA clauses whereby partners commit to mitigate and respond to SEA.

- All implementing partners involved in the project are assessed for PSEA capacities through the [United Nations Partner Portal](#), a capacity development plan is developed jointly with the partners¹⁰, and they are supported to meet minimum standards on PSEA.
- Implementing partners, service providers, traders, vendors, government counterparts are monitored to ensure adherence to PSEAH standards and commitments.

WHEN?



*For further guidance on SEA risk mitigation in needs assessments, please consult the **SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist for Partnerships**.*

6. Safe and accessible complaints and feedback mechanisms have been established or strengthened, and have procedures in place for handling SEA complaints, including referring survivors to assistance and reporting SEA using IOM's reporting channels ([We Are All In](#) platform and OIOintake@iom.int).

WHEN?



7. Raise community awareness of PSEA using context- and culturally appropriate awareness materials, such as posters and pamphlets. These materials should be informed by community needs and preferences, and communicate information on staff conduct, the fact that aid is free, and how to report misconduct. Make these materials visible and available to beneficiaries and community members in the local language(s), in visual form, or communicate the information orally. Reinforce this message throughout the activity.

WHEN?



8. Ensure that the targeting criteria are set with the participation of key community stakeholders, including (representatives of) vulnerable groups. Once set, targeting criteria for beneficiary selection are widely communicated, understood, and endorsed by the community.

WHEN?



Prior understanding of the community dynamics, and how decisions are made in the context, is key for ensuring a safe, inclusive and meaningful participation process. If existing structures are representative and credible, or leaders are open to adapting processes to be more inclusive and equitable, their involvement in beneficiary selection decisions is beneficial.



⁵ For detailed information on steps to safely handle PSEA disclosures, please refer to key messages in Box B below, and Box E of the IOM PSEA Toolkit & Checklist.

⁶ For example, field teams can use the [GBV Pocket Guide](#).

⁷ For reference on how to implement data protection measures, please refer to [IOM Data Protection Manual](#) and [DTM Data Protection Checklist](#).

⁸ For further information, please refer to [DTM Methods and Sources for Data Collection](#).

⁹ For more information on PSEA inclusion into partner agreements, please refer to section B1 (Working with partners on PSEA) of [IOM's PSEAH Toolkit & Checklist](#).

¹⁰ For reference, see: [Sample Template for Action Plan on PSEA.docx - Google Docs](#)

9. Concerning registration and selection of beneficiaries:

- Consider having one team who registers individuals and a separate team verifying registration and coordinating the selection of beneficiaries.
- Enumerators explain to community members during registration that they are not responsible for beneficiary selection and therefore cannot influence decisions or add names to lists.
- Where feasible, create automated/digital systems to select beneficiaries, based on the set eligibility criteria to help mitigate risks associated individuals responsible for beneficiary selection soliciting sexual favors in exchange for inclusion on the list.
- Contact Child Protection actors/specialists if considering targeting vulnerable children (e.g.: separated or unaccompanied children, children-heads of household), to assess risks and explore suitable options.
- Restrict access to databases containing individuals' information to those who need it.

WHEN? ●

10. When registration and selection are done by implementing partners or other third parties (e.g. government, community leaders, etc.), the same risk mitigation measures as IOM should be implemented (as per guidance immediately above). Ensure IOM gender-mixed IOM teams monitor or verify the registration, and sign a *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU) with the entity conducting the registration to ensure data protection is in line with IOM standards¹¹.

WHEN? ●

➔ For further guidance, please consult the **Beneficiary Targeting, Registration and Selection SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist**.

11. On identity verification, or setting required IDs for registration:

- Consult communities including vulnerable groups to identify existing identification documentation options and risks associated with obtaining identification documents.
- Whenever possible, accept multiple types of identification documents (e.g.: national IDs and passports, stamps, unique identification numbers, QRs, fingerprints, etc.)

WHEN? ● ● ●

12. After selection, explain to beneficiaries why they were chosen to receive assistance*. To minimize SEA risks linked to potential exclusion of certain individuals/groups:

- Emphasize indirect benefits stemming from the project in messaging disseminated to the community.
- Explore synergies with complementary programmes and activities that may benefit other (vulnerable) groups or the community at large.

*Use different communication methods to ensure messaging is disseminated in a manner and language individuals/groups understand and that message reaches them effectively, especially the most vulnerable groups.

WHEN? ● ●

13. Plan activities during times and at locations that are safe, appropriate and convenient for participants, especially the most vulnerable groups/individuals. Provide beneficiaries clear information on the assistance that will be provided, as well as date, time and location of activities.

WHEN? ●



Consider information access differentials among the various target/vulnerable groups and ensure message dissemination methods are appropriate to them (e.g.: women, persons with disabilities, etc.).

14. Consultations are held with communities and beneficiaries to inform planning and design of activities.

WHEN? ●

15. Deploy gender-mixed teams of monitors to conduct observational audits of activities and flag any potential Protection/GBV/SEA risks¹².

WHEN? ●

16. Direct individuals who wish to express grievances (e.g.: about the beneficiary selection process, the assistance provided, etc.) to the available complaints and feedback mechanism.

WHEN? ● ● ● ● ●

17. At a reasonable interval, conduct post-distribution/monitoring/beneficiary satisfaction exercises that include questions that help identify red flags related to exclusion and unintended Protection/SEA risks, as well as aspects such as beneficiary feedback on conduct of staff and partners, and intervention safety (including after the assistance is received).

WHEN? ●

¹¹ See: [IOM's Data Protection Principles and Manual](#).

¹² Monitors can work with a standardized observational audit tool; for an example of safety audit tool that can be customized for Shelter and Settlements programmes, please refer to: [Empowered Aid Toolkit](#), Annex 1.

¹³ For detailed guidance on PDM methodologies, sample tools that can be customized and questions that are safe to ask, please refer to [Post Distribution Monitoring for Shelter and NFI Programming – Guidance for Inclusive Programme](#).

BOX A: CONSIDERATIONS ON GENDER-MIXED TEAMS

Programmes should take concrete steps to engage women as frontline workers, enumerators, or facilitators as part of SEA risk mitigation measures. However, meeting these requirements may be challenging in settings where context-specific cultural and security barriers exist. In such cases, consider the following options:

- o Collaborate with other IOM teams (e.g.: Protection) within the operation that can volunteer women staff members to support these activities that involve close interaction with community members, especially vulnerable groups.
- o Engage women-led local/community-based organizations, committees and groups to provide support and/or monitor such activities.

Consult the Protection/GBV/SEA specialist in your operation and contact the **Protection Information Management Field Support Network** (PIM-Support@iom.int) for guidance on safe and viable alternatives that can be explored in your context.

BOX B: KEY STEPS IN RESPONDING TO A COMPLAINT OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (SEA)**1. Ensure SEA survivor gets the assistance they need**

- Address **urgent needs** immediately, including medical and safety.
- Find a **safe location** for you and the survivor to speak.
- Explain **mandatory reporting** to the survivor: if the survivor tells you that an IOM/ any aid worker committed SEA, you have an obligation to report to your organization; give the survivor the option of choosing if they want their personal information to be included in the confidential report to investigators or not.
- Inform the survivor about **available services** - know who your **service providers** are (Health, Safety, MHPSS) and use GBV/ CP/Protection **referral pathway**, if there is one.
- Ensure **informed consent** when referring to services: ensuring that a survivor agrees to access services on the basis of their having full information, including risks and benefits; them being competent to decide; and no coercion, threats or promises of benefits being used to secure that consent.
- Remind the survivor they can **seek services later**.

2. Report through existing mechanisms

- IOM's **We Are All In** Platform or OIOintake@iom.int
- In case you need further support, contact your PSEA Officer or Focal Point.

BOX C - Specific SEA Risk Mitigation Measures for Distribution of Shelter Materials, Essential Household and Personal Items¹⁴

1. Engage beneficiaries, especially vulnerable groups, in distribution planning to express their preferences (i.e.: to determine safe and accessible locations, convenient ways and times for receiving the assistance, etc.).



Avoid late-time distributions and opt for public locations whenever possible.



If possible, consider assigning separate collection times for men and women.

2. Encourage beneficiaries to travel in groups to collection points and shops to minimize SEA/GBV risks during transit.
3. Consider the following aspects in relation to the activity site :
 - Site layout allows for easy communication with the beneficiaries and is large enough to accommodate and organize large groups without disorder and overcrowding.
 - The site is easy to reach for beneficiaries.
 - The site is accessible for persons with disabilities, women, the elderly.
 - The site offers protection from rain and sun.
 - The site is well lit.
 - The site, and surroundings, are safe, especially for women and other vulnerable populations (disabled, elderly, child-headed households).
4. When the site is not within easy reach, establish additional distribution points to increase proximity to communities and reduce travel time.
5. Staff explain what beneficiaries are expected to receive (e.g.: items contained in the kit)
6. Establish separate waiting area and collection lines for women, men and persons with specific needs (i.e., pregnant women, elderly, persons with disabilities) and they are prioritized to receive assistance first.
7. Provide additional support to beneficiaries who face challenges carrying the items home. They may be paired with a trusted family member/person from the community that can assist, provided with financial support to pay for transport, and as a last resort, staff can volunteer to help women beneficiaries carry the items back home **only if** a female staff member is present the entire time.



*For specific guidance on cash and voucher assistance, please consult the **SEA Risk Mitigation Checklist for Cash-based Interventions**.*

¹⁴ For further guidance on risk mitigation, please refer to Distribution: Shelter materials, NFI & Cash - Guidance to reduce the risk of gender-based violence.

BOX D - Specific SEA Risk Mitigation Measures for Settlement Planning¹⁵

1. Conduct Land Tenure due diligence, contact hlp@iom.int for support
2. Engage beneficiaries, especially vulnerable groups, in settlement planning to express concerns, needs and preferences (i.e.: identify safe/unsafe areas, risks, threats, appropriate locations for the positioning of residential shelters and critical infrastructure, etc.).
3. Maintain existing family structures, group relationships and self-management relationships.
4. Ensure privacy of households within the community.
5. Provide a minimum usable surface area of 45m² for each person, including household plots, to avoid overcrowding.
6. Ensure equitable distribution of plots between all households.
7. Provide life-saving infrastructure, such as water points and water-supply infrastructure, firebreaks, and drainage.
8. Ensure site layout enables residents, especially vulnerable groups, to safely access services available on the location.
9. Install lighting in communal and residential areas, around service infrastructure, WASH facilities and along access routes.
10. Ensure paths provide good visibility and are wide enough to enable people to see ahead and identify any threats at a distance, and to walk together in groups.
11. Provide secure waiting areas for women and girls waiting to leave the camp and to access any service or facility on-site.
12. Collaborate with CCCM and Protection actors, when implementing density reduction interventions to ensure that expansion and transfers are transparent, well-informed, rights-based processes.

Avoid:

- Splitting family groupings
- Situations in which only the most vulnerable households are forced or intimidated into moving shelters.

13. Engage WASH actors to ensure site layout enables residents, especially vulnerable groups, to safely access sanitation facilities and water points/infrastructure, and that these are sufficient to meet their needs¹⁶.

BOX E - Specific SEA Risk Mitigation Measures for Shelter Construction & Rehabilitation

1. Include PSEA sessions in all training and orientation, e.g.: individual household-level, carpenter, cash for work training, daily workers, contractors, etc.
2. Place shelters in safe locations, structure and disposition guarantees safety and privacy for residents¹⁷.
3. Avoid remote, poorly lit, overcrowded areas, etc.
4. Avoid long, unbroken 'military style' lines of shelters or tents.
5. Consult single/divorced/separated/widowed female-headed households to determine safe locations for placing their shelter.
7. Shelter blocks could consider, whenever possible, semi-private spaces shared between clusters of shelters to provide safe spaces for young children and women.
8. Shelters have a strong door with internal lock and spyhole, lighting, opaque walls, private WASH facilities, etc.
9. When the design of the shelter does not guarantee safety and privacy for beneficiaries, distribute additional materials to meet their safety and privacy needs (e.g.: supplementary lighting, partitions, etc.).
10. When relying on Self-Help labor for construction or rehabilitation of shelters, provide additional support to vulnerable groups (e.g.: women, persons with disabilities, etc.) such as technical/labor/financial support and training.
11. Conduct damage assessment and building inspections at convenient times and always in the presence of a woman staff member.



When entering beneficiaries' homes, staff ensures that the respondent is not alone and there is a woman staff member present if the beneficiary is a woman.



Plastic sheeting should be considered only as a first shelter option for emergency contexts; these should be eventually replaced by alternatives that guarantee greater safety and privacy for beneficiaries.

¹⁵ For further guidance on risk mitigation, please refer to [Site Planning: Guidance to Reduce the Risk of Gender-Based Violence](#)

¹⁶ For detailed information on water supply minimal standards, please refer to [Sphere Handbook 2018](#).

¹⁷ For detailed guidance on approaches to lay out residential shelters and mitigate associated risks, refer to [Site Planning: Guidance to Reduce the Risk of Gender-Based Violence](#).

BOX F - Specific SEA Risk Mitigation Measures for Shelter Housing, Land and Property (HLP)

1. Land tenure recordation process enables women to safely submit property claims.
2. Establish Gender-Sensitive Submission Procedures, i.e. assigned days/spaces reserved only for women to submit claims.
3. Implement submission processes that are specifically designed to be accessible and safe for women.
4. Provide options for both in-person and remote submissions to accommodate different needs.
5. Ensure confidentiality and privacy in the submission process.
6. Maintain strict confidentiality of claimant's information.
7. Create private and secure spaces for in-person submissions.
8. Train staff on gender sensitivity and privacy protection.
9. Educate all staff involved in the recordation process, including on gender sensitivity and the importance of protecting privacy.
10. Include training on handling sensitive information and understanding the unique challenges faced by women claimants.
11. Ensure safe dispute resolution mechanisms, which allow women to put forward their case free from the risk of SEA. Create dedicated spaces or sessions where women can voice grievances without male presence. Ensure these spaces are physically safe and easily accessible.
14. Enforce a policy against violence and harassment in dispute resolution settings.
15. Guarantee confidentiality to protect the identities and details of cases involving women.
16. Carefully vet mediators/arbitrators for a history of ethical conduct.
17. Provide them with training on gender sensitivity, SEA prevention, and trauma-informed approaches.
18. Establish clear Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs).
19. Set up a transparent system for reporting misconduct by mediators, arbitrators, or other parties.
20. Ensure prompt action and unbiased assumptions when receiving complaints.
21. Encourage representation and support, i.e. women are encouraged and allowed to bring a trusted person to accompany them.
23. Provide legal and psychological support services for women involved in disputes.



If support is needed, contact the HLP team:
hlp@iom.int

BOX G – USEFUL RESOURCES

- [IOM's PSEA Toolkit and Checklist](#)
- [Site Planning: Guidance to Reduce the Risk of Gender-Based Violence](#)
- [Distribution: Shelter materials, NFI & Cash - Guidance to reduce the risk of gender-based violence.](#)
- [Post Distribution Monitoring for Shelter and NFI Programming – Guidance for Inclusive Programme](#)