

**(Interim)
Harmonized Implementation
Tool**

**UNITED NATIONS
IMPLEMENTING PARTNER
PSEA CAPACITY
ASSESSMENT**

UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, and WFP in consultation
with IASC members and the UN SEA Working Group

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Endorsed by IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group

UN IMPLEMENTING PARTNER PSEA CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

Background and Disclaimer:

The UN Implementing Partner Protection from Sexual Exploitations and Abuse (PSEA) Capacity Assessment does not have any legal effects and will serve as a reference tool in connection with the UN system wide response to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) when working with implementing partners. All terms and definitions are to be read in the context of SEA. This tool is offered to stakeholders to support a common approach to the implementation of The [United Nations Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Involving Implementing Partners](#) (UN IP Protocol). Its use is not mandatory. This tool will be piloted and revisited with the benefit of lessons learned from field testing and feedback from operational stakeholders.

Purpose:

Strengthening protection from sexual exploitation and abuse is a shared responsibility of the humanitarian and development community, including both UN and partners. The UN IP Protocol outlines requirements for the UN and its implementing partners to ensure adequate safeguards and appropriate actions related to SEA.¹ This assessment is intended to give UN entities the necessary assurance of partners' organizational capacities on PSEA, determine monitoring and support activities, and serve as a baseline for tracking progress, in line with the minimum standards of the UN IP Protocol.

Common partners at country level:

To avoid multiple assessments, common partners only need to be assessed by one UN entity. UN entities may utilize local coordination structures, such as the PSEA Network, to agree on a lead agency to manage the assessment. Whilst the UN entity that assesses a partner should also develop the plan to strengthen its capacity where needed, there may be instances where other UN entities may take the lead on capacity building for partners if they are better placed to do so.

Process overview:

The Assessment process consists of a: (1) partner self-assessment; (2) UN entity review and preliminary determination of partner capacity; (3) documented decision including capacity-strengthening implementation plan; (4) appropriate monitoring and support activities; and (5) final determination of partner capacity.

1. Partner self-assessment

Partners are required to self-complete the PSEA assessment (including self-rating) and submit the completed assessment, together with relevant supporting documents, considered as proof of evidence of meeting the required standard, to the UN entity. For new partners this is done before entering into a partnership. For existing partners, this is done as per the schedule adopted by the UN entity.

2. UN entity review and preliminary determination of partner capacity

UN entity will assess and score the partner's capacity based on a set of eight standards on PSEA organizational policies and procedures (TABLE 1: Capacity Assessment – Standards). Compliance with each standard has to be assessed individually and rated with "yes" or "no. The number of standards met provides the basis for the partner's "SEA Risk Rating" and reflects the partner's current capacities.

Total score	PSEA organizational capacities
8	Meets all standards (full capacity)
6 to 7	Meets most standards. Support required to address remaining gaps (medium capacity)
5 or fewer	Does not meet the minimum standards. Immediate action needed to strengthen PSEA capacity (low capacity)

¹ The UN Protocol notes that "Implementing partners may include – but are not limited to - government institutions, inter-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations, including NGOs. Implementing partners' subcontractors are subsumed within this definition".

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3. Documented decision including capacity strengthening implementation plan

If a UN entity selects a partner assessed as having capacity gaps in one or several areas, that UN entity is required to:

a) justify why the engagement of this partner is necessary; and b) develop an implementation plan outlining appropriate risk mitigation, capacity building and monitoring. The assessment and implementation plan are to be shared with the assessed partner and the UNCT to inform and support coherence and coordination in partner selection and retention. Accordingly, UN agencies will follow the steps below for partners assessed as having full, medium or low capacity with respect to PSEA:

- **Full Capacity (8/8 standards met):** Enter into a partnership agreement with standard monitoring plan.
- **Medium Capacity (6 to 7 standards met):** Prior to entering into or renewing a partnership agreement, the UN agency must **justify the selection of that implementing partner** notwithstanding its limited PSEA capacity, and **develop an implementation plan** outlining appropriate risk mitigation measures, including capacity building and monitoring, and steps for the partner to meet the “full capacity level” (i.e. 8/8 standards met) within six months of entering into, or continuing, a partnership agreement.
- **Low Capacity (5 or fewer standards met):** Prior to entering into or renewing partnership agreement, the UN agency must **justify the selection of that implementing partner** notwithstanding its low PSEA capacity, and **develop an implementation plan** outlining appropriate risk mitigation measures, including capacity building and monitoring, and outlining steps for the partner to increase the number of PSEA standards met within three months of entering into, or continuing, a partnership agreement.

Irrespective of their level of capacity (full, medium or low), where partners are operating in a **higher-risk environment**, as defined by para 13 of the UN IP Protocol,² they are to be reviewed regularly for compliance with SEA prevention and response requirements, in line with para 18 of the UN IP Protocol. For UN entities to enter into or renew agreements with partners assessed as having medium or low capacity, the respective partner must agree to adhere to the implementation plan.

Partners and UN entities should jointly develop the implementation plan to have a shared understanding of the partner’s organizational strengths and areas of improvement on PSEA moving forward. External support may be provided as needed by UN entities or other partners, including through training, technical advice, or increased coordination with inter-agency activities. A number of resources are available to support partner’s efforts in capacity building.

Note:

Under no circumstances can a UN entity engage a new partner who receives a “no” to Standard 8 as compliance with this question is mandatory (i.e. has the partner taken appropriate corrective action in response to past SEA allegations). However, that partner can apply to work with a UN entity at a later date if meeting the standard is demonstrated. For existing partners who receives a “no” to question 8, the existing partnership must be suspended until it can satisfactorily show it has taken corrective action.

² The UN Protocol defines “higher-risk programme activities” as involving at least one of the following: a) They take place in high-risk environments such as camps and shelters; b) They involve the implementing partner having direct contact with children; c) They take place in environments where SEA has occurred in the past and/or where sexual and gender-based violence is prevalent.

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4. Appropriate monitoring and support activities

UN entities are required to monitor progress made against the implementation plan at regular intervals. To the extent possible, monitoring should be integrated into existing assurance activities (such as the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT)) to avoid multiplication of processes. Where feasible, UN entities are encouraged to work jointly with interested members of the UNCT for the implementation of assurance activities. This joint work can be supported by the PSEA Network and/or PSEA Coordinator (where they are in place).

5. Final determination of partner capacity

Partners are expected to meet all standards within six months of the signed implementation plan. After these six months, partners with remaining capacity gaps (medium capacity) may be engaged under exceptional circumstances with increased monitoring or other risk mitigation measures. Partners with persistent significant capacity gaps (low capacity) may be given an exceptional three months extension to reach full compliance. If an implementing partner fails to meet standards within the stated timeline, the UN entity may consider project discontinuation in line with para 24 of the UN IP Protocol³ and section 6.2 of ST/SGB/2003/13.⁴

Assessment cycle:

The final determination of partner capacity based on the results of the assessment are valid for a period of five years unless an earlier re-assessment is considered necessary by a UN entity funding the partner (e.g., because of a significant change to a partner's organizational or management structure, or following an incident that calls into question the results of the assessment). Results of the assessment will be shared with the partner organization being assessed.

Transitional Measures:

Partners who have been assessed within 24 months prior to the issuance of this guidance, do not need to be assessed again, so long as the previous assessment covered the following criteria: mandatory screening of personnel; mandatory training; adequate reporting procedures; appropriate action in past cases; and adequate investigative and assistance capacities (including referral pathways where partners do not have in-house investigation/assistance capacities).

³ Paragraph 24 of the UN Protocol notes that the "Failure of the implementing partner to comply with the above-stated corrective actions can result in a termination of the agreement before the end of the agreement period. The cooperative arrangement with the implementing partner shall expressly provide for this contingency."

⁴ Section 6.2 of ST/SGB/2003/13 states that "The failure of those entities or individuals to take preventive measures against sexual exploitation or sexual abuse, to investigate allegations thereof, or to take corrective action when sexual exploitation or sexual abuse has occurred, shall constitute grounds for termination of any cooperative arrangement with the United Nations."

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TABLE 1: Capacity Assessment- Standards

Standard	Yes	No	Supporting documentation may include
<p>1: Organizational Policy</p> <p><u>Required:</u> The organization has a policy document on PSEA. At a minimum, this document should include a written undertaking that the partner accepts the standards in ST/SGB/2003/13.</p> <p>(UN IP Protocol para 15 & Annex A.4)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 point	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 points	<input type="checkbox"/> Code of Conduct (internal or interagency) <input type="checkbox"/> PSEA policy <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of standard procedures for all personnel to receive/sign PSEA policy <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):
	Comments:		
<p>2: Organizational Management</p> <p><u>Required:</u> The organization's contracts and partnership agreements include a standard clause requiring sub-contractors, to adopt policies that prohibit SEA and to take measures to prevent and respond to SEA.</p> <p>(UN IP Protocol para 11; 15; & Annex A.1)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 point	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 points	<input type="checkbox"/> Contracts/partnership agreements for sub-contractors <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):
	Comments:		
<p>3: Human Resources Systems</p> <p><u>Required:</u> There is a systematic vetting procedure in place for job candidates through proper screening. This must include, at minimum, reference checks for sexual misconduct and a self-declaration by the job candidate requesting that they confirm that they have never been subject to sanctions (disciplinary, administrative or criminal) arising from an investigation in relation to SEA, or left employment pending investigation and refused to cooperate in such an investigation.</p> <p>(UN IP Protocol para 11; 15; & Annex A.2)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 point	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 points	<input type="checkbox"/> Reference check template including check for sexual misconduct (including reference from previous employers and self-declaration) <input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment procedures <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):
	Comments:		

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Standard	Yes	No	Supporting documentation may include
<p>4: Mandatory Training</p> <p><u>Required:</u> The organization holds mandatory trainings (online or in- person) for all personnel on PSEA and relevant procedures. The training should include: 1) a definition of SEA (that is aligned with the <u>UN's definition</u>); 2) explanation on prohibition of SEA; and 3) actions that personnel are required to take (i.e. prompt reporting of allegations and referral of victims).</p> <p>(UN IP Protocol para 17 & Annex A.5)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 point	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 points	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual training plan <input type="checkbox"/> Training agenda <input type="checkbox"/> Training package <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance sheets <input type="checkbox"/> Training certificates <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
Comments:			

Standard	Yes	No	Supporting documentation may include
<p>5: Reporting</p> <p><u>Required:</u> The organization has mechanisms and procedures for personnel, beneficiaries and communities, including children, to report SEA allegations that comply with standards for reporting (i.e. safety, confidentiality, transparency, accessibility).</p> <p>(UN IP Protocol para 19 & Annex A.3)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 point	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 points	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal Complaints and Feedback Mechanism <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in joint reporting mechanisms <input type="checkbox"/> Communication materials <input type="checkbox"/> PSEA awareness-raising plan <input type="checkbox"/> Description of reporting mechanism <input type="checkbox"/> Whistle-blower policy <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
Comments:			

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Standard	Yes	No	Supporting documentation may include
<p>6: Assistance and Referrals</p> <p><u>Required:</u> To be consistent with the IP Protocol and other UN SEA instruments, the organization has a system to refer SEA victims to available support services available locally, based on their needs and consent. This can include active contribution to in-country PSEA networks and/or GBV systems (where applicable) and/or referral pathways at an inter-agency level.</p> <p>(UN IP Protocol para 22.d.)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 point	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 points	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal or Interagency referral pathway <input type="checkbox"/> List of available service providers <input type="checkbox"/> Description of referral or Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) <input type="checkbox"/> Referral form for survivors/victims of GBV/SEA <input type="checkbox"/> Guidelines on victim assistance and/or training on GBV and GBV case management principles <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
	Comments:		

Standard	Yes	No	Supporting documentation may include
<p>7: Investigations</p> <p><u>Required:</u> The organization has a process for investigation of allegations of SEA and can provide evidence. This may include a referral system for investigations where in house capacity does not exist.</p> <p>(UN IP Protocol para 20, 23 and 24, & Annex A.6)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 point	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 points	<input type="checkbox"/> Written process for review of SEA allegations <input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated resources for investigation(s) and/or commitment of partner for support <input type="checkbox"/> PSEA investigation policy/procedures <input type="checkbox"/> Contract with professional investigative service <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):
	Comments:		

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Standard	Yes	No	Supporting documentation may include
<p>8: Corrective Action</p> <p><u>Required:</u> The organisation has taken appropriate corrective action in response to SEA allegations, if any.</p> <p>(UN IP Protocol para 20, 22.a., & Annex A.6)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 point	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 points	<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of implementation of corrective measures identified by the UN partner entity, including capacity strengthening of staff. <input type="checkbox"/> Specific measures to identify and reduce risks of SEA in programme delivery. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):
Comments:			

Rating of PSEA Capacity	
GRAND TOTAL	
PSEA organizational capacities	

PSEA Assessment of [Name of the IP]:

Assessment completed by (UN Entity/ies):

Name and functional title of person completing:

Email address:

Signature: _____ Date of Assessment: _____