
Bangladesh and Cox's Bazar Network on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Terms of Reference

Dates of Versions

Version 1:	November 2017 (<i>Endorsed by the CXB Heads of sub-Office and the ISCG Senior Coordinator</i>)
Version 2:	March 2024 (<i>Endorsed by the ISCG Senior Coordinator</i>)
Version 3:	February 2025 (<i>Endorsed by the ROCT and UNCT</i>)

A. Background

At Cox's Bazar level, the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) network was established in November 2017 following the largest scale influx of Rohingya refugees in August 2017. The UN Resident Coordinator's responsibility on PSEA in Cox's Bazar is operationalized daily through the ISCG Principal Coordinator and the PSEA Network Coordinator together with the Network Co-Chairs who are leading the efforts to eradicate SEA in the Rohingya Refugee Response in Cox's Bazar.

Following the example of Cox's Bazar, a PSEA Network was established in Bangladesh in 2023 to increase and coordinate the effort in the prevention and response to SEA allegation in the entire Bangladesh. The network is operating with the support of the PSEA coordinator and the PSEA Co-Chairs and it is reporting to the UN Resident Coordinator.

PSEA is a core commitment of the UN Secretary-General and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). To deliver on this commitment, the IASC has prioritized the acceleration of PSEA from the outset of humanitarian response, with a focus on key priority areas including safe and accessible reporting, victims/survivor-centered response, and enhanced accountability.¹

B. Networks Responsibilities

Under the auspices of the Resident Coordinator and overseen by the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) Principal Coordinator, the Cox's Bazar PSEA Network and the PSEA network in Bangladesh, are the primary body for technical-level coordination and oversight of PSEA activities in line with the PSEA Action Plan. The PSEA Network in Cox's Bazar will coordinate and report back the PSEA network in Dhaka. Any other PSEA network at field level will follow the same approach and align with this ToR. The PSEA networks will give regular reports to the RC, to the Principal Coordinator of ISCG, to Heads of Office in Dhaka and to Heads of Sub-Offices in Cox's Bazar and at any other relevant forum at the field level. All the Networks and the relative coordinators in Cox's Bazar and any other field locations, will report to Dhaka and PSEA Coordinator in Bangladesh to ensure a proper coordination and alignment.

The presence of the PSEA Networks do **not** lessen the responsibility of individual network members to develop, implement, and strengthen internal PSEA programs at the country level. Senior management within each member organization is primarily accountable for PSEA within their organizations.²

The network is responsible for implementing coordinated activities between members to minimize the risk of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) by aid workers, ensure effective response when incidents do arise,

¹ IASC Strategy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (2021), available [here](#); IASC Plan for Accelerating PSEA in Humanitarian Response at Country-Level (2018), available [here](#); UN Secretary-General's Strategy on PSEA (2017), available [here](#).

² Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13), available [here](#).

ensure proper support is provided to the victims and raise awareness of PSEA among the communities. The PSEA Network activities follow a victim-centered approach and will respect the principles of safety, confidentiality, respect, and non-discrimination in all stages of implementation of activities.

The PSEA Networks are **not** responsible for investigating or adjudicating complaints. These functions rest exclusively with the entity that employs the individual against whom a complaint has been alleged, in line with internal policy and procedure.

C. Network Roles

The PSEA Coordinators are responsible to lead, chair, support and represent the respective PSEA Networks in coordination with the network co-chairs in the fulfillment of its responsibilities under these TOR and the Annual Action Plan. The PSEA coordinators are providing technical support to the PSEA networks members and ensuring there is a joint response to PSEA in every location. The PSEA Coordinators are responsible for reporting monthly and on a need to know basis on network activities, progress on PSEA Network Action Plan indicators, and anonymized SEA trends to the ISCG Principal Coordinator and to the RC and any other relevant forum. The PSEA Coordinators represent the network in relevant coordination bodies and advise actors on good practice to support effective PSEA implementation. The PSEA coordinators in different locations will report and coordinate with PSEA coordinator in Dhaka for technical support and ensure a joint response and strategy.

Co-chair organizations for the PSEA Networks are nominated every two years, ensuring representation of UN and non-UN entities. While the organizations seated as co-chairs change, the co-chairs' role remains permanent to provide sustainable leadership to the network. The co-chair representatives will take an active role at the network level in convening and managing network meetings and events and help coordinate and oversee the PSEA Network Action Plan.

Each member organization will be represented in the network by one PSEA Focal Point, and an alternate.³ Focal Points must share information and coordinate on internal PSEA initiatives with the PSEA Network. These include, for instance, training, information campaigns, IEC materials development, site monitoring, and the establishment and ongoing maintenance of community-based complaint mechanisms (CBCMs) for SEA reporting. This will ensure alignment with the PSEA Network Action Plan and strategy, prevent duplication of efforts and coordinate activities under the PSEA Network Annual Action Plan. The Focal Points will be also responsible for providing technical support and coordination on PSEA activities within their organization, under the leadership of their senior management.

The networks may form smaller, time-bound task teams of regular members & provide suggestions or recommendations to carry out specific deliverables as needed.

D. Membership

Network membership is open to all UN agencies, INGOs, and NGOs operating in Bangladesh. In Cox's Bazar and in Bashan Char It is mandatory for all Joint Response Plan (JRP) partners – both appealing, implementing, and strategic partners – to be an active and participating member of the PSEA Network from 2022 onwards. Members of the PSEA Network must have a PSEA policy in place or commit to developing an internal PSEA policy within three months after joining the Network. They must be represented in the PSEA Network by one PSEA Focal Point, and preferably an alternate.

³ [See the Terms of Reference for Cox's Bazar PSEA Focal Points \(2024\).](#)

All PSEA Focal Points must be able to make decisions on behalf of their agencies in an inter-agency forum. PSEA focal points should have specific PSEA responsibilities included in their entity terms of reference, workplan and/or performance appraisals. If there is a change in Focal Point, it is the duty of that entity to inform the PSEA Network co-chairs/coordinator of the new Focal Point as soon as possible.

Membership of the network is also open to Sector/Cluster Coordinators, who are strongly encouraged to attend PSEA Networks meetings to improve two-way coordination between sectors/clusters and the networks. The PSEA Coordinators/co-chairs and the GBV sub-sector/cluster Coordinators should participate in each other's meetings and events, and actively engage to ensure close linkages between PSEA and GBV interventions.

The networks will engage in outreach with non-member organizations as part of ongoing activities. At a minimum, as per the SOP for SEA Compliant Referral in Bangladesh⁴, all organizations in Bangladesh should be aware of the inter-agency SEA complaint referral system and be able to receive complaints against their own staff, regardless of their relationship to the network.

At a minimum, all members of the PSEA network should: have appointed a PSEA/safeguarding focal point who has the PSEA focal point Terms of Reference included in their job description and/or performance appraisal; be aware of the inter-agency PSEA complaint referral system; be able to receive complaints, regardless of their relationship to the Network; have been assessed by a UN, donor or partner entity as meeting any standard. The tool should be the IASC Harmonized Partner Capacity Assessment Tool⁵ or other similar tools. Partners should submit the most recent assessment to the interagency PSEA Network coordinators; If the member has not been assessed by a partner entity, they should carry out a self-assessment according to the IASC Harmonized Capacity Assessment tool, or similar, and submit this assessment to the PSEA Network coordinators.

The Networks will advocate for the strengthening and/or establishment of internal complaint handling systems for all organizations and agencies operating in Bangladesh and will offer support as needed.

E. Meetings

The PSEA Networks will convene monthly and additional ad-hoc meetings may be requested by any of the members, the Coordinators or the Co-Chairs. The agenda & notes of each meeting will be distributed among all members and filed on the records of the networks. As networks meetings should provide a supporting environment to discuss potentially sensitive challenges in PSEA, any information shared during meetings will be kept confidential on request following a victim-centered approach. As a general matter, the PSEA Networks meetings will refrain from discussing individual cases; any reference to SEA allegations or cases during meetings will be anonymized.

In case a Focal Point cannot attend a regularly scheduled network meeting, the member organization will be represented by a dedicated and sufficiently briefed alternate FP.

F. Tasks/Responsibilities

It is the senior management within each UN and non-UN entity that are accountable for PSEA preparedness and response; thus, ensuring that organizational processes and procedures supporting a survivor-centered approach to PSEA are in place and work effectively through continued monitoring and review. As per the IASC generic Terms of Reference for PSEA Networks, the main responsibilities of the PSEA Network are listed

⁴ [SOP for SEA Compliant Referral in the Rohingya Refugee Response in Bangladesh.](#)

⁵ [IASC UN Implementing Partner PSEA Capacity Assessment Tool](#)

below. In addition, the PSEA Network's activities will be guided by an annual action plan which will be drafted and validated with input from all members.

Management and Coordination

- Carry out joint SEA risk assessments in identified locations as appropriate and as needed, identifying potential risk factors and areas of concern. The risk assessment outcomes will inform strategic decision-making of senior leadership and the PSEA Network Action Plan.
- Establish and implement a measurable PSEA Network Annual Action Plan with defined time frames and responsibilities of Network members based on specialty and capacity. Design and implementation of the Action Plan will be informed by community input, contextually appropriate, and respond to the risk factors identified by joint assessment. The UNCT and the ISCG will monitor Action Plan deliverables and will provide additional support when warranted.
- Monitor the PSEA activities of Network members to avoid duplication and fill gaps.
- Work closely with other coordination bodies in Cox's Bazar and Bangladesh and any other locations, including the Protection Sector and GBV and CP Sub-Sectors, the AAP the GIHA Working Group and any other relevant network to support prevention and response to SEA.
- Identify training needs and resources to coordinate training for all PSEA Focal Points and senior management on their specific PSEA roles and responsibilities.
- Advocate for the strengthening and/or establishment of internal PSEA policies and practices for all organizations and offer support to organizations as needed where such systems are not in place, whether or not an organization is a network member.
- Hold regular meetings of the PSEA Networks both in Cox's Bazar and in Bangladesh and any other locations, with ad hoc meetings as necessary.

Engagement with and support of the affected population

- Raise awareness about the rights of affected populations, SEA definitions, what constitutes appropriate behavior of personnel, humanitarian worker mandatory reporting of any SEA allegations that they are aware of, the available reporting channels to submit complaints and how to access victim assistance services.
- Support members to assess and improve the effectiveness and appropriateness of PSEA activities within the targeted communities, ensuring the activities are aligned with the PSEA networks.
- With the particular engagement of women, children, persons with disabilities and gender diverse population in the community, support members to create and/or adapt their aid delivery models to address power disparities and actively give those in more vulnerable positions a sustained voice in how aid is delivered.
- Advocate for effective engagement and commitment from Humanitarian Country Team and
- Government entities to implement PSEA action plan and strategy

Prevention

- Advocate for PSEA to be a priority throughout all programming and support actors working in operational areas to embed SEA risk mitigation in needs assessment, project design, implementation, and monitoring based on identified SEA trends.
- Supplement network members' internal initiatives to strengthen SEA prevention through joint activities and sharing good practice.
- Encourage network members to carry out induction and refresher training on SEA for all personnel and support such training with jointly developed contextualized materials.
- Share resources created by the Network members including training modules, and IEC materials.
- Present best practices in relation to the vetting/screening systems for safe recruitment.

Response

- Ensuring that member agencies and organisations have effective internal complaints and investigation procedures in place which adhere to principles of confidentiality.
- Jointly map trusted and functional complaint and feedback mechanisms (CFMs) and other available reporting mechanisms to identify where there are gaps in the affected population's safe access to report SEA.
- Support members to establish new complaint channels to fill the gaps in access to reporting based on the mapping and informed by community preferences, so that there are safe, accessible, and contextually appropriate channels for any member of the community to report sensitive allegations.
- Establish an inter-agency community-based complaint mechanism (CBCM) by linking the network members' complaint and feedback mechanisms (CFMs) through agreed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on inter-agency complaint and assistance referral, in line with the Global SOPs.⁶
- Work with the Protection sector/cluster, including the GBV and Child Protection sub-sectors/sub-clusters, to incorporate assistance referral pathways into the CBCM SOPs to provide immediate support for complainants and survivors of SEA. The PSEA Network does **not** create parallel assistance referral pathways for survivors of SEA.
- Raise the awareness of Protection actors, GBV actors, Child Protection actors, and all actors staffing complaint channels, so that all personnel who may work with SEA survivors or receive an SEA report know how to recognize SEA and where to safely send allegations.
- Raise awareness on the inter-agency reporting and referral mechanism among all actors.

G. Members' Commitment

- Implementation of the PSEA Network PSEA Action Plan.
- Establishing SOPs, referral pathways, reporting lines, and follow-up procedures.
- Advocating for the rights, protection and well-being of affected populations, in particular women, children and adolescents of diverse intersectional backgrounds, for the prevention of and response to SEA, as a priority throughout humanitarian programming.
- Collaborating on awareness-raising for the community on their rights, how to report abuse, and appropriate behaviour of all humanitarian staff/service providers.
- Quarterly/bi-annually/annually reporting on PSEA-related updated information and figures
- Providing monthly updates on PSEA-related activities and occasionally present on achievements, lessons learned, best practices and highlight activities on a voluntary basis.
- Ensuring their organization's development and adoption of a Code of Conduct.
- Ensuring their organization's staff is trained on PSEAH/Safeguarding
- Keeping abreast of PSEA Network activities, resources and updates, including being familiar with the PSEA Network Page
- Respond in a timely fashion to information requests regarding PSEA activities.
- Regular failure to share information will result in suspension of membership until further notice.

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed and revised as appropriate.

⁶ IASC *Global Standard Operating Procedures on Inter-Agency Cooperation in Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms* (2016), available [here](#). For practical guidance to set up an inter-agency CBCM, see the *Best Practice Guide on Inter-agency CBCMs*, available [here](#).