

Summary brief



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Global Standards on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment

We have developed this brief to provide civil society organisations (CSOs) with an overview of the global standards on sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH). SEAH occurs when individuals abuse their position of power. Groups who are already disadvantaged in some way often experience SEAH. Women and girls are most affected by SEAH. Individuals who experience discrimination are also at risk of experiencing SEAH, for example because of their age, race, sexuality or disability.

Different organisations have developed global standards on SEAH to keep community members and staff safe when delivering development and humanitarian assistance. It is important for CSOs that deliver development and humanitarian work to implement these standards. This will protect their staff and ensure they do no harm in the communities where they work.

The Global Standards

There are five standards on SEAH that the international development community encourages organisations to use when delivering development and humanitarian assistance.

1

The Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (Number 190) and Recommendation Number 206¹

Why does this standard exist? To provide an international framework for governments to address violence and harassment that individuals face at work.

What does the standard cover? This standard protects individuals from experiencing violence or harassment at work. Governments must create laws and regulations to prevent and eliminate violence and harassment in any work situation. Employers must have a policy in place and provide training on identifying and responding to violence and harassment at work. Women and other groups that are more vulnerable to violence and harassment require additional support to ensure their safety. If anyone experiences violence or harassment, there must be a safe and confidential system in place for them to make a report and receive support.

Who does the standard apply to? If your government has approved the Convention, your organisation must follow the standard. Even if your government has not approved it, your organisation has a moral obligation to protect its employees from experiencing violence and harassment at work.

¹ https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/meeting-reports/WCMS_721160/lang--en/index.htm

2

Development Assistance Committee² Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance³

Why does the standard exist? Governments that provide funding for development and humanitarian work wanted to standardise their work to prevent and respond to SEAH.

What does the standard cover? This standard prioritises the rights, needs and wants of survivors and victims of SEAH. Organisations that receive funding must have a policy and code of conduct in place that addresses SEAH. Confidential and anonymous reporting systems must be available for anyone who wants to make a report. This includes staff members and community members. Organisations should keep a record of the safeguarding measures they implement. This allows them to keep track of their achievements and think about what to improve on.

Who does the standard apply to? Governments who are members of the Development Assistance Committee and any organisation who works with them should follow this standard. Governments who are not members of the Development Assistance Committee are also encouraged to follow the standard.

3

Inter-Agency Standing Committee Minimum Operating Standards: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Own Personnel (MOS-PSEA)⁴

Why does this standard exist? To standardise the way the United Nations (UN) and its partners protect their own staff and community members from experiencing sexual exploitation and abuse where they work. This standard does not cover sexual harassment.

What does the standard cover? This standard requires the UN and its partners to have a policy in place to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. Local UN offices and partners must inform local communities about the steps their local UN office and its partners take to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. These steps include having a culturally appropriate system in place for anyone to report concern and access support, including community members and staff, ensuring recruitment processes identify appropriate people to hire, and providing staff training on how to implement the standard.

Who does the standard apply to? All UN staff and anyone working in partnership with them. If you partner with the UN, you must agree to follow these standards to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

4

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS)⁵

Why does this standard exist? This standard provides a common approach to deliver humanitarian assistance to communities affected by crisis. This also includes how to prevent and respond to SEAH.

What does the standard cover? This standard requires SEAH risks to be identified and addressed within organisations and their programmes activities. Organisations must have policies in place to prevent and respond to SEAH. Communities must be informed of the organisation's work to prevent SEAH. Reporting

2 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation that works with governments, policy-makers and citizens to develop policies and international standards that promote equality and opportunities for all. The OECD has the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) that brings together some of the world's largest providers of development assistance to monitor how funds are used, develop standards and monitor members' work on development assistance. There are currently 30 DAC members. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/development-assistance-committee/>

3 [http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC\(2019\)31/FINAL&docLanguage=En](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC(2019)31/FINAL&docLanguage=En)

4 https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/3_minimum_operating_standards_mos-psea.pdf

5 <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>

systems must exist for communities to make reports. Reporting and investigation processes must prioritise the safety, needs and interests of victims and survivors.

Who does the standard apply to? Organisations who directly or indirectly support communities affected by crisis. The CHS is written for humanitarian work but anyone delivering development work could use it.

5

The International Child Safeguarding Standards by Keeping Children Safe⁶

Why does this standard exist? To protect children from all forms of violence and abuse that could result from humanitarian or development assistance being delivered, including sexual exploitation and abuse.

What does the standard cover? This standard requires all organisations coming into contact with children to have a child safeguarding policy in place. The standard ensures anyone working with children is trained and supported to safeguard children. Organisations must include child safeguarding measures across all organisational activities and processes. Reporting systems must be available to anyone who wants to report a concern, especially children.

Who does the standard apply to? These standards are voluntary for any organisation but are especially relevant to organisations whose work involves, or impacts on, children.

Adapting Global Standards to Your Context: How Should My Organisation Implement These Standards?

1. What can I do if I don't have specific knowledge of SEAH in my organisation?

- Learn from your existing network. Find another local organisation that knows about the SEAH issues that interest you and arrange a visit to learn from them.
- Request support from your donors. Having policies and systems on SEAH is becoming a common requirement to receive funding. Donors may be able to offer training, opportunities to learn how they deliver work on SEAH or other types of capacity-building to support you.

2. What should I do if some aspects of SEAH is legal in my country?

- In many countries, SEAH is not fully covered under the law. Your organisation can still address SEAH comprehensively. For example, if sexual harassment at work is legal, your organisation's code of conduct can still cover sexual harassment.

3. How do I start to integrate SEAH into my work?

- Think about the work you already do to keep people safe. You might already have a statement in your organisation's values about how you keep people safe. Expand that into a simple code of conduct that includes the behaviours your organisation wants to encourage or discourage from staff.

⁶ <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/KCS-CS-Standards-ENG-200218.pdf>

- Review other organisations' policies. Identify some processes you could easily adopt for your organisation. Identify other processes and activities that you will work towards achieving over time.
- Start to assess the potential risks in your own organisation and find ways to address them. Think about risks your own staff may face, risks in how you recruit staff, risks to the communities you work and risks to consider when designing programmes.

4. How do I think about power and privilege in my own work?

- Someone's gender, age, race, disability or sexuality affects whether they are in a privileged or disadvantaged position. These questions are a helpful starting point to think about power and privilege in your work:
 - When could I be in situations where I could benefit over others because of my age, race or gender (or combination of these)?
 - How could my physical appearance influence how others treat me?
 - How do I ensure individuals are not discriminated against for any reason and are given equal opportunities?
- Power and privilege influence your relationships and your work with communities and your own staff. It is important to consider both when reflecting on power and privilege.

5. What can I do if I don't know what support services exist in my area?

- Contact your local office for women, family and children/youth affairs. They can provide you with information on local support services. They may also provide you with details for the local government representative who could help with identifying services.
- Map the formal and informal services in your area. Do this by asking local organisations and women's groups who they refer people to for support. You can also ask communities who they go to for support. Ask for their opinion on the service so you know which ones they consider trustworthy.

6. What if some global standards conflict with community values and beliefs?

- Raise awareness on what SEAH means with communities. Explain how it harms those who experience it. Get communities to identify who is most at risk for experiencing SEAH.
- Help community members identify existing social norms and customs that communities feel are important to protect people. Work with communities to identify reasons why it is important for vulnerable groups to be protected and supported. These conversations are important to have over time to change people's views. Do not get frustrated if you do not see people's attitudes and behaviours change immediately. This is not about changing community social norms and customs. It is about making sure your organisation does not cause harm to people. By raising awareness on what SEAH means and who it affects, your organisation will support communities to be able to identify it and report it.