

## Common PSEAH Principles



These principles are designed to underpin and guide the SEAH-related conduct of all people and organisations doing humanitarian, development or peace-related work.

1. **SEAH is prohibited.** SEA constitutes gross misconduct and grounds for termination of contract, and potential prosecution under criminal, civil or military law. SH is misconduct and can constitute gross misconduct depending on its severity. Acts of SEAH are an abuse of power and undermine the integrity and impact of HDP work. In particular:
  - a. **Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions, is prohibited.**
  - b. **Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including demands for sex / 'sexual favours' or other forms of abusive, humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited.** This includes exchange of any assistance or protection that is due to people or communities.
  - c. **Any sexual relationship which involves improper use of rank, role or position, or any abuse of power and power imbalances, is prohibited.**
  - d. **Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) by those engaged in HDP work is prohibited, regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally.** Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.
  - e. **Sexual harassment of co-workers (whether in the same organisation or not) or people in communities receiving assistance or protection, is prohibited.**
2. **Zero tolerance for inaction.** This means: zero tolerance for acts of SEAH; zero tolerance for inaction to prevent, report or respond to SEAH; and zero tolerance for retaliation against victim-survivors or whistleblowers. It does not mean having zero cases of SEAH being reported. Reporting is strongly encouraged and should not be penalised.
3. **Tailor PSEAH approaches to the context and ensure the approaches are inclusive and victim-survivor centred.** Consult people and communities, particularly vulnerable groups. Build on and strengthen existing community and national mechanisms when assessing SEAH risk and designing PSEAH approaches. Embed and prioritise the rights, safety, needs, wellbeing and dignity of victim-survivors and their communities.
4. **Embed SEAH prevention as part of working culture.** Always act with integrity and help create and maintain an environment which prevents, reports and responds to SEAH. Leaders and managers at all levels have particular responsibility to resource, develop, implement and support PSEAH systems to proactively identify, monitor and address SEAH risks and reports.
5. **Respond appropriately to suspicions, reports and incidents of SEAH.** In particular:
  - a. Knowledge, concerns or suspicions of SEAH by HDP personnel, whether in the same organisation or not, must be reported in line with organisational policies, guidance and reporting mechanisms.
  - b. Assistance and investigations should prioritise the rights, safety, needs, wellbeing and dignity of victim-survivors. Help victim-survivors who report an incident to access support, regardless of whether they participate in an investigation.
  - c. Hold those found to have committed SEAH accountable and take appropriate action in line with relevant due process.
6. **Respect confidentiality and protect against retaliation.** Ensure reports can be made safely and confidentially. All those involved in an allegation should be protected against retaliation, have their confidentiality and dignity respected and receive appropriate support. This includes victim-survivors, complainants, witnesses, whistle-blowers, and the subject(s) of complaint.



**Summary:** These actions are recommended to help all people and organisations do all they reasonably can to prevent and respond to SEAH. Different types and sizes of organisation or operation can implement them in ways that feel proportionate and most relevant to them. Related supporting documents provide more guidance on the minimum actions and how they can be implemented at individual, international, national, organisation and project/programme levels.

## **1. POLICIES: Set, communicate, uphold and implement clear PSEAH policies.**

- a** Set, resource, implement and adhere to a PSEAH policy/strategy aligned to these common principles, minimum actions and the standards that underpin them.
- b** Ensure PSEAH principles and standards of behaviour are embedded in codes of conduct with clear prohibition of SEAH.
- c** Ensure all personnel, volunteers and delivery partners are made aware of, sign up to and strive to comply with PSEAH policies and codes of conduct.

## **2. LEADERSHIP: Prioritise and embed a culture of zero tolerance for inaction.**

- a** Leaders need to show clear and visible commitment to zero tolerance for inaction on SEAH.
- b** Leaders should allocate sufficient resources to prevent and respond to SEAH.
- c** Leaders should regularly assess and monitor the implementation and impact of efforts to prevent and respond to SEAH.
- d** Leaders should set out and incentivise clear responsibilities on PSEAH.

## **3. COMMUNICATION: Consult, inform and coordinate with communities & partners.**

- a** Consult local people and communities.
- b** Empower local communities.
- c** Collaborate and coordinate with partners and peers, and seek out learning and best practice to strengthen and align PSEAH approaches.

## **4. PREVENTION: Assess SEAH risk and take action to prevent SEAH across all activities**

- a** Mainstream protection from SEAH.
- b** Understand, reduce and manage the risk of SEAH.
- c** Engage affected communities in the design of mechanisms to prevent and report SEAH.
- d** Use relevant vetting schemes and recruitment processes to prevent the hiring of perpetrators of SEAH.

## **5. RESPONSE: Encourage reporting, accountability and a victim-survivor centred approach.**

- a** Establish, test, and promote safe and accessible mechanisms for receiving complaints and detecting concerns relating to personnel, operations and project/programmes.
- b** Help personnel to know what to do if they experience, witness or suspect SEAH.
- c** Help victim-survivors who report to access support.
- d** Take a victim-survivor centred approach to reports and investigations.
- e** Hold individuals to account.
- f** Consider legal accountability.

## **6. MONITORING: check if efforts to protect against SEAH are working**

- a** Learn and improve from experience, including where things have gone wrong.
- b** Monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of PSEAH policies and approaches.
- c** Participate in joint efforts to strengthen and align PSEAH approaches.