

# Tip Sheet



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## Sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH) and gender-based violence (GBV) in private sector development programmes

This tip sheet provides an overview of sexual exploitation<sup>1</sup>, abuse<sup>2</sup> and sexual harassment<sup>3</sup> (SEAH) and gender-based violence (GBV<sup>4</sup>) risks and mitigation strategies in private sector development (PSD) programmes.<sup>5</sup> Practical guidance is given on how companies can prevent, mitigate, and respond to SEAH and GBV risks throughout the programme cycle.

### What is SEAH and GBV?

**SEAH and GBV are closely related.** Gender inequality is a main driver of both SEAH and GBV so the basic principles and approaches to address SEAH and GBV are very similar. However, one crucial difference is that while GBV is always perpetrated as a result of gender inequality, SEAH can also be driven by other forms of abuses of power and inequalities.

In this tip sheet, the term SEAH is used to refer to sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment that is perpetrated by individuals involved in delivering programmes. The term GBV is used to describe violence perpetrated by anyone including company staff, contractors, and community members. It encompasses intimate partner violence experienced by or perpetrated by workers, and physical violence experienced or perpetrated by workers based on gender identity.

**SEAH and GBV is more likely to affect individuals who experience discrimination based on several intersectional<sup>6</sup> inequalities.** Whilst women and girls are at disproportionate risk of both SEAH and GBV, individuals that experience discrimination based on factors such as disability, migration status, race, age and sexual identity etc are at additional risk and may be even less likely to report experiences.

### Why are SEAH and GBV prevention, mitigation and response efforts important for companies?

There is both a strong ethical argument and a compelling business case for companies to tackle SEAH and GBV. Investing in SEAH and GBV prevention, mitigation and response:

- ✓ Reduces the negative impact of SEAH and GBV on individuals and the risk of costly litigation.
- ✓ Improves relations with local communities and service users.
- ✓ Boosts the confidence of potential investors and partners, increasing access to markets and finance.
- ✓ Improves company culture and working environment by increasing worker morale, which improves productivity.
- ✓ Reduces absenteeism and improve workers' concentration and performance at work, increasing profits.
- ✓ Improves an organisation's ability to recruit and retain diverse talent.

The following table outlines key SEAH and GBV risk mitigation strategies. Though there are SEAH and GBV risks in every PSD programme, the impact and likelihood of each risk will vary based on factors including the country of operation and types of contractors used.

## Design and Mobilisation phases



**Embed SEAH and GBV risks and mitigation strategies into programme design, delivery, management and monitoring.**

- Collect baseline data/knowledge of local SEAH issues and gender dynamics.
- Undertake a high-level assessment of potential risks with individuals representing groups at risk of SEAH and GBV and involve those with gender and inclusion expertise in this.
- Include SEAH risks in the programme governance structure and management information.
- Develop a risk mitigation plan. Incorporate it into the programme budget and design.
- Hire staff with experience in addressing SEAH and GBV.
- Conduct capacity and resource assessments and plan to address any gaps.

**Develop strong and clear, context appropriate, SEAH and GBV policies and complaints procedures, designed to empower survivors, bystanders and whistle-blowers to report.**

- Integrate SEAH and GBV into relevant workplace policies, including in the code of conduct.
- Operationalise the policies, to include establishing a Grievance Redress Mechanism and communicating policies internally and externally.

**Implement robust recruitment and performance assessment procedures.**

- Apply strong institutional safeguards during the application process and interview, vetting/reference checks, contracting, inductions and performance assessments.

**Clarify the responsibility and accountability of management, workers and contractors for SEAH and GBV issues in the supply/delivery chain and in their interactions with the wider community.**

- Create or join sector-wide networks to agree on joint principles, policies and actions across supply chains and facilitate peer-to-peer learning.
- Engage in dialogue with unions and workers groups.

**Identify support services to which SEAH and GBV survivors can be referred. Implement investigation procedures and disciplinary procedures as necessary.**

- Conduct a mapping of quality assured support services (e.g. financial, legal, psychological, medical, and includes child protection support) in the programme location.

## Implementation phase and monitoring and evaluation



**Demonstrate strong leadership towards gender equality and social inclusion. Promote workplaces free of violence.**

- Company management to communicate SEAH and GBV prevention messages to staff, partners and beneficiaries through multiple channels.

**Identify and address the potential for the programme to inadvertently contribute to GBV, exclusion or inequality.**

- Address risks (e.g. gender dynamics in-country) in early risk assessments, and implement mitigation measures throughout the programme.

**Allocate sufficient resources, develop capacity and systems to address SEAH and GBV.**

- Integrate technical assistance into programme design.
- Conduct capacity, safety, and resource assessments related to preventing and responding to SEAH and GBV. Put measures in place to address gaps.

**Report all incidents in a timely way to senior leadership and investors/donors as needed.**

- Regularly communicate the importance of reporting any SEAH incidents/concerns to staff and communities. Use opportunities such as monitoring meetings and community visits to reiterate this.
- Regularly review complaints mechanisms (particularly if reporting is low) to ensure they are fit for purpose and accessible.

**Respond appropriately to reports of SEAH and GBV issues.**

- Prioritise survivor and/or whistle-blower wellbeing and safety in case management.
- Investigations conducted by trained investigators only, survivors are supported by skilled staff.
- Survivor support monitored during and after investigation.
- Disciplinary procedures are clear for those involved in perpetrating SEAH or GBV.

## Programme completion phase



**Review status and performance of SEAH and GBV measures, incidents and concerns. Integrate lessons into future programmes.**

- Include documentation of lessons learned into programme completion review process, including how SEAH and GBV cases were handled.
- Share these learnings to build internal capacity.
- Report any outstanding SEAH concerns/incidents immediately and prior to programme completion.

**Build SEAH and GBV considerations into programme being handed over to government or other organisations.**

- Ensure a Grievance-Redress Mechanism is in place, codes of conduct are signed, and monitoring plans incorporate SEAH and GBV.
- Ensure those responsible for operations are explicitly required to continue implementation of these measures.

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<sup>1</sup> Sexual Exploitation: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes. Includes profiting momentarily, socially, or politically from sexual exploitation of another.

<sup>2</sup> Sexual Abuse: The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. It should cover sexual assault (attempted rape, kissing / touching, forcing someone to perform oral sex / touching) as well as rape. Under UN regulations, all sexual activity with someone under the age of 18 is considered sexual abuse, regardless of the age of majority or consent locally.

<sup>3</sup> Sexual Harassment: A continuum of unacceptable and unwelcome behaviours and practices of a sexual nature that may include, but are not limited to, sexual suggestions or demands, requests for sexual favours and sexual, verbal or physical conduct or gestures, that are or might reasonably be perceived as offensive or humiliating.

<sup>4</sup> Gender based violence (GBV): violence targeted at individuals because of socially ascribed gender differences and includes physical, sexual, emotional, and economic violence.

<sup>5</sup> This tip sheet has been adapted from a report written for the Resource and Support Hub: Sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH) and gender-based violence (GBV) in private sector development programmes. <https://safeguardingsupporthub.org/documents/sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-sexual-harassment-seah-and-gender-based-violence-gbv>

<sup>6</sup> Intersectionality is used to understand that people may experience discrimination and oppressions as a result of multiple, overlapping identities, including race, class, caste, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, nationality, immigration status, geographical location, religion.