

# International Standards on Safeguarding and Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH)

International standards are used to ensure quality and safety of services, as well as accountability to those using them. In the last decade, several standards have been developed on safeguarding and sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH) in the aid sector. This brief provides a summary of these international standards.

It is important for organisations working in Eastern Europe as part of the emergency response to be aware of the relevant standards to protect staff and people who you work with. Donors increasingly require organisations to meet certain standards to qualify for funding. Many large organisations have also adapted these international standards to create their own standards.

Standard	Who does it apply to?
1. Inter-Agency Standing Committee: Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse	The major governmental donors who form the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) agreed their work and all their partners should adhere to these standards
2. Inter-Agency Standing Committee Minimum Operating Standards: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Own Personnel (MOS-PSEA)	
3. Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability	
4. The International Child Safeguarding Standards by Keeping Children Safe	Relevant for organisations working with children
5. DAC <sup>1</sup> Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance	Donor governments, but useful to understand what funders are committed to

## **Inter-Agency Standing Committee Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)**

**Why does the standard exist?** The six core principles form a code of conduct on minimum acceptable behaviour. They form a useful basis for organisations to develop policies and procedures for preventing and responding to SEAH.

**What does this standard cover?** The standard:

- Requires SEA to be treated as gross misconduct, with the potential for dismissal
- Prohibits staff paying for sex or exchanging goods for sex

- Prohibits sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18
- Strongly discourages relationships with beneficiaries and or partners
- Obliges staff to report concerns
- Obliges staff to create and maintain a culture which prevents SEA.

**Who does the standard apply to?** All United Nations (UN) staff and anyone working in partnership with/receiving funds from them. If you partner with the UN (or other organisations who adhere to these principles, e.g. International Financial Institutions (IFIs)), you must agree to follow these standards to prevent SEA.

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

**Why does this standard exist?** It aims to standardise the way the UN and anyone who receives UN funding protects community members from experiencing sexual exploitation and abuse by their own staff. It does not cover sexual harassment of staff within the workplace.

**What does the standard cover?** This standard requires the organisation and partners to have:

- A policy in place to prevent SEA
- Measures to prevent SEA including staff training, recruitment and reporting processes
- Inform communities about these steps
- Dedicated SEA focal point or department
- A clear code of conduct and that the Secretary General's Bulletin (ST/SGB/2003/13) or respective codes of conduct should be included in contracts.

**Who does the standard apply to?** All UN staff and anyone working with or receiving funds from them. If you partner with the UN, you must agree to follow these standards to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. DAC donors require adherence to MOS-PSEA and/or CHS.

### **Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS)**

**Why does this standard exist?** It aims to standardise the way that organisations deliver quality, effective and accountable support to people affected by crises. In 2020, the CHS Alliance published an updated **PSEAH Index** to help organisations verify whether they have the policies and practices in place for protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (PSEAH).

**What does the standard cover?** This standard requires organisations to:

- Identify and address SEAH risks in organisations and programme activities.
- Have policies in place to prevent and respond to SEAH.
- Inform communities of the organisation's work to prevent SEAH.
- Put in place reporting systems for communities, with reporting and investigation processes that prioritise the safety, needs and interests of survivors.

**Who does the standard apply to?** The CHS was written for humanitarian aid but the CHS Alliance advocates that anyone delivering development work could use it.

## **The International Child Safeguarding Standards by Keeping Children Safe**

**Why does this standard exist?** To help organisations meet their responsibilities for safeguarding children from the organisation (its staff, programmes and operations).

**What does the standard cover?** The standards require organisations working with children to have:

- A child safeguarding policy in place
- Clear responsibilities and expectations on staff and anyone working with children, including training and support to safeguard children
- Child safeguarding procedures that are applied across the organisation
- Accountability so that the organisation monitors and reviews its safeguarding measures.

**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.

## **2019 Development Assistance Committee Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance**

**Why does this document exist?** Governments that provide funding for development and humanitarian work wanted to standardise their work to prevent and respond to SEAH. The DAC Recommendation is not a new standard but focuses on donors' application of the IASC and CHS standards. It prioritises the rights, needs and wants of survivors and victims of SEAH.

**What does the document cover?** 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.

**Who does the document apply to?** Governments who are members of the Development Assistance Committee and any organisation who works with them should ensure their SEAH work is guided by it. Governments and organisations who are not members of the Development Assistance Committee are also encouraged to 'adhere' to the document and several UN organisations have done so.

**To apply the standards and international instruments listed above, refer to the [RSH How-to Note on applying SEAH sector standards](#).**

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<sup>1</sup> 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. There are currently 30 DAC members.