



Accountability to Affected Populations Task Force Common Terminologies Document

Content

Accountability.....	3
Accountability to Affected Populations	3
Affected Populations.....	3
Assessment	3
At Risk Adults.....	4
Child	4
Child Protection.....	4
Code of Conduct	4
Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms.....	5
Community Engagement.....	5
Complaint	5
Complainant	6
Complaints Mechanism or Procedure	6
Confidentiality.....	6
Corruption	7
Design, Monitor and Evaluate	7
Dignity	7
Do No Harm	8
Feedback	8
PSEA Focal Point.....	9
Fraud.....	9
Gender-Based Violence	10
Human Rights	11
Humanitarian Response.....	11
Impartiality.....	11
Inclusion.....	11
Informed Consent.....	12



Investigation of Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment.....	12
Leadership & Governance.....	12
Non-Discrimination.....	12
Organizational Learning and Adaptation	13
Participation	13
People with Disabilities.....	14
Resource Allocation	15
Respect.....	15
Quality	15
Safeguarding.....	15
Safety.....	15
Sexual Abuse	16
Sexual Exploitation.....	16
Sexual Harassment.....	16
Speak Up Policy	17
Survivor or Victim	17
Survivor/Victim-Centered Approach	17
Transparency	17
Whistleblower Protection Policy	18



Accountability

Accountability refers to the responsible use of power (resources, decision making) by humanitarian actors, combined with effective and quality programming that recognizes a community of concern's dignity, capacity, and ability to be independent. Accountability is a structured relationship in which one party fulfils its obligation to enable the assessment and approval of its actions or decisions by another party. Accountability implies there are consequences for an organization if it fails to meet its responsibilities.

Source: [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#)

Source: [ALNAP](#)

Affected Populations

Affected populations refers to the individuals, groups, and communities that are affected by a humanitarian crisis.

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Accountability to Affected Populations

Accountability to affected populations is an active commitment to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people humanitarian organization.

- Taking account means giving communities meaningful influence over decision making in a way that is inclusive, non-discriminatory and accounts for the diversity of communities.
- Giving account is about the sharing of information in an effective and transparent way across communities. This can include for instance information about agencies and their roles and responsibilities, about entitlements and targeting criteria, as well as the reasons why these would change, about how to provide feedback or how to raise complaints.
- Being held to account means ensuring communities have the opportunity to assess and, where feasible, alter or sanction humanitarian actors' actions.

Source: [IASC](#)

Assessment

Gather and systematically analyze, with the active involvement of persons of concern, AGD-disaggregated information relating to the rights, needs, risks and priorities of all persons of concern. Balance the time and effort required to run an assessment against



the length of time its findings will remain valid, particularly in situations that change rapidly. Use all opportunities and encounters with persons of concern to understand how the situation is changing for them.

Source: [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#)

At Risk Adults

- Any person aged 18 years and older who may be at risk of abuse or exploitation due to their dependence or reliance on others for services, basic needs or protection, and according to context, for example, in humanitarian situations.
- An adult may also be at risk/ vulnerable when in a relationship (social or work) with another who seeks to misuse their position of authority or trust to control, coerce, manipulate or dominate them.
- An adult may also be at risk if their decision-making capacity is impaired and/or they do not have the support to make a decision.

Being at risk is not a 'fixed' characteristic but rather changes due to a range of factors and can change over time. For example, a person living with a disability may not be at risk in their own usual environment but may become so if they are displaced and away from their usual coping mechanisms.

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Child

Child is any individual under the age of 18, irrespective of local country definitions of when a child reaches adulthood.

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Source: [UNICEF](#)

Child Protection

Child protection is preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children – including [but not limited to] commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labor and harmful traditional practices.

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Code of Conduct



It is a set of standards about behavior that staff and volunteers of an organization are obliged to adhere to. It is a statement of principles and values that establishes a set of expectations and standards for how an organization, government body or partner will behave, including minimum levels of behavior expected and any disciplinary action that could follow in cases of non-compliance.

Code of Conduct seeks to guard organization's standards of behavior. It is not about operational details, such as how one should calculate food rations or set up a refugee camp. Rather, it seeks to maintain the high standards of independence, effectiveness and impact to response organizations. It is a voluntary code, enforced by the will of the organization accepting it to maintain the standards of behavior.

Please refer to this [this link](#) to access the sample Code of Conduct (in English) developed by the Accountability Task Force .

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Source: [ICRC](#)

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms

Community-based complaints mechanisms are systems blending both formal and informal community structures, built on engagement with the community where individuals are able and encouraged to safely report grievances – including SEA incidents – and those reports are referred to the appropriate entities for follow up.

Source: [IASC](#)

Community Engagement

A dynamic process connecting the community and other stakeholders so that crisis-affected people have more control over the response and its impact on them. For example, in public health crises, effective engagement links communities and response teams to maximize community influence to reduce public health risks, provide appropriate, accessible services, improve programme quality and establish accountability.

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Complaint



Complaint is composed of specific grievance of anyone who has been negatively affected by an organization's action or who believes that an organization has failed to meet a stated commitment. Organizations actively seek the complaints/feedback of affected populations to: (a) improve the efficiency and effectiveness of organization's work; (b) ensure adherence to organization's policies and procedures; and (c) protect the affected populations' basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Organizations should actively seek the views of affected populations to improve policy and practice in programming, ensuring that feedback and complaints mechanisms are streamlined, appropriate and robust enough to deal with (communicate, receive, process, respond to and learn from) complaints about breaches in policy and stakeholder dissatisfaction

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Source: [WHO](#)

Complainant

Complainant is the person making the complaint, including the alleged victim/survivor of the sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment, or another person who becomes aware of the wrongdoing

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Complaints Mechanism or Procedure

Complaint mechanism or procedure is consisted of processes that allow individuals to report concerns such as breaches of organizational policies or codes of conduct. It is a formal system established and used to allow recipients of humanitarian action (and in some cases, other crisis-affected populations) to provide information on their experience with a humanitarian agency or the wider humanitarian system. Such information is then used for different purposes, in expectation of a variety of benefits, including taking corrective action to improve some element of the response. Feedback can also be provided informally.

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Confidentiality



Confidentiality reflects the belief that people have the right to choose to whom they will, or will not, tell their story. Maintaining confidentiality means not disclosing any information at any time to any party without the informed consent of the person concerned. Confidentiality promotes safety, trust and empowerment. It is an ethical principle that restricts access to and dissemination of information. In investigations on sexual exploitation, abuse, fraud and corruption, it requires that information is available only to a limited number of authorized people for the purpose of concluding the investigation. Confidentiality helps create an environment in which witnesses are more willing to recount their versions of events and builds trust in the system and in the organization.

Source: [IASC](#)

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Corruption

Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. This includes financial corruption such as fraud, bribery, extortion and receiving kickbacks (illicit payments in return for facilitating transactions or contacts with influential people). Exchanging relief goods in return for sexual favors, preferential treatment of friends or relatives when recruiting or providing assistance, and the manipulation of distribution lists and diversion of resources are also forms of corruption.

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Design, Monitor and Evaluate

The design of programmes should be based on assessments of the protection needs of affected and host communities and their capacities. Involve persons of concern and their representatives in the design of programmes that affect them. Design, monitor and evaluate the goals and objectives of programmes with the involvement of affected populations, feeding learning back into the organization on an ongoing basis and reporting on the results of the process.

Source: [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#)

Source: [IASC](#)

Dignity

The capacity to make one's own deliberate choices and consequently to be acknowledged as a free subject. It reflects the integrity of the person and is seen as the



source from which all human rights derive (see also ‘The right to life with dignity, Humanitarian Charter’, Point 5). The foundation of life with dignity is the assurance of access to basic services, security and respect for human rights. Equally, the way in which humanitarian response is implemented strongly affects the dignity and well-being of disaster-affected populations. The Humanitarian Charter and Protection Principles make particularly strong reference to dignity.

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Do No Harm

Underscores unintended impacts of humanitarian interventions and is an essential basis for the work of organizations in conflict situations. The concept has acquired a broader meaning that warns humanitarian agencies to avoid unintended negative consequences in any situation in which they operate in order that the humanitarian response might not further endanger affected persons and might not undermine communities' capacities for peacebuilding and reconstruction. In its broader sense, it stipulates that humanitarian agencies should have policies in place to guide them during planning, monitoring and evaluation on how to handle sensitive information that can directly harm people's safety or dignity (see also ‘Protection Principle 1’ and ‘Core Humanitarian Standard Commitment 3’).

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Feedback

Feedback allows recipients of humanitarian action (and in some cases, other crisis-affected populations) to provide information on their experience with a humanitarian agency or the wider humanitarian system. Such information is then used for different purposes, in expectation of a variety of benefits, including taking corrective action to improve some element of the response. Formal and informal feedback from persons of concern is systematically received and responded to, and corrective action taken when appropriate.

- Establish and maintain effective feedback systems (including comments, suggestions, and complaints), using a variety of communication channels that are accessible to all persons of concern and that are appropriate for both sensitive and non-sensitive feedback.
- Allocate human and financial resources to ensure that feedback from persons of concern is systematically collected, acknowledged, assessed, referred, and responded to in a timely, confidential, and effective manner.



- Collaborate with partners in feedback referral and response processes (due regard being given to confidentiality/consent, anonymization of feedback when collaborating with partners).

Source: [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#)

Source: [CHS](#)

PSEA Focal Point

Focal point is a person designated to receive reports of cases of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and support the organization in implementing PSEAH (Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment)

The Accountability Task Force developed a sample PSEA focal point terms of references document, accessible through [this link](#).

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Fraud

Fraud is a deliberate improper action which leads to financial loss to the organization and usually also results in financial gain to the fraudster. It is a serious misconduct and is ground for administrative action, disciplinary measures including summary dismissal, and criminal proceedings.

Fraud is typically carried out by an organizations' own staff or their partners' staff. Sometimes money may be leaking out of the organization for a long time undetected. Fraud is very common indeed, but reliable statistics are very hard to come by, as organizations are understandably reluctant to talk about frauds they have experienced.

Examples of Fraud

- Stealing money or assets
- Abuse of procurement process, often collusion with suppliers to pay inflated prices
- Pocketing of cash receipts
- Bribes paid to organizations' staff by suppliers or beneficiaries
- Supplies sold for personal gain
- Staff being paid inflated expenses (supported by false receipts)
- The same project being funded by two different donors
- Unauthorized personal use of assets (eg. telephones, vehicles)



- Resources given to ghost staff or beneficiaries, who do not really exist.

Source: [Humentum](#)

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms. GBV is a serious violation of human rights and a life-threatening health and protection issue. During displacement and times of crisis, the threat of GBV significantly increases for women and girls. GBV is a widespread international public health and human rights issue.

Common Types of GBV

- Child sexual abuse
- Conflict-related sexual violence
- Denial of resources, opportunities and services
- Domestic violence and intimate partner violence
- Economic abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Female infanticide and sex-selective abortion
- Forced marriage and child marriage
- Harmful traditional practices
- Physical assault
- Rape
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual assault
- Sexual exploitation
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual violence
- Sexual and gender-based violence
- Son preference
- Trafficking in persons
- Violence against women and girls

Source: [UNHCR](#)

Source: [IASC](#)



Human Rights

Rights that every human being is entitled to enjoy simply by virtue of being human. They identify the minimum conditions for living with dignity that apply to all of us. They are universal and inalienable: they cannot be taken away. In an emergency context, certain human rights may be temporarily suspended, but only in exceptional circumstances and under strict conditions. Rights such as those concerning life, health and physical security are likely to be a priority for action in emergencies, governed by the principle of nondiscrimination.

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Humanitarian Response

Humanitarian response is one dimension of humanitarian action. It focuses on the provision of assistance in a given emergency situation. The provision of emergency services and public assistance during or immediately after a disaster in order to save lives, reduce health impacts, ensure public safety, maintain human dignity and meet the basic subsistence needs of the people affected. Humanitarian response should be governed by the key humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Can be used interchangeably with 'humanitarian assistance' and 'intervention'.

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Impartiality

Impartiality is the principle that humanitarian assistance is provided solely on the basis of, and in proportion to, need, without discrimination. Impartiality is objective and does not discriminate because of someone's nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class, tribal allegiances, political opinion or other such factors.

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Inclusion

A rights-based approach to community programming, aiming to ensure all people who may be at risk of being excluded have equal access to basic services and a voice in the development and implementation of those services. At the same time, it requires that organizations make dedicated efforts to address and remove barriers to access services. Including diverse groups in programme design makes humanitarian response more



comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable. Inclusion of, and participation by, the affected population is fundamental to life with dignity.

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Informed Consent

Respect for persons requires that, to the degree possible, participants must be given the opportunity to make an informed decision about their potential participation, which entails three elements: information, comprehension, and voluntary participation. Getting the informed consent means agreeing to an action based on a clear understanding of the facts, implications and consequences of the action. It implies agreeing to an action based on a clear understanding of the facts, implications and consequences of the action.

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Source: [Global Protection Cluster](#)

Investigation of Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment

This is an internal administrative procedure, in which an organization attempts to establish whether there has been a breach of SEAH policy(ies) by a staff member or members.

The Accountability Task Force developed a Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy, which is accessible through **this link**.

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Leadership & Governance

Demonstrate commitment by ensuring accountability is integrated into country strategies, programme design, monitoring and evaluations, recruitment, staff inductions, trainings and performance management, partnership agreements, and highlighted in reporting.

Source: [IASC](#)

Non-Discrimination

The principle that unfair distinctions should not be made between people or communities on any grounds of status, including age, gender, race, color, ethnicity, national or social origin, sexual orientation, HIV status, language, religion, disability, health status, political



or other opinion, or other status. It does not mean that everyone should be treated in the same way, but is about equality of access and outcomes, allowing different types of assistance and support based on actual needs and capacities. Survivors of violence should receive equal and fair treatment regardless of their age, gender, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or any other characteristic.

Source: [IASC](#)

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Organizational Learning and Adaptation

Interventions, planning, priority setting, course corrections, and evaluation are informed on an ongoing basis by the views of persons of concern.

- Learn from continuous engagement with communities of concern and adapt interventions and programmes in response to new knowledge gained through community participation and feedback, both in the short and long-term.
- Measure and improve accountability to all persons of concern through assessments of organizational performance on accountability.
- Include persons of concern as partners throughout the operation's management cycle, inter alia by reporting the results of assessments and follow up actions to them.

Source: [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#)

Participation

Women, men, boys and girls of diverse backgrounds are able to engage meaningfully and are consulted on protection, assistance, and solutions.

- Establish arrangements that permit meaningful participation at all stages of the operation's management cycle (assessment, planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). The arrangements should be accessible to all groups in a community. In particular, ensure that potentially marginalized groups are included, such as minorities, people with disabilities, and people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.
- Ensure that all persons of concern have equal and non-discriminatory access to protection, assistance and solutions.
- Identify the capacities and priorities of all persons of concern and develop protection, assistance and solutions programmes that accord with them.



Effective participation of people affected by humanitarian crises puts the needs and interests of those people at the core of humanitarian decision-making processes. This requires an ongoing dialogue about the design, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian responses with people, local actors and communities who are vulnerable or at risk, including those who often tend to be disproportionately disadvantaged, such as women, girls and older persons. In order to facilitate “equal access and participation” one-size approaches will not fit all, and mechanisms for participation should be tailored to the needs of different groups, including but not limited to persons with disabilities, those with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and children.

A party ‘participates’ in humanitarian action when they play an active role in the decisions for any of the following: the financing, strategic priority setting, planning, implementation and/or evaluation of humanitarian assistance. Participation is therefore not a type or component of accountability, but a different solution to the same inequalities which accountability relationships are designed to address. Participation solves information and influence asymmetries. In a scenario with full participation, there is less need for accountability, as the stakeholder has been involved in decision-making and implementation throughout the process, rather than sitting outside the process and ‘peeking in’ through accountability mechanisms. The processes and activities that allow crisis-affected people to play an active role in all decision-making processes that affect them. Real participation includes all groups, including the most vulnerable and marginalized. It enables people and communities to take part in decision-making processes and to take action on certain issues that are of concern to them. It is a way of identifying and mobilizing community resources and building consensus and support. Participation is voluntary.

Source: [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#)

Source: [IASC Grand Bargain](#)

Source: [ALNAP](#)

Source: [SPHERE](#)

People with Disabilities

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (CRPD, 2006, A/RES/61/106) defines persons with disabilities to include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Source: [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#)



Resource Allocation

To fully implement an AGD (Age, Gender and Diversity) approach, budget allocations and programme interventions must reflect the findings of assessments and community consultation and should consider the priorities set by the community.

Source: [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#)

Respect

The individual is the primary actor, and the role of helpers is to facilitate recovery and provide resources for problem-solving. All actions taken should be guided by respect for the choices, wishes, rights and dignity of individuals.

Source: [IASC](#)

Quality

Quality is about doing work well. In the humanitarian sector, this means effectiveness (impact), efficiency (timeliness and cost of a response or service) and appropriateness (taking account of needs and context) of elements of a humanitarian response. It requires assessments and feedback from stakeholders on what an organization is doing well and how it can learn how to do better. It means measuring outcomes against recognized mechanisms and/or standards.

Source: [SPHERE](#)

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the responsibility of organizations to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children and adults at-risk nor expose them to abuse or exploitation. This term covers physical, emotional and sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse by staff and associated personnel, as well as safeguarding risks caused by programme design and implementation. Many organizations now also use this term to cover harm caused to staff in the workplace.

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Safety

The safety and security of the survivor and others, such as her/his children and people who have assisted her/him, must be the number one priority for all actors. Individuals



who disclose an incident of GBV or a history of abuse are often at high risk of further violence from the perpetrator(s) or from others around them.

Source: [IASC](#)

Sexual Abuse

The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Source: [Secretary General's Bulletin](#)

Sexual Exploitation

Actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

Source: [Secretary General's Bulletin](#)

Acts of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse include:

- Sexual assault
- Demanding sexual intercourse in any context or having sex as a condition for assistance
- Forcing someone to have sex with anyone
- Forcing a person to engage in prostitution or pornography
- Unwanted touching of a sexual nature
- Refusing to use safe sex practices.
- Insinuating and suggestive remarks about appearance of a person
- Sexist comments and jokes about sexual characteristics, sexual behavior and the sexuality of a person.
- Whistling or staring
- Stalking through lying in wait, monitoring or repeatedly pursuing contact in person or through a medium of communication, such as letters, email, text messages, or telephone calls
- Phone-calls, text messages or emails with obscene or sexual content.

Sexual Harassment

It is a continuum of unacceptable and unwelcome behaviors and practices of a sexual nature that may include, but are not limited to, sexual suggestions or demands, requests



for sexual favors and sexual, verbal or physical conduct or gestures, that are or might reasonably be perceived as offensive or humiliating. Sexual harassment has widely been understood to relate to the workplace (see 'Workplace sexual misconduct' via the below link), but is also included in the spectrum of behaviors that are not acceptable conduct by our staff, be it in the workplace or with affected population.

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Speak Up Policy

Speak Up policy is an organizational policy which encourages staff members to report concerns or suspicions of misconduct by colleagues. Those making reports are protected from any negative consequences of reporting these concerns.

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Survivor or Victim

Survivor or victim is the person who is, or has been, sexually exploited or abused. The term 'survivor' implies strength, resilience and the capacity to survive. The term 'victim' has protective implications, as it implies the victim of an injustice which we should seek to redress. People who have experienced SEAH may choose different terms to describe their experience.

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)

Survivor/Victim-Centered Approach

Survivor centered approach is an approach in which the victim/survivor's wishes, safety, and well-being remain a priority in all matters and procedures.

Source: [IASC](#)

Transparency

Transparency is providing accessible and timely information to affected populations on organizational procedures, structures and processes that affect them to ensure that they can make informed decisions and choices and facilitate dialogue between an organization and affected populations over information provision. Women, men, boys and girls of diverse backgrounds in all operations should have access to timely, accurate, and relevant information on (i) their rights and entitlements, and (ii) the programmes of UNHCR and its partners.



- Facilitate communication and dialogue between organizations, its partners, and persons of concern at key stages throughout the operation's management cycle.
- Share information and communicate in languages, formats, and media that are culturally appropriate for, and accessible to, all groups in a community.

Source: [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#)

Source: [WHO](#)

Whistleblower Protection Policy

A policy which encourages staff members to report concerns, the disclosure of which are typically in the public interest, particularly in countries where whistleblowing is part of national legislation. Concerns are typically those regarding a criminal offence, health and safety, damage to the environment or miscarriage of justice. Reporting on PSEA can fall within an organization's Whistleblower Protection policy. Whistleblowers are often protected by law and cannot be treated unfairly or lose their job because they report these concerns.

Source: [CHS - PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#)