

Interim Guidance

CHECKLIST TO PROTECT FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE DURING COVID-19

CHS Alliance, InterAction, IOM, Oxfam,
UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, OCHA, WFP, WHO,
UN Victims' Rights Advocate in consultation
with IASC members

June 2020

A Checklist to Protect from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

A plan should be developed at country level to regularly verify that critical elements of prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) are in place, and to prepare for contingencies where they are significantly impacted by the pandemic. Key elements to verify and address are as follows:

1. Clear and consistent messages on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) that are accessible and context-specific are developed and disseminated regularly in all delivery sites.
 - The messages should indicate that: aid is always free, no sexual nor other favours can be requested in exchange for assistance; sexual activity with children under 18 in all circumstances constitutes abuse; and include information on how to report SEA.
 - Communication and outreach methods are tailored to people at heightened risk including women, adolescent girls, people with disabilities, and others.
 - Alternatives to in-person communication are used where necessary, i.e. posters, flyers, radio, telephone, texts, and social media.
 - Appropriate messages regarding protection from SEA feature in all COVID-19 related communications and include information on how to report and where to receive assistance.
 - Coordinated messaging takes place through risk coordination and community engagement (RCCE) and other groups.
2. Safe and accessible pathways to report on sexual exploitation and abuse are available, through channels preferred by affected people, inclusive of sex, gender, age, disabilities, and other diversities.
 - Complaint and referral mechanisms, including help lines, are coordinated, safe, and continue to operate effectively, with particular attention to isolated or quarantined populations.
 - Where in-person complaints and referral mechanisms are suspended or their accessibility is limited, stakeholders engage with affected people, especially women and girls, to identify and support their preferred alternatives for reporting and referral.
 - Community volunteers are briefed on updated complaints mechanisms and disseminate awareness of any changes in complaints mechanisms within their communities. Community volunteers include a significant proportion of women who can reach vulnerable women and girls in their communities.
 - Identify people who may be at risk of exclusion from reporting mechanisms, such as minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, displaced persons, refugees, persons with disabilities, LGBTI, or people affected by extreme poverty.
3. Gender-based violence (GBV) and child protection services are known and functioning.
 - SEA reporting channels are linked with GBV and (CP) referral pathways so victims and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse can be promptly referred for assistance according to their informed consent¹ and in line with [GBV Guiding Principles and Approaches](#).

¹ In line with SGB/2003/13, UN officials must report SEA cases, but the personal identifying information of the victims/survivors may only be included with the victim/survivor's consent.

- GBV and child protection referral pathways are modified in line with COVID-19 guidelines, and confidentiality measures are reinforced in respect of new communications channels through which SEA may be disclosed.
 - Essential GBV and CP services are open and equipped with personal protective equipment and other supplies needed to operate during the COVID-19 response.
4. Risks of sexual exploitation and abuse within the COVID-19 response are assessed and mitigated.
- Proof of completion of protection from SEA training, including a signed code of conduct, is required from all humanitarian aid and implementing partners and health workers deployed in the area.
 - Safeguards relating to recruitment are maintained.
 - PSEA focal points and critical staff are working and contacts are updated regularly. If they are not, ensure that relevant responsibilities have been assigned to a designated delegate.
 - Six core principles related to SEA are translated into local languages and tailored to context.
 - Map and mitigate SEA risks across key programmatic areas including Basic Needs, Food Security, Shelter, Health and WASH.
5. Review progress against this checklist bi-weekly.

NB : this checklist is a quick reference card - representing minimum actions for project managers delivering in the field and remote locations. Please refer to the IASC Interim Technical Note for additional guidance for country-level programmes. For additional support and "how to" implement the checklist, please reach out to: helpdesk-aap-psea@unhcr.org