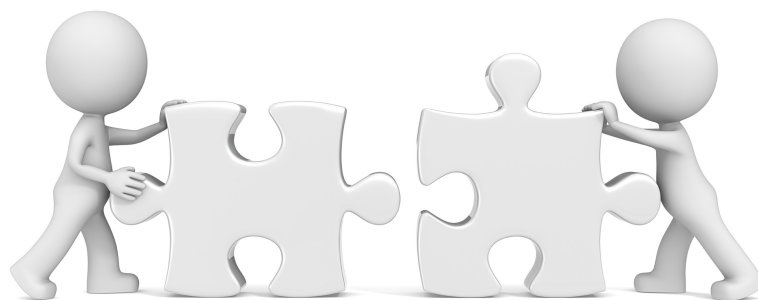


# PSEA: Working With Partners

## Guidance and Resources





# digna

## PSEA/PEAS

**The Canadian Centre of Expertise on the  
Prevention of  
Sexual  
Exploitation and  
Abuse**

This document is based on the content developed by consultants, Renée Wolforth and Virginie Vuylsteke, for the Digna training, “PSEA: Working with Partners,” held online on the 16th, 22nd, and 23rd of November 2022. This document complements the power point presentations used for the training.

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[IASC Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#)

[Sexual exploitation and abuse in international assistance - Definitions and Canada's commitments](#)

[IASC Minimum Operating Standards \(MOS-PSEA\) Four pillars](#)

**Note:** Interesting [article](#) that discusses many issues related to feminism and SEA, including the controversies regarding IASC Core principles 3 & 4

## Introduction to the guidance and resource document <sup>[1]</sup>

This Guidance and resources document includes key elements related to PSEA to consider when working with partners. It presents best practices and resources related to capacity assessment, capacity strengthening, risk assessment, due diligence, complaints handling mechanisms, partnership agreements, safe and inclusive programming and financing. Resources are referenced throughout the document, and compiled at the end for ease of reference.

[Understanding of key concepts related to PSEA is essential to working with partners on this issue.](#)

## A Protection Mainstreaming Approach to PSEA <sup>[2]</sup>

Protection mainstreaming is the process of incorporating protection principles and promoting meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid. A focus on these principles within an approach to PSEA, especially concerning relationships with partners, supports the creation of a culture of safety within both the organization and among its partners. If these principles are embedded within an organization and its programming, it is less likely there will be incidents of SEA within the organization or

among its partners. It will also be more likely that those who are survivors/victims will report these incidents, and receive a safe and adequate response, if they do occur.

**The following elements should be taken into account in all humanitarian or development activities:**

### 1. **Prioritize safety & dignity, and avoid causing harm:**

Prevent and minimize as much as possible any unintended negative effects of your intervention which can increase people's vulnerability to both physical and psychosocial risks, incl. PSEA.

[Related questions:](#) are those working with us, and those we work for, safe? Do they feel safe? Are we treating them like people, not numbers?

### 2. **Meaningful Access:** Arrange for people's access to assistance and services – in proportion to need and without any barriers. Pay special attention to individuals and groups who may be particularly vulnerable or have difficulty accessing assistance and services.

[Related questions:](#) are we putting a ramp at the front of our building but people can't even get to the building due to barriers – physical or social (e.g. discrimination) and do they feel welcome? Do they feel your organization, your partners are welcoming them?

### 3. **Accountability:** Set-up appropriate mechanisms through which affected populations can measure the adequacy of interventions, and address concerns and complaints.

[Related questions:](#) are we listening to what they are saying? Do we give them many options to give us feedback? In-person, in writing, audio/visual, etc...

### 4. **Participation and Empowerment:** Support the development of self-protection capacities and assist people to claim their rights, including – not exclusively – the rights to shelter, food, water and sanitation, health, and education.

[Related questions:](#) are we ensuring their participation? Are they empowered and feel empowered?

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[2] Source: [Global Protection Cluster \(webpage includes an introductory video\)](#) 

## Keep in mind:

- Your partners are not only implementing partners but also vendors, contractors, consortium members, etc. ; and
- There are many different types of partners from churches and universities to local and international NGOs to individuals (e.g. volunteers, researchers), among others.
- Inclusivity is key to preventing and responding to SEA. A useful resource; e.g. consider tips from the [Pocket Guide: Safeguarding Persons with Disabilities and those with Mental Health conditions](#) ↻

## POWER RELATIONS

Power relations are at the center of both PSEA and partnership. When working with partners, one should consider the following:

- The power imbalance between your partners' staff and the community and programme participants; and how it affects risks for SEA as well as complaints handling
- The power imbalance between parties to a partnership; and how it affects PSEA related discussions and expectations, as well as complaints handling (cf. PSEA policies, partnership agreements, CHM)
- Addressing power imbalance and its impact on SEA risks starts with addressing the power imbalances within your partnerships. Not least because trust is essential within a partnership to have a functional (safe) PSEA CHM.

It is recommended to have an approach to partnership that promotes a balance of power and utilizing the strengths of all parties to the partnership to enhance services and ensure a culture of safety within the organization, partnership, and for partners/programme participants.

A useful resource to reflect on power dynamics: [The Power Walk exercise](#) ↻

## CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

In light of the above, it is recommended to use a transparent and balanced approach to capacity assessment in a partnership framework. This includes assessing capacity of ALL parties to a partnership, incl. our own.

### Key resource:

[Digna PSEA Organizational Assessment Tool](#) ↻

- “Digna’s self-assessment is a useful tool that helps organizational leaders to gain a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their organization’s prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) implementation. This is the first step of a journey that will enable your organization to implement the best and most appropriate PSEA measures for your organization and your partners.”
- “The tool is not meant as an audit, but rather to examine accountability as a mutual commitment, by organizations, their partners, and other stakeholders – including rights holders/targeted communities in their institution, their offices, and within their programmes and projects.” Both quotes are from the Foreword for the narrative of the Digna capacity assessment tool.

## Keep in mind:

- Doing our own capacity assessment as well as our partners’ lays the basis for dialogue and potential joint frameworks (MoU / CHM)
- Given the wide variety of partners (size, capacity, context, etc.), **adapt the tool to your needs**, and possibly to different types of partnership(s)
- **Language is key** when working on PSEA with partners whose primary language is not English (and/or in communities where English is not the primary language). Even when operating in the same language, it is important to ensure that the language is inclusive and that everyone has a common understanding of the terms used. To support you in navigating PSEA related language with partners, the following introduction, resource, and instructional video may be useful:
  - ↻ [Introducing the Clear Global PSEA glossary](#): A new multilingual, interagency glossary of PSEA terminology (208 terms, in 32 languages)
  - ↻ [The Clear Global PSEA Glossary](#)
  - ↻ An [instructional video](#) on how to use the Clear Global PSEA Glossary app

## Keep in mind:

Power dynamics are central to understanding risks for SEA within any organization. It is important to always recognize these dynamics to ensure that the risks that they pose are understood; and prevention and/or mitigation measures are put in place to avoid or minimize potential harm.

## CAPACITY STRENGTHENING/BUILDING

Gaps and strengths identified in the capacity assessment should inform the design of a capacity building plan.

Take into account all parties to a partnership's existing strengths identified during assessment, avoid top-down approach, but rather aim at co-building a PSEA framework (policies, human resources, CHM, etc.) that meets your common donor requirements, but also – most importantly – your targeted communities' context.

Ensure that any capacity strengthening/building is **SMART**:

- **Specific** (simple, sensible, significant): tailored to each partner, their gaps; or to the entire partnership (e.g. joint training) – no one size fits all
- **Measurable** (meaningful, motivating): make it tangible: what/whose knowledge to increase? What documents/policies to develop, change, to include what? Which practices to adopt?
- **Achievable** (agreed, attainable): take into account your and your partners' resources, initial capacity
- **Relevant** (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based): contextualised (e.g. reporting channels, is reporting to local authorities safe?), based on capacity assessment, existing strengths/weaknesses
- **Time bound** (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive).

## RISKS

**PSEA related risks can be posed to/by:**

- **Programme participants/ rights' holders:** Programme participants (incl. members of targeted communities that do not directly participate in your activities) will be the primary victims of SEA. It is however worth noting that power imbalances within the community may also lead to SEA being perpetrated by community members, incl. those who have community leaders' roles within your programmes (and are thus your partners by

extension), e.g. teachers, community volunteers, etc.

- **Partners:** Partner organisations' staff, volunteers, vendors, contractors, etc. may pose risks to your (or their) programme participants – even organizations with a specialization can have “tunnel vision” - this is why it is important to have open conversations with a wide spectrum of people involved in your (or your partners') services
- **Organization:** Within your organization – staff, volunteers, vendors, contractors, etc within your organization can pose risks to your partners or programme participants - in real life or online
- **Donors:** Though donors often are far removed from the field and/or interactions with programme participants or partners, they may still pose risks. This is especially true if donors are on the ground where programmes are being run, for example. In particular, NGOs, International organizations, or UN agencies may be more likely to be hands on donors whose staff interact regularly with partners or programme participants. Even if a donor is not present in the area of programme implementation, there may be issues with online communications, during visits, or meetings with donors.

**There can be risks of PSEA and other harms and abuses in many situations, including where [3]:**

1. You are working with implementing partners in situations where oversight and due diligence is reduced, such as during emergencies,
2. Partners are (relatively) new to safeguarding / SEAH,
3. SEAH / safeguarding policy, procedures and training are not tailored to the partner and emergency setting (some terms, points may be contrary to their values)

[3] [Safeguarding \(or SEAH\) risk assessment and management tool in emergencies](#) 

## Keep in mind:

Trying to speak to partners about the risks posed by their staff or volunteers can be difficult. **Trust is essential** and this is why it is important in the framework of a partnership to look at your own organization first regarding all aspects of PSEA and to really approach the partnership as you would any partnership, as an equal with different strengths that are brought to the relationship. Also, **you need to have partners that align with your mission and values and make sure that you align with theirs before even entering into a partnership.**

4. Partners have to expand quickly due to an emergency, and
5. Partners do not feel comfortable asking about SEAH because they think their funding or other resources will be cut.

### Some risk assessment tools:

1. [Safeguarding \(or SEAH\) risk assessment and management tool in emergencies](#) [↗](#) includes an Emergency Risk Assessment Tool and Guidance and the [RSH Safeguarding Risk Register](#) [↗](#), of particular interest to partnerships: section 3. Partnerships
2. [How-To Note: How to carry out a safeguarding risk assessment - For CSOs in humanitarian or development settings](#) [↗](#) by the RSH Available in English, French, Arabic and Swahili
3. [Toolkits for Addressing PSEA: Toolkit B – Examples of Risk Assessment and Management](#) [↗](#) by Digna

## DUE DILIGENCE

In order to ensure your partnerships are safe for the communities you work in and your programme participants, it is essential to consider who your partners are, and how their values align with your organization's. This includes donors.

### Things to consider within your due diligence process:

- PSEA Minimum standards (international, national, donor specific)
- Risk assessments
- PSEA Capacity assessment
- Complaints mechanisms and investigations
- Legal compliance
- Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), partnership agreements
- Two-way due diligence <sup>[4]</sup>

## COMPLAINTS' HANDLING MECHANISMS

Useful resource to reflect on Complaints handling mechanisms with partners (and internally): The MAZE exercise from CARE International's [PSEA 2 Day Workshop Manual](#) [↗](#)

### Considerations to keep in mind when designing a CHM:

- Fear for personal security, of losing job/funds are often barriers to report SEA incidents
- Hierarchical power dynamics (INGO vs small organisation, local CSO vs community, manager vs lower ranking staff, etc.) contribute to these fears

## Keep in mind:

A general CBCM can be a good way to establish trust for SEA complaints. If there is a trusted system for reporting other issues, especially of a confidential nature, this can be a good way to enable SEA reporting.

**Note:** PSEA risk management may be integrated with existing organisational risk management process. It doesn't need to be separate. Ideally, PSEA is integrated into all aspects of your project cycle.

[4] [BOND - 3 Practical Ideas To Shift The Power In Partnerships](#) and [BOND: Safeguarding in successful partnerships](#)



- Understanding the obstacles for staff and programme participants to report enables organizations to adjust their PSEA systems
- Any CHM therefore needs to be safe, inclusive, contextualised (to each organisation, partnership and local context), designed in a participatory manner (with partners organisations and different groups from targeted communities)
- Failing to do so can have serious impacts on project participant safety and security
- Make sure your staff, partners and targeted communities know your CoC and CHM

### 10 steps to setting up a Community-Based Complaints' Mechanism <sup>[5]</sup>

1. Secure leadership commitment
2. Agree on a process for handling complaints = separate, joint, embedded?
3. Complete a mapping and quality assurance of local support services and gaps
4. Train all staff to receive and handle reports.
5. Try to avoid creating different CBCMs for each CSO or project within one community.
6. Explain to the affected population that CSO staff and programmes should not cause SEA or other harm.
7. Consult with different members of the affected population on how they would like to report.
8. Decide how to appropriately feed back to the community on a report response.
9. Set up appropriate channels for SEA reports that are safe and confidential.
10. Raise awareness with the affected population about your CBCM.


### Considerations for establishing or managing a CBCM with partners:

1. Partners need to abide by your CoC, but do you want integrated complaints handling mechanism? For what reason? Have a discussion with partners
2. What mechanisms are in place? Don't re-invent the wheel. If you or your partners have a good mechanism in place, see how you can complement, improve, and/or adapt it for SEA complaints
3. How can mechanisms within the organization and partners be integrated/complementary? See how your organization and your partner(s) can complement existing systems. To that end, use capacity assessment, risk assessment and due diligence outcomes; identify gaps, strengths, governance, available resources, power dynamics with the targeted community.
4. Integration of/in local existing structures (legal systems, victim referral, etc.) is vital. The CBCM is more likely to be sustainable if it is integrated into existing systems within the country(s) where your organization and your partner(s) work. However, make sure that outcomes of risk assessments are taken into account.
5. Include how PSEA will be handled if against partner staff (consider including reference to this in your partnership agreements). Ensure any potential risks are examined and prevention and/or mitigation measures are put in place so that regardless of who the perpetrator is, the victim/survivor has multiple avenues to report and feels safe doing so.
6. With regard investigations make sure your and your partners CHM ensures confidentiality, a victim/survivor centred approach, is based on availability of resources/expertise needed (e.g. external investigator), takes into account risk assessments (e.g. reporting to local authority vs victim safety, local legal framework, consider consulting a local lawyer (incl. for grounds of firing - e.g. breach of contracts)
7. Make the process inclusive, built on mutual trust

[5] RSH - How to Design and Manage Community Based Complaints Mechanisms (CBCM)



## PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

PSEA should be included in any agreement with partners, suppliers, contractors. Examples of best practices can be found in the following resource: [Strengthening Partners in Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(CRS\)](#)  HO 9.2 Examples of PSEA clauses in contractual agreements (p.164).

**As a general rule, and at a minimum, your agreements should <sup>[6]</sup>:**

- 2.1. Include clauses on PSEA in all contract agreements.
- 2.2. Define what actions related to SEA are prohibited and the contractual consequences. This could include adherence to the organization's or contracting entity's:
  - Code of Conduct, if there will be direct contact with program participants
  - PSEA policy that covers protection of vulnerable adults and children
  - Child protection policy, if direct access to children is foreseen

**Checklist for implementing PSEA with partners, suppliers and contractors <sup>[7]</sup>:**

1. Assess all partners, suppliers and contractors before the contracting arrangements are agreed.
2. Develop contracts for organizations/companies that include PSEA requirements and commitments.
3. Decide on the type of PSEA support or training to provide to the organizations/ companies, depending on the needs, context and resources available.
4. Agree with the organization/company on how to exchange information on PSEA.
5. Monitor the implementation of the PSEA requirement.

## SAFE PROGRAMMING

Safe programming is focused on how to ensure that an agency's interventions do not cause harm and that those participating in any programming will be safe in accessing services. PSEA is an integral part of safe programming; whilst safe programming supports PSEA. Safe and inclusive (participatory) programming will contribute to preventing SEA and reducing SEA risks. It is everyone's responsibility and should be at the core of how you design your projects, activities, M&E with partners.



**To achieve this when working with partners:**


- Co-create programmes
- Do joint risk assessments
- Monitor implementation
- Ensure information sharing on CoC/CHM, especially what people can expect (e.g., "no payment for services" (as this will empower programme participants);
- Ensure inclusive participation
- Ensure meaningful access


There are many tools to support design and implementation of Safe programming including webinars, toolkits, how to notes, trainings, etc. Here are a few of those tools:

 [How to Design and Deliver Safe Programmes \(SRH Ethiopia\)](#)

 [A Safe programming training package \(SRH\)](#)

 [Safe Programming for CSOs in Humanitarian and Development Settings infographics](#) (English) and [Infographie sur la programmation sûre Globale](#)  (français), also available in Tigrinia, Swahili, Arabic, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Somali, and as a mobile version.

<sup>[6]</sup> [Strengthening Partners in Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(CRS\)](#)  HO 9.1 Checklist for implementing PSEA with partners, suppliers and contractors (p.162)

<sup>[7]</sup> [Ibid.](#) 

## FINANCING PSEA

When looking at financing PSEA in working with partners, it is important to start by identifying what requires financial resources. This could include (but not limited to):

- Joint workshops/trainings
- Complaints handling mechanism
- Victim/Survivor support/referrals
- Investigations (incl. possibility to relocate the alleged perpetrator and the victim)
- Human Resources
- MEAL (complaints mechanism, monitoring of programmes including PSEA)

### Ask yourself:

- What resources do you / your partner have already? Which ones need financing? What extra resources do you / your partner need? How much would this cost?
- To what extent am I able/willing to support my partner financially to meet my PSEA requirements?

### Opportunities for funding:

- Increased donor requirements with regard PSEA/safeguarding
- Advocacy to donors concerning PSEA funding, Incl. through putting PSEA related costs systematically into your project proposals/funding applications
- Free resources and support
- Embed as much as possible in activities budget, M&E budget, etc.
- Consider including a PSEA/safeguarding, capacity building, programme quality or similar result in your project results framework
- Include partners as co-applicants to fund their own PSEA framework (i.e. through human resources, etc.)
- Facilitator's guide, videos, notes, games, etc. - many UN focused tools



## FULL LIST OF RESOURCES AND REFERENCE DOCUMENTS OUTLINED ABOVE

- [↪ Introducing Clear Global PSEA glossary: 208 terms, in 32 languages to support contextualisation with local partners](#)
- [↪ Strengthening Partners in Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(CRS\), incl. HO 9.1 Checklist for implementing PSEA with partners, suppliers and contractors \(p.162\) and HO 9.2 Examples of PSEA clauses in contractual agreements \(p.164\)](#)
- [↪ Digna PSEA Organizational Assessment Tool](#)
- [↪ Sexual exploitation and abuse in international assistance - Definitions and Canada's commitments](#)
- [↪ IASC Learning Package on Protection from Sexual Misconduct for UN partner organizations – Facilitator’s guide, videos, notes, games, etc. - many UN focused tools](#)
- [↪ Safeguarding \(or SEAH\) risk assessment and management tool in emergencies – includes an Emergency Risk Assessment Tool and Guidance \[↪\]\(#\) and the RSH Safeguarding Risk Register \[↪\]\(#\), of particular interest to partnerships: section 3. Partnerships](#)
- [↪ How-To Note: How to carry out a safeguarding risk assessment - For CSOs in humanitarian or development settings – by the RSH Available in English, French, Arabic and Swahili](#)
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- [↪ RSH - How to Design and Manage Community Based Complaints Mechanisms \(CBCM\)](#)
- [↪ A Safe programming training package \(SRH\)](#)



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