

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (PSEAH)

Overview

IOM's mandate spans the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Its global workforce (18,934 staff and over 5,600 affiliated staff¹), many of whom directly provide services and assistance to migrants and host communities, operate in 590 offices across 171 countries, and represent a significant proportion of the United Nations' (UN) operational footprint.

Sexual misconduct by aid workers is a grave violation of individual rights and directly contradicts the principles upon which humanitarian action is based. It harms the people we are obligated to protect and jeopardizes the credibility of our assistance work.

Even one incident of sexual misconduct can undermine the work of the entire humanitarian community. The abuse and exploitation of beneficiaries is a global concern, one that the entire humanitarian community – including IOM – has committed to fight. This commitment requires all staff, related personnel and partners to be involved and take action to protect those we are meant to serve.

As the first ever Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Champion, IOM has been a leader in addressing collective PSEA action since 2011. During the same time period, it also strengthened its internal approach to not only Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse but also Protection from Sexual Harassment (PSEAH) and in 2022 a dedicated PSEAH Unit was established within the Office of the Director General (now called the Executive Office).

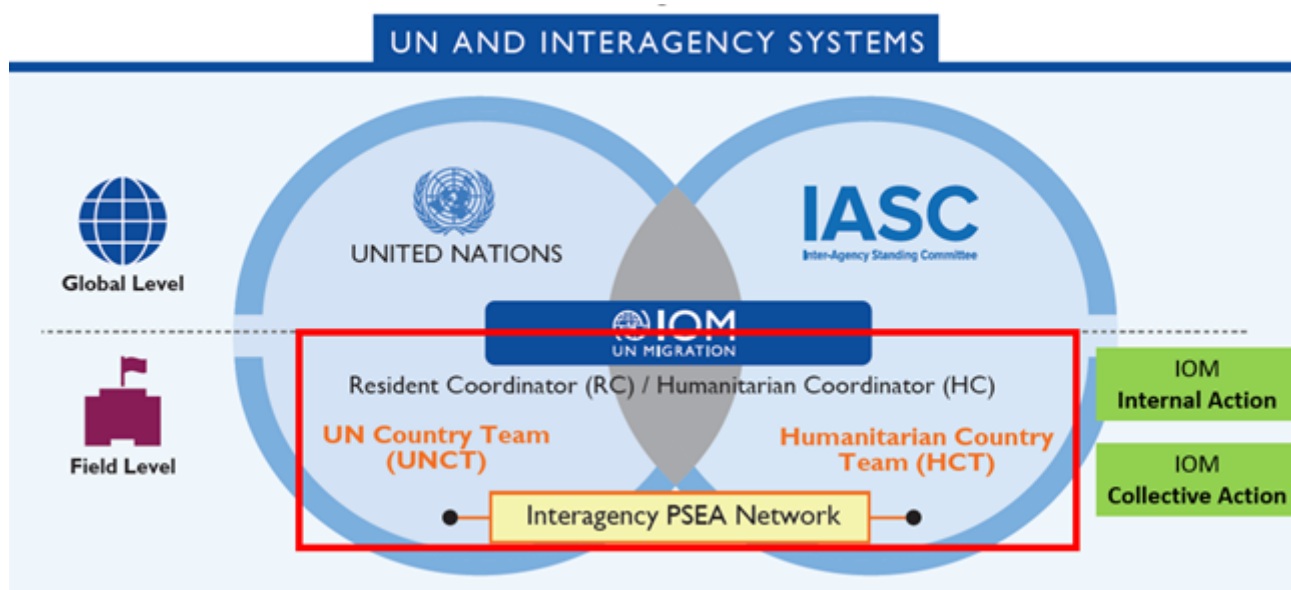
Key Points

- IOM has a policy of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by IOM staff members and the employees or any other persons engaged and controlled by IOM Contractors.
- Sexual exploitation means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power differential, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
- Sexual abuse means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.
- All IOM staff members are required to take the mandatory IOM PSEA Awareness-Raising Training.
- All IOM staff members have a duty to report in good faith any SEA allegations, concerns or suspicions, or retaliation related to SEA through the We Are All In reporting platform.
- SEA of affected populations constitutes gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action, including summary dismissal and referral for criminal prosecution, where appropriate.

Description

How does IOM engage on PSEAH at the global and field levels?

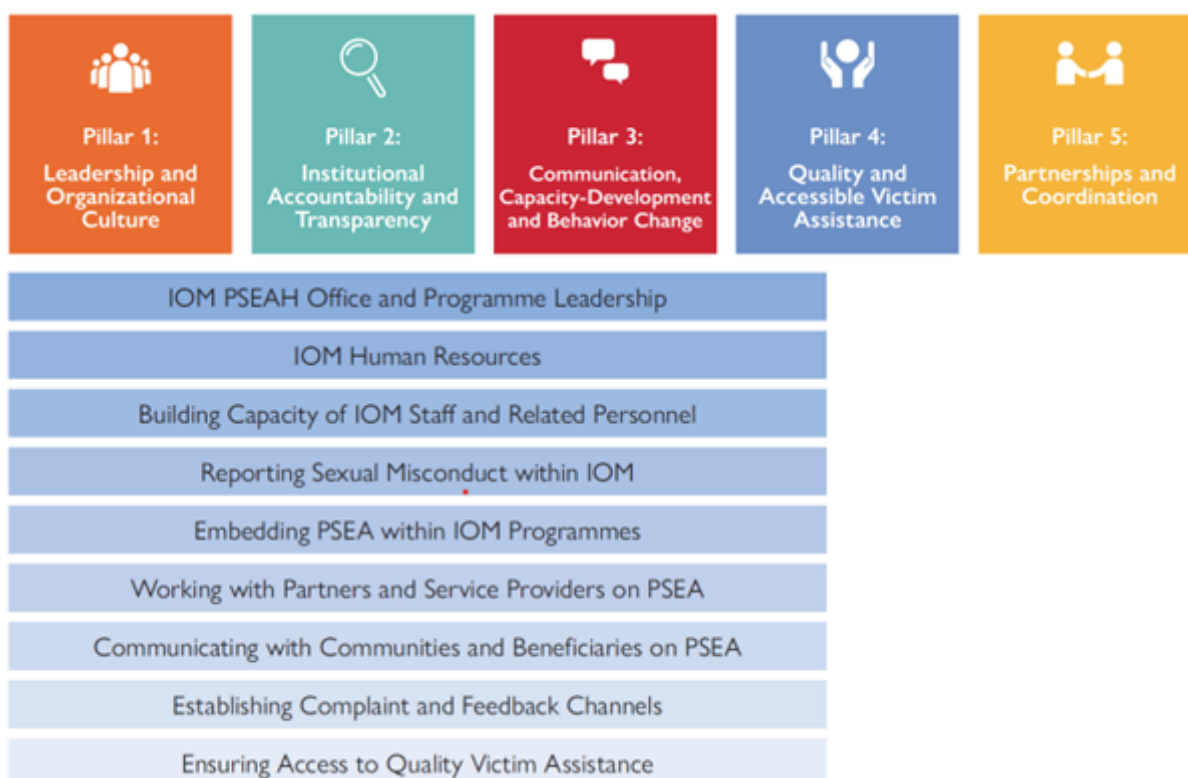
IOM is part of the UN and IASC systems, actively working on PSEAH. At the field (or country) level, IOM participates in both the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), both of which prioritize PSEAH, and where an inter-agency PSEA Network or Task Force exists, IOM should be an active member. Within the field, IOM has two roles: a) internal IOM action; and b) collective action.²



What does PSEAH mean in IOM?

PSEAH remains a key priority at the highest level within IOM and the Organization has continually demonstrated over the past decade, its strong commitment to addressing PSEAH both internally and collectively through the IASC and the UN system.

IOM's PSEAH approach focuses on five strategic pillars and nine operational areas.



Translating policy into practice is the driving force behind IOM's PSEAH strategic approach and in 2022, the IOM [PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#) was launched globally to provide IOM staff, at all levels, with practical actions and guidance to strengthen PSEAH efforts within IOM offices, programmes and projects, as well as amongst partners, communities, and affected individuals. The Toolkit covers each of the nine operational areas outlined above, providing concrete actions, tips and tools, best practices and useful resources.

What is the difference between Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment?

In summary:

- **Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse** links primarily to acts of SEA committed by **IOM (or partners) staff against beneficiaries or the affected population**
- **Sexual Harassment** links primarily to acts commitment by **staff against other staff**

The below chart shows the differences, including who, what, reporting requirement, as well as examples of the different types of behaviors for each category of sexual misconduct – whether it is sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment.

DEFINITIONS	Sexual Exploitation (SE)	Sexual Abuse (SA)	Sexual Harassment (SH)
Who?	IOM/Partner -> Beneficiary	IOM/Partner -> Beneficiary	IOM/Partner -> IOM/Partner
What?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse of vulnerability, differential power, or trust • Victim's sexual activity generates benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical intrusion of a sexual nature • Use of force or coercion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcome advance or conduct of a sexual nature • Creates an intimidating environment or becomes a condition of employment
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory to report • Victim does not have to participate in the investigation (their choice) to receive services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory to report • Victim does not have to participate in the investigation (their choice) to receive services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting optional. • Victim to decide if they want to report to OIG / a formal investigation with OIG. • Victim can also seek support from Ombudsperson and Staff Welfare
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering money, gifts or a job in exchange for sex • Withholding due services or blackmailing for sex • Hiring sex workers • Threats of sexual exploitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwanted kissing, touching, grabbing or rubbing • Threats of an unwanted sexual act • Raping or attempted rape • Any sexual activity with a child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touching, kissing or speaking inappropriately to a colleague at work • Attempted or actual sexual assault • Raping or attempted rape

IOM staff members engaged in emergency and humanitarian operations are often in close or direct contact with some of the most vulnerable populations, and therefore should be particularly aware of IOM's Standards of Conduct ([IN/15 Rev. 1](#)) and IOM's PSEA Policy ([IN/234](#)). In addition to IOM's Standards of Conduct, sexual harassment is also covered under the Policy for a Respectful Working Environment: Addressing i) discrimination; ii) harassment, including sexual harassment; and iii) abuse of authority ([IN/90 Rev. 1](#)).

It is important to highlight that the focus within the IOM Emergency Manual is primarily on PSEA rather than Sexual Harassment. For more information on Sexual Harassment, please contact the IOM PSEAH Unit (PSEA-SH@iom.int).

What are the first steps to take to address PSEA within an emergency?

Embedding PSEA within humanitarian, stabilization and development programming is no longer a choice but a necessity.

Refer to these simple PSEA “start-up” actions to know where to begin. Please note that the below list is not exhaustive. It is not meant to provide information on all the required PSEA actions. For more information, visit the [IOM PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#).

STEP 1: DEDICATED (100%) PSEA STAFF MUST BE INTEGRATED WITHIN ANY EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ensure that at least one dedicated PSEA Officer is recruited to support the emergency response.

Contact PSEA-SH@iom.int to obtain a copy of the already graded Terms of References (ToRs) available across a range of grades (G6 to NO-D levels and P1 to P4 levels). As an interim measure, a PSEA Focal Point who has the technical capacity to support and embed PSEA within IOM programming, projects, and operations could support before a dedicated PSEA Officer is recruited.

See **Section A2: IOM Human Resources (linked to PSEAH)** of the IOM [PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#) for more helpful information on other HR actions that can be taken.

STEP 2: PSEA LEADERSHIP - MESSAGING ON PSEA: THE TONE STARTS FROM THE TOP!

Ensure that CoM/HoO and relevant Emergency Coordinator reinforce the importance of PSEA and embedding within the emergency response, particularly with IOM Project Managers, Project Development Officers, M&E Officers, Sector Leads, Resource Management and other key staff, to reinforce that PSEA is a priority.

This is a key step to ensure that the tone starts from the top!

For more information on being a leader on PSEA, see **Section A1: IOM PSEAH Country/Programme Leadership** of the IOM [PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#).

STEP 3: KNOW HOW TO REPORT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Ensure that all IOM staff and affiliate personnel know where and how to report (allegations of sexual misconduct, even rumors, must be reported immediately).

- Through the weareallin.iom.int reporting platform
- By sending an email to OIGIntake@iom.int
- By clicking on the yellow Report Misconduct button at the IOM intranet
- For issues related to retaliation, contact the Ethics and Conduct Office (ECO@iom.int)
- For counselling or staff welfare issues related to IOM staff, contact the Staff Welfare Office (SWO@iom.int)

Senior leadership must continue to remind all IOM staff of their reporting obligation (even rumors!) during meetings, through emails, through audio and visual materials, and at other opportunities.



Important points linked to reporting!

- Do not do any fact-finding or investigations. Your role is to report!
- At the same time the report is made, ensure that the victim has access to assistance. Do not wait for the outcome of an investigation to link the victim to assistance services. See **Step 7: Victim Assistance Referral Pathways (where to refer victims for assistance)** and **Step 8: What do if someone reports a case of sexual misconduct to you** below on how to do this safely and carefully.

For more information on reporting misconduct in IOM, see **Section A4: Reporting Incidents of Sexual Misconduct within IOM** within the IOM [PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#).

STEP 4: IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON PSEA FOR NEW IOM STAFF AND THOSE ON SHORT TERM ASSIGNMENTS (STA) OR TRAVEL ON DUTY (TDY)

Using the IOM template, available on [Annex K: Welcome to IOM – PSEA Information Sheet](#) within the IOM [PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#), amend with country information and distribute to all IOM staff, those on TDY or STA so they are informed on PSEA, prohibited behaviors, how to enroll in the IOM PSEA trainings, and where to report allegations (including rumors) of sexual misconduct.

For more information on communicating with staff, please contact PSEA-SH@iom.int.

STEP 5: ALL NEW RECRUITS MUST BE CLEARED THROUGH UN CLEAR CHECK

Ensure that when recruiting new IOM staff or consultants, the Human Resources (HR) Unit within country systematically checks names through the mandatory, *UN Clear Check* prior to hiring. IOM HR staff will know how to action.

UN Clear Check is a protection measure to avoid hiring new staff who have previously committed sexual misconduct.

For more information on how HR can support other PSEA actions, see **Section A2: IOM Human Resources (linked to PSEAH)** of the IOM [PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#).

STEP 6: IOM'S MANDATORY PSEA TRAINING AND HOW TO ENROL

Review PSEA training completion and compliance rates amongst staff or affiliate personnel. The below PSEA trainings are mandatory within IOM:

- **IOM PSEA training (face-to-face or webinar):** must be taken every three years.
- **IOM PSEA micro-modules (online):** must be taken every year.

Implementing partner staff, third party contracted staff, consultants, interns, UNVs should also be included in IOM PSEA training. Links are available below.

IOM PSEA FACE-TO-FACE WEBINAR TRAINING

- *Internal IOM staff register for the webinar training at the I-Learn linked here: [PSEA Webinar for IOM staff](#)*
- *External partner staff, consultants, interns, UNVs, and other personnel need to register at E-Campus link here: [PSEA Webinar for consultants, interns, UNVs, partner staff](#)*

IOM PSEA ONLINE MICRO-MODULES

- *Internal IOM staff register for the micro-modules at the I-Learn link here: [English, French, Spanish](#)*
- *External partner staff, consultants, interns, UNVs, and other personnel need to register at E-Campus link here: [English, French, Spanish](#) Enrollment key/code: *PSEAMM-IOM-2022**

For more information on IOM PSEA trainings, consult **Section A3: Building PSEAH Capacity of IOM Staff and Related Personnel** or contact PSEA-SH@iom.int. You can also access more information on IOM mandatory PSEA trainings on [I-Learn](#) (for internal IOM staff) or [E-Campus](#) (for externals).

To receive an updated list of staff, consultants, interns and other personnel who have completed (or not completed) the PSEA mandatory training, contact PSEA-SH@iom.int.

STEP 7: VICTIM ASSISTANCE REFERRAL PATHWAYS (WHERE TO REFER VICTIMS FOR ASSISTANCE)

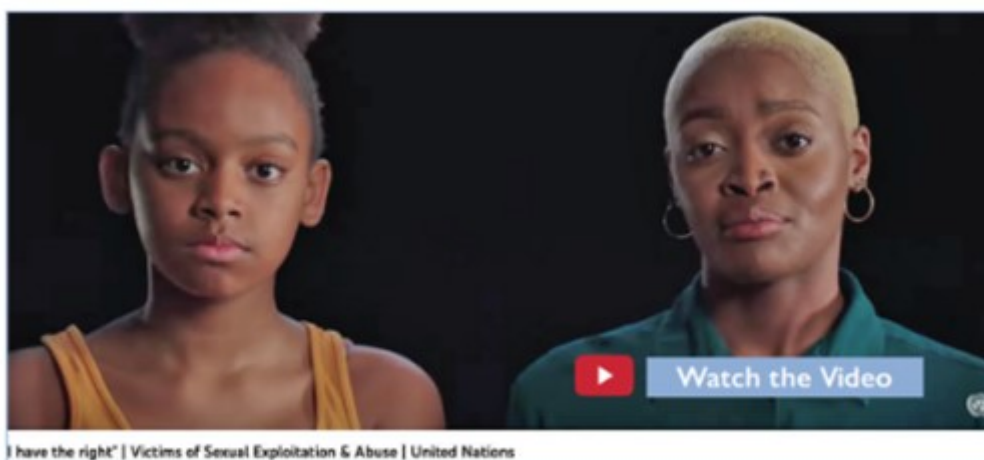
Obtain a copy of the Victim Assistance pathway (to know where to refer victims of SEA for assistance services) if one has been developed within country by reaching out to a GBV or protection practitioner within IOM or through the Gender-based Violence (GBV) cluster/working group.

When linking victims of sexual exploitation and abuse with assistance services, a person experienced in GBV preferably, or Child

Protection, Protection or PSEA should be involved. Do not provide the victim with assistance on your own unless you are an experienced GBV expert or qualified Protection or PSEA staff. Engaging with a victim in a way that prioritizes rights, needs, wishes and dignity; protects from retaliation, traumatization and discrimination; and keeps them informed and supported is central to a victim-centered approach.

If there are no specialized services available in your area, plan in advance with GBV, Child Protection and interagency PSEA Network specialists how survivors will be connected to services elsewhere or supported through remote services. Consider whether IOM programming, or the programming of other organizations, could meet any of the survivor's immediate basic needs and agree upon procedures for referral.

Where no Victim Assistance pathway exists or for more information on victim assistance, visit **Section B4: Ensuring access of quality victim assistance (cases of SEA)** of the IOM [PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#) or contact PSEA-SH@iom.int or IOM's GBV Unit GBVsupport@iom.int. See also [I Have the Right](#), a UN System-wide Training Module on the Rights and Dignity of Victims of SEA, which IOM helped develop.



Consider whether IOM programming, or the programming of other organizations, could meet any of the survivor's immediate basic needs and agree upon procedures for referral. Where no Victim Assistance pathway exists or for more information on victim assistance, visit **Section B4: Ensuring access of quality victim assistance (cases of SEA)** of the IOM [PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#) or contact PSEA-SH@iom.int or IOM's GBV Unit GBVsupport@iom.int. See also [I Have the Right](#), a UN System-wide Training Module on the Rights and Dignity of Victims of SEA, which IOM helped develop.

STEP 8: WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE REPORTS A CASE OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT TO YOU

Ensure that all IOM staff, affiliate staff and partners know what to do when a beneficiary or someone from the affected population reports sexual exploitation and abuse to them.

- Referral for victim assistance should occur **as soon as possible** after a victim comes forward, upon the receipt of a complaint, or when information about SEA becomes known through other means.
- The safety and basic needs of the victim must be prioritized within any SEA response. Check if you are in a safe location. **Be prepared.** Inform yourself about the services available in your area ahead of time.
- Ask if the survivor **consents** to sharing their personal identifying information for the report. Explain that this information will be shared confidentially with investigators so that the organization can try to prevent this from happening in the future. Tell them they are not obliged to participate in the investigation if they don't want to. If they choose to be involved in the investigation, they can withdraw their participation at any time.
- Confirm that they are entitled to assistance, **whether or not they decide to cooperate with an investigation.** For children too young to understand, this information should be shared with their parent(s), legal guardian or primary caregiver (except when engaging with parent(s) or guardian would put the child at risk).
- Immediately report IOM's Office of Inspector General through the IOM [We Are All In](#) platform or by sending an email to OIGIntake@iom.int. There is an obligation to report all SEA allegations, even rumors, in good faith.

- At the same time a report is made, ensure that the victim has access to assistance. Do not wait for the outcome of an investigation to link the victim to assistance services!

Here are some useful videos to help you get started on understanding a victim's perspective and IOM's role in the process.

- **Victim's Perspective video - Under the Surface** - [EN](#), [ES](#), [FR](#)
- **Duty of Care video - Do No Harm** - [EN](#), [ES](#), [FR](#)
- [I Have the Right](#), a UN System-wide Training Module on the Rights and Dignity of Victims of SEAH.

For more information, see **Box E: How should I respond to disclosures of an SEA Incident in the Field?** and **Section B4: Ensuring access of Quality Victim Assistance (cases of SEA)** and **Section A4: Reporting Incidents of Sexual Misconduct within IOM** of the IOM [PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#).

STEP 9: CONDUCT A RISK ASSESSMENT

Conduct a rapid risk assessment on sexual exploitation and abuse or embed SEA risk questions within the overall risk assessment. Conducting a risk assessment will enable mitigation measures to be identified and put in place within IOM programmes and projects.

Click [here](#) to access questions to help in identifying the risk of SEA (based on country context, operational environment, IOM country presence, IOM staffing, and other risk factors).

For more information on conducting risk assessments on SEA, see Sections A1: IOM PSEAH Country/Programme Leadership; Box B: What is a Programme/Project-Level SEA Risk Assessment?; Box C: Guidance for Engaging with Communities to Collect Information on PSEA and SEA Risks; Box I: Guiding Questions to understand SEA Risk and/or Risk Mitigation Measures in Place to Prevent SEA within the IOM PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist.

STEP 10: EMBED PSEA IN PROPOSALS AND BUDGETS

Ensure that PSEA is part and parcel of any project being developed and budgeted accordingly (both PSEA dedicated staff should be included in budgets, as well as PSEA operational costs to be able to deliver on PSEA) Examples of IOM Concept Notes and Proposals that include PSEA can be found here:

- [ANNEX E - IOM PSEA Proposal Ideas](#)
- [ANNEX H1 - IOM Concept Note on PSEA, Example 1](#)
- [ANNEX H2 - Mainstreaming PSEA, proposal, Example 2](#)
- [ANNEX H3 - Mainstreaming PSEA, Proposal, Example 3](#)
- [ANNEX H4 - Mainstreaming PSEA, Proposal, Example 4](#)

For more information on embedding PSEA in programming, as well as examples, please click on **Section A5: Embedding PSEA within the Programme/Project Cycle** of the IOM [PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#).

For more information on embedding PSEA within programming and budgets, contact PSEA-SH@iom.int.

STEP 11: BE PART OF THE INTERAGENCY PSEA NETWORK / TASKFORCE

Find out whether an interagency PSEA Network or Task Force exists in-country and if so, ensure that IOM is represented and actively participates within the Network/Task Force, contributing to inter-agency PSEA action.

For more information of the role of the IASC in supporting collective action on PSEA, visit the collective IASC PSEA page [here](#).

For more information on interagency PSEA Networks, please contact PSEA-CBCM@iom.int.

STEP 12: ESTABLISH AND STRENGTHEN COMPLAINT CHANNELS FOR BENEFICIARIES TO REPORT

Ensure that beneficiaries and affected populations have access to safe and effective reporting channels and know how to report SEA. Beneficiaries and the affected populations need a way to report!

For information on establishing reporting channels within IOM projects/programmes, visit **Section B3: SECTION B30 Establishing and Strengthening Complaints and Feedback Channels** or **Section B3 of IOM PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist** or contact IOM's Accountability to Affected Populations Unit (AAP@iom.int). Alternatively, contact the IOM PSEAH Unit (PSEA-SH@iom.int).

For more information of the role of the IASC in supporting collective action on PSEA, visit the collective IASC PSEA page here or contact PSEA-CBCM@iom.int.

STEP 13: PSEA VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION MATERIALS FOR IOM STAFF, PARTNERS AND BENEFICIARIES

Ensure that there are visibility materials on PSEA prominently displayed within IOM or partner offices, centers, or other operational sites highlighting what SEA is and how to report.

For more information on creating visibility materials or using existing visibility materials on PSEA, visit **Section A3: Building PSEAH Capacity of IOM Staff and Related Personnel** or **B2: Communicating and Increasing awareness on PSEA within the Affected Communities and Amongst Migrants and Beneficiaries** of the IOM [PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#).

For PSEA visibility materials for frontline humanitarian workers in 22 languages, visit the IASC website "PSEA at the Frontline: Together We Say No" [at this link](#).

For more information on PSEA communication materials, please contact PSEA-SH@iom.int.

STEP 14: HOW TO BUILD THE CAPACITY OF PARTNERS ON PSEA

Ensure the capacity of PSEA within implementing partners is strengthened and built into project proposals and budgets.

Here are a few tools to get you started:

- [1a - IOM - Partner PSEA Capacity Assessment](#): to conduct a partner PSEA capacity assessment and identify gaps.
- [1b - IOM - Partner PSEA Capacity Development Plan](#): used to develop a capacity workplan to strengthen the partner.
- [1c - Partner "Code of Conduct" template](#): can be adapted and used by partners.

For more information and ideas on strengthening PSEA within implementing partners, see **Section B1: Working with Implementing Partners, Government Partners and Other Service Providers** of the IOM [PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist](#).

STEP 15: WHAT IF A MEDIA ENQUIRY IS RECEIVED OR INFORMATION ON A PARTICULAR CASE IS REQUESTED?

Do **NOT** answer any media enquiries on PSEAH or case information without consulting HQ first.

Do **NOT** share case information.

For media enquiries, please contact the IOM Spokesperson in HQ (Safa Msheli) who will coordinate a response, copying Dyane Epstein (IOM PSEAH Unit). For case information requests, please coordinate with Dyane Epstein (IOM PSEAH Unit).

Links

- [We Are All In](#)

- [IOM Policy and Procedures for Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(IN/234\)](#)
- [IN/234 \(FR\)](#)
- [IN/234 \(ES\)](#)
- [Link to all relevant training materials](#)
- [Link to all relevant communication materials](#)
- [IOM Standards of Conduct \(IN/15 Rev. 1\)](#)
- [IN/15 Rev. 1 \(FR\)](#)
- [IN/15 Rev. 1 \(ES\)](#)
- [IOM Policy for a Respectful Workplace Environment \(IN/90 Rev. 1\)](#)
- [IN/90 \(FR\)](#)
- [IN/90 \(ES\)](#)
- [IN/90 \(AR\)](#)
- [IOM Data Protection Principles \(IN/138\)](#)
- [IOM Ethics and Conduct Office Intranet Site](#)
- [IOM Office of the Inspector General Intranet Site](#)
- [IOM Office of the Ombudsperson Intranet Site](#)
- [IOM Staff Welfare Site](#)
- [IOM PSEAH Intranet Site](#)
- [Inter-Agency Standing Committee PSEA Site](#)

References and Tools

- [IOM Policy and Procedures for PSEA](#)
- [IOM Standards of Conduct](#)
- [IOM Emergency Manual PSEAH \(PDF Version\)](#)

Other Entries in this Topic

- [Inter-Agency Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\)](#)

Contacts

For more information on PSEAH, contact: psea-sh@iom.int

For more information on reporting, contact the Office of the Inspector General (OIG): oigintake@iom.int

For more information on retaliation, contact the Ethics and Conduct Office (ECO): eco@iom.int

For staff welfare support, contact the Staff Welfare Office (SWO): swo@iom.int

For more on inter-agency PSEA, contact: PSEA-CBCM@iom.int

For the link to IOM's PSEAH Toolkit and Checklist, contact: psea-sh@iom.int

Document last updated: Jan 2024