



**United Nations**

**Review of policies and practices to prevent  
and respond to sexual exploitation and  
abuse in the United Nations system  
organizations (expanded report)**

**Report of the Joint Inspection Unit**

**Prepared by Eileen A. Cronin and Conrod Hunte**





# **Review of policies and practices to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations system organizations (expanded report)**

**Report of the Joint Inspection Unit**

**Prepared by Eileen A. Cronin and Conrod Hunte**



United Nations • New York, 2025

**Project team**

Eileen A. Cronin, Inspector

Conrod Hunte, Inspector

Kamolmas Jaiyen, Evaluation and Inspection Officer

Alexandra Samoulada, Evaluation and Inspection Officer

Eleyeba Bricks, Research Assistant

Diane Goodman, Expert Consultant

Ursula Mosqueira, Research Consultant

**Research interns**

Takayuki Kondo

Chan Kyu Choi

Ranggi Aprilianzah

Sinead Balloch

Sijia Yao

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Abbreviation and acronyms .....	v
Glossary of key terms .....	viii
I. Introduction .....	1
A. Rationale .....	1
B. Objectives and scope .....	1
C. Methodology .....	2
D. About the report .....	4
E. Context .....	4
II. Analysis of policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and related frameworks in Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations .....	12
A. Policies at Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations .....	12
B. Gaps in policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse .....	18
C. A path forward: establishing a comprehensive sexual misconduct policy .....	23
D. Conclusion .....	24
III. Inter-agency coordination for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse .....	26
A. Inter-agency coordination mechanisms .....	26
B. System-wide data collection and reporting on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse .....	31
C. Access to sexual exploitation and abuse data and transparency with respect to allegations .....	33
D. Conclusion .....	35
IV. Implementing strategies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and the commitment of leadership .....	36
A. Accountability and capacities at the organizational level .....	36
B. Accountability and capacities in the field .....	42
C. Conclusion .....	46
V. Addressing the conduct of United Nations system personnel through training, outreach and change management initiatives .....	47
A. Training and awareness-raising with respect to policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse for United Nations personnel .....	47
B. Beyond mandatory training: innovative prevention strategies addressing the root causes of sexual exploitation and abuse .....	53
C. Conclusion .....	54
VI. Safe recruitment practices: screening and vetting personnel for sexual misconduct .....	55
A. ClearCheck: the system-wide screening database on sexual misconduct .....	55
B. Beyond ClearCheck .....	61

C.	Conclusion . . . . .	65
VII.	Assessments of risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and mitigation measures . . . . .	65
A.	Risk assessments at the organizational level . . . . .	65
B.	Risk assessments in the field . . . . .	67
C.	Screening and vetting processes for implementing partners and commercial vendors . . .	71
D.	Conclusion . . . . .	77
VIII.	Responding to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse . . . . .	78
A.	Mechanisms for reporting and handling complaints at participating organizations . . . . .	78
B.	Investigating allegations . . . . .	81
C.	Administrative and disciplinary measures for substantiated allegations . . . . .	88
D.	Assistance to victims . . . . .	93
E.	Conclusion . . . . .	98
IX.	Engagement with governing bodies and Member States on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse . . . . .	98
A.	Coverage of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse by governing and legislative bodies . . . . .	98
B.	Criminal referrals to national authorities . . . . .	101
C.	Member States: United Nations peacekeeping and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse . . . . .	104
D.	Conclusion . . . . .	107
Annexes		
I.	Key documents and their origins in the development of policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations . . . . .	108
II.	Policy documents establishing the legal basis for administrative and disciplinary actions against United Nations personnel involved in sexual exploitation and abuse . . . . .	112
III.	Aggregated data on sexual harassment allegations from the annual sexual harassment surveys of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination . . . . .	123
IV.	Main functional roles in coordinating inter-agency work related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse globally across the United Nations system . . . . .	125
V.	Main functional roles in coordinating the work related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level within Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations . .	129
VI.	Governance and procedures for ClearCheck at Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations . . . . .	141
VII.	ClearCheck coverage and data transactions by Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations . . . . .	146
VIII.	List of United Nations system administrative tribunal judgments on 34 sexual misconduct cases (2023–2024) . . . . .	151
IX.	Reporting practices on disciplinary measures at Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations . . . . .	154
X.	List of formal and informal recommendations . . . . .	162

---

## Abbreviations and acronyms

BINUH	United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti
CAPSEAH	Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment
CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILOAT	International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
iReport	iReport SEA Tracker
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
LICA	Limited in-country activities
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MOPAN	Multilateral Performance Network
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIOS	United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services
OSC-SEA	Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
OVRA	Office of Victims' Rights Advocate
PRS	Prevention of and response to sexual misconduct

---

PSEA	Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
PSEACap	Inter-Agency Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Capacity Project
PSEAH	Protection from sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment
RB	Regular budget
SEA	Sexual exploitation and abuse
SEAH	Sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNAMID	African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNAT	United Nations Appeal Tribunal
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDT	United Nations Dispute Tribunal
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIOGBIS	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSOS	United Nations Support Office in Somalia
UN Tourism	World Tourism Organization
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UPU	Universal Postal Union



---

WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
XB	Extrabudgetary

---

## Glossary of key terms

Affiliate personnel	Any individual engaged by a United Nations system organization to perform work or services for a limited period of time or for a period of time tied to a specific project, and whose contractual relationship is not governed by a letter of appointment subject to the staff regulations and rules of the respective organization. (Source: JIU review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations.)
Implementing partner	Entity responsible and accountable for ensuring proper use of resources provided by a United Nations agency and the implementation and management of the intended programme as defined in the work plan. Implementing partners may include – but are not limited to – government institutions, intergovernmental organizations, eligible civil society organizations and United Nations agencies. (Source: United Nations Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.)
Sexual abuse	Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. (Source: <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> .)
Sexual exploitation	Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. (Source: <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> .)
Sexual harassment	Any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation. Sexual harassment may involve any conduct of a verbal, non-verbal or physical nature, including written and electronic communications, and may occur between persons of the same or different genders. (Source: UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment.)
Victim	<p>An individual, whose claims that he or she has been sexually exploited or abused by United Nations staff or affiliate personnel have been established through a United Nations administrative process or Member States' processes, as appropriate. (Source: United Nations Glossary on Exploitation and Abuse.)</p> <p>The term “victim” is used in United Nations treaties, declarations, most resolutions, policies and guidance documents. The authors acknowledge that the term “survivor” is used in certain contexts, such as the psychological and social support sectors, as it implies resilience. However, in the interest of consistency, the review uses the term “victim” throughout.</p>
Victim-centred approach	<p>The victim-centred approach puts the rights and dignity of victims, including their well-being and safety, at the forefront of all efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, regardless of the affiliation of the alleged perpetrator.</p> <p>The victim-centred approach is founded on the rights of victims and a set of guiding principles. It refers to a systematic way of engaging with victims, from the moment that allegations are known and in every subsequent interaction. It requires the empathetic, individualized, holistic delivery of continuous and reliable services in a non-judgmental and non-discriminatory manner. (Source: Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate)</p>

# I. Introduction

## A. Rationale

1. A review of policies and practices to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in United Nations system organizations was included in the 2024 programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). The review responds to successive requests made by participating organizations in recent years. The review was carried out within the scope of the JIU Strategic Framework for 2020–2029, with a particular focus on the following thematic areas: (a) accountability and oversight functions and systems of organizations, as well as the functions for administration of justice and for ethics and integrity; (b) management and administrative practices; and (c) methods and governance arrangements and mechanisms, as well as inter-agency coordination.

2. This is the first time the JIU has conducted a comprehensive review focused specifically on this topic. However, aspects related to SEA have been addressed in part in previous JIU reviews, including those on the investigations function, protection of whistleblowers, the ethics function and implementing partners.<sup>1</sup>

3. The review was conducted at a time when key system-wide policy documents related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) were undergoing revision, most notably the Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse ([ST/SGB/2003/13](#), referred to hereinafter as “the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin”) and the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). Additionally, the Secretary-General's 2017 initiative introducing a new approach to PSEA (see [A/71/818](#) and [A/71/818/Corr.1](#)) has since shaped policy development across JIU participating organizations. Accordingly, the findings and recommendations from the present review are well-timed to inform the ongoing revisions of these foundational documents and provide evidence to support participating organizations in strengthening their efforts in this area.

## B. Objectives and scope

4. The overarching objective of the present review is to assess the relevance and effectiveness of policies related to PSEA and their implementation by JIU participating organizations in preventing and responding to SEA, as well as to examine inter-agency coordination mechanisms that support a system-wide harmonization in this area. The specific objectives of the review are to:

(a) Examine the relevance and effectiveness of regulatory and policy frameworks related to PSEA that enable the organizations to hold their staff and associated personnel accountable for SEA;

(b) Analyse existing system-wide and inter-agency coordination mechanisms that promote coherent policies, strategies and practices related to PSEA;

<sup>1</sup> Past JIU reviews that contained findings and recommendations related to SEA include, inter alia, the review of safety and security in the United Nations system ([JIU/REP/2016/9](#)), the review of whistle-blower policies and practices in United Nations system organizations ([JIU/REP/2018/4](#)), the review of the state of the investigation function ([JIU/REP/2020/1](#)), the review of the management of implementing partners in United Nations system organizations ([JIU/REP/2021/4](#)), the review of the ethics function in the United Nations system ([JIU/REP/2021/5](#)), and the review of accountability frameworks in the United Nations system organizations ([JIU/REP/2023/3](#)).

(c) Explore the relevance and effectiveness of practices aimed at preventing and responding to SEA, including the provision of assistance to SEA victims, across various United Nations operations and contexts;

(d) Assess the integration of a victim-centred approach in PSEA efforts;

(e) Highlight good practices and lessons learned, as well as identify challenges and bottlenecks, to support ongoing efforts to strengthen the work of JIU participating organizations in this area.

5. The review focuses on the policies and practices of JIU participating organizations related to SEA and does not cover sexual harassment, as the two issues are addressed through separate United Nations system-wide workstreams and distinct approaches to the issues are followed in practice. The focus on SEA also allowed for a more in-depth analysis within the available time and resources. However, given that sexual harassment and SEA are by nature closely related, particularly in terms of personnel misconduct and abuse of power for sexual purposes, relevant information on sexual harassment was also considered as part of the evidence base.

6. The review covers all 28 JIU participating organizations, regardless of the number of SEA allegations reported at any given organization. It considers the differing levels of SEA risk across organizations, which is shaped by factors such as operational context, prevention capacity and organizational culture.

7. The scope covers SEA committed by anyone employed by or affiliated with the United Nations, including staff, affiliate personnel (e.g. consultants, volunteers, interns and experts), civilian and uniformed personnel at peacekeeping operations and special political missions, and personnel of implementing partners and vendors.

8. Although this is the first JIU review focused exclusively on SEA, the issue has been addressed within the United Nations system since the issuance of the 2003 Secretary-General's Bulletin. The present review focuses on developments from the 2017 launch of the Secretary-General's new approach for PSEA (see [A/71/818](#) and [A/71/818/Corr.1](#)) through 2023, with relevant developments from 2024 and 2025 included when data was available.

9. The review examines PSEA policies, mechanisms and practices rather than individual cases, though it analyses trends and aggregate data on the handling and outcomes of SEA allegations to inform its findings and recommendations.

## C. Methodology

10. In accordance with the JIU Norms and Standards and Internal Working Procedures, the present review employed a mix of qualitative and quantitative data-collection methods from diverse sources to ensure the consistency, validity and reliability of its findings. Although information provided by participating organizations, as well as insights obtained through interviews with relevant personnel and external stakeholders, could not always be independently verified, the team reviewed and triangulated the data to ensure internal consistency and plausibility, and systematically sought additional details or clarifications when needed.

11. The data and evidence used in preparing the present report were collected at various periods between January 2024 and 31 March 2025 using the following tools and methods:

- An extensive desk review and an in-depth analysis of relevant documentation including, among other sources, governing and/or legislative body resolutions, policies, procedures, reports, tools, guidance notes and decisions of United Nations system administrative tribunals related to sexual misconduct. Over 2,000 documents were examined.

- A corporate questionnaire was used to collect a broad range of data related to PSEA from the 28 JIU participating organizations. This includes information on policy and regulatory frameworks; leadership, roles and responsibilities; dedicated resources; engagement in and feedback on inter-agency coordination; practices for preventing SEA; responses to SEA including investigation and oversight and protection against retaliation; and enforcement of administrative and disciplinary measures. Additionally, specific data were provided on the number of SEA allegations received, including disaggregated data on the location of incidents (headquarters vs. field), the gender of alleged perpetrators and victims and the status of investigations.
- The Inspectors conducted 163 formal interviews with 311 officials of participating organizations and external stakeholders including implementing partners and peer organizations. They also attended relevant conferences to informally gather input from key entities.
- Case studies were undertaken to examine efforts to prevent and respond to SEA across development, humanitarian and peace contexts in 14 United Nations operations in Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Cyprus, Ecuador, Kenya, Lebanon, Mali, Nigeria, the Republic of Moldova, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine and Yemen. As part of the case studies, three sets of questionnaires were distributed, resulting in responses from 12 United Nations Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators, 13 inter-agency PSEA coordinators and 140 PSEA coordinators and focal points from JIU participating organizations in these locations. Field visits were carried out in the Central African Republic, the Republic of Moldova and Uganda. In addition to interviews, four focus-group discussions and one brainstorming session were organized, which included 126 participants from participating organizations and implementing partners.

12. For quality assurance purposes, in accordance with article 11.2 of the Statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the draft report underwent an internal peer review to test the recommendations against the collective wisdom of the Unit. The revised report was then shared with participating organizations for factual verification and to solicit comments on the findings, conclusions and recommendations. All feedback received was duly considered in finalizing the report; however, the authors bear sole responsibility for its content.

13. In fulfilling their professional and ethical obligations, the Inspectors were not subject to any external influence that could have affected their independence, fairness, neutrality or professional integrity during the planning, execution and drafting phases of the present report.

14. The Inspectors note a key limitation to the review: the lack of harmonization of SEA-related data across participating organizations, particularly in terms of how allegations are classified and disaggregated, and how the status and outcome of investigations are recorded. This limits the Inspectors' ability to present a fully accurate and comparable picture of SEA allegations and responses across participating organizations. It also reduces the reliability of cross-organizational analysis. Where feasible, the Inspectors cross-verified reported data with alternative sources and, in some cases, relied on proxy data to fill critical information gaps.

15. **Acknowledgements.** The Inspectors and the team wish to express their appreciation to all officials from JIU participating organizations and other United Nations system organizations who supported the preparation of this report, particularly those who coordinated or contributed to the questionnaires and data annexes and those who participated in interviews. The team also wishes to express their appreciation to representatives from the CHS Alliance, the Multilateral

Performance Network (MOPAN), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the University of Essex, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) for sharing their expertise and knowledge as well as the numerous representatives of non-governmental and community-based organizations who participated in interviews and focus groups with the team.

## **D. About the report**

16. There are two outputs resulting from the review: (a) the present report, which is the expanded version of the review and is available in English only; and (b) a concise report, issued under the symbol JIU/REP/2025/2, available in the six official languages of the United Nations, which contains the formal recommendations addressed to JIU participating organizations.

17. The present expanded report consists of nine chapters. Chapter I outlines the rationale, objectives and methodology of the review as well as an overview of SEA allegations reported in JIU participating organizations between 2017 and 2024. Chapter II presents key findings from the analysis of PSEA policies that underpin the regulatory and legal frameworks of organizations. Chapter III examines inter-agency coordination mechanisms and the administration of system-wide SEA allegation data. Chapters IV through VII address prevention-related findings, including accountability and capacity in respect of PSEA at the organizational and field levels, training and awareness efforts, safe recruitment practices and SEA risk assessments and mitigation measures. Chapter VIII focuses on SEA response measures, including complaint handling, investigations, administrative and disciplinary measures, and victim assistance. Chapter IX focuses on the roles and responsibilities of Member States and governing bodies in holding organizations accountable for PSEA. Findings related to the implementation of a victim-centred approach are integrated throughout the report. Good practices and lessons learned are highlighted across all thematic areas covered.

18. The review includes 15 formal recommendations, which are numbered and presented in bold. See annex I of the concise report ([JIU/REP/2025/2](#)) for actions to be taken by JIU participating organizations related to these recommendations. Key findings of the review are presented in italicized text. Informal recommendations appear in bold text. See annex X to the present report for a list of all recommendations resulting from the review.

## **E. Context**

### **1. Background on sexual exploitation and abuse and key, system-wide foundational policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations system**

19. SEA arises from power imbalances and gender inequality, wherein perpetrators exploit their authority for sexual gain. These dynamics are often exacerbated by additional factors such as racism, impunity (real or perceived) and social norms that tolerate or normalize sexual misconduct. Given the prevalence of such conditions across United Nations operational settings, SEA remains a risk that can, and has, occurred in all contexts.

20. United Nations system organizations work around the world, employing over 220,000 staff and affiliate personnel and engaging over 60,000 uniformed personnel

in peacekeeping operations and special political missions.<sup>2</sup> They also work closely with personnel from non-governmental and governmental implementing partners, as well as commercial vendors. While power imbalances are present across all operational contexts, they are particularly pronounced in settings involving direct engagement with vulnerable populations. As the data below demonstrate, SEA has occurred throughout the United Nations system, in both headquarters and field settings, across development, humanitarian and peace operations, and even within smaller, headquarters-based organizations.

21. SEA allegations and cases against United Nations personnel have been made known to the public since the 1990s and were first reported in respect of personnel in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Cambodia. Over the past 30 years, SEA allegations have been consistently reported and the United Nations has devised an array of system-wide measures and initiatives to prevent and respond to SEA, including policies, strategies, guidance, tools and inter-agency coordination mechanisms. These have been primarily spearheaded by the United Nations Secretariat and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Below is a brief description of these foundational policies and guidance documents. More details can be found in annex I. In-depth policy analysis is discussed in chapter II.

*The Secretary-General's bulletin issued in 2003 still serves as the primary policy governing protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations Secretariat, its funds and programmes and influences relevant policies of organizations in the United Nations system and beyond.*

22. The issuance of the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin was prompted by allegations of sexual exploitation of refugees in West Africa (see [A/57/465](#)). The bulletin explicitly states that acts of SEA constitute serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal. It also defines SEA and sets out applicable standards in relation to sexual activity with children and the exchange of assistance or favours for sex. The bulletin strongly discourages sexual relations with beneficiaries of assistance and outlines the duty to report SEA, as well as the obligation for managers to foster and uphold an environment that prevents SEA.

23. The provisions of the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin are applicable to all personnel of the United Nations Secretariat and its funds and programmes. These definitions and standards are widely referenced in nearly all PSEA policies across the United Nations system, as well as by organizations outside the United Nations. The bulletin is intended to be applied in tandem with the relevant United Nations staff regulations and rules on administrative actions and disciplinary measures.

24. Following SEA allegations perpetrated against children by non-United Nations international troops serving in a peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic, an independent review was conducted (see [A/71/99](#)), which provided the foundation for the 2017 report by the Secretary-General entitled, "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: a new approach" ([A/71/818](#) and [A/71/818/Corr.1](#)). In that report, the Secretary-General presented a PSEA strategy designed to address SEA system-wide through an integrated approach. The report

<sup>2</sup> According to the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination personnel statistics (<https://unsceb.org/human-resources-statistics>), as at 31 December 2023, the total number of United Nations system staff was 133,126. The JIU review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations established that, as at 31 December 2022, affiliate personnel accounted for 87,004 individuals. According to United Nations peacekeeping data (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data>), as at 31 January 2025, there were 69,7000 civilian and uniformed personnel in peace operations.

introduced a victim-centred approach and protocols for SEA prevention and called for proactive engagement with civil society and external partners, and enhancements to communication and transparency.

*The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse influences the policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse of United Nations entities working in the humanitarian context.*

25. Created in 1991, IASC – comprising United Nations system organizations, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations – is the United Nations system’s longest-standing and highest-level humanitarian coordination forum. Chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, “it brings together the executive heads of 19 organizations and consortia to formulate policy, set strategic priorities and mobilize resources in response to humanitarian crises”.<sup>3</sup>

26. In 2002, IASC first established its Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse to guide SEA prevention and response in humanitarian contexts, and their key elements were later incorporated into the 2003 Secretary-General’s bulletin. In 2019, the Principles were updated; Core Principle 4 was revised to explicitly indicate that sexual relations between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries based on improper use of rank or position are “prohibited” rather than “strongly discouraged”.<sup>4</sup>

*The International Civil Service Commission Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service provide guidance for ethical conduct and are a reference for administrative tribunals.*

27. The ICSC Standards of Conduct, in their paragraphs 42 to 44, provide ethical guidelines for the United Nations common system, including on the personal conduct of United Nations personnel. The ICSC Standards of Conduct provide a general guide and basis for the staff regulations and rules of a United Nations system organization.<sup>5</sup>

28. Regarding the conduct of personnel in their private life, in a 2024 judgment related to SEA, the United Nations Appeals Tribunal (UNAT) states that “the legal framework mandates staff members to respect the dignity and worth of every human person, uphold the highest standards of integrity, and conduct themselves in a manner befitting their status of international civil servants at all times, whether inside or outside the workplace”.<sup>6</sup> In this judgment, the Tribunal also notes that the United Nations staff regulations are an integral part of the Organization’s legal framework and establish the duty of civil servants, and it echoes the phrasing used in the 2003 Secretary-General’s bulletin by stating that “sexual exploitation and abuse constitutes serious misconduct”.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in a 2024 judgment, the United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) also references the code of conduct of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which is adapted from the ICSC Standards of Conduct and supports the case against the applicant.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/the-inter-agency-standing-committee>.

<sup>4</sup> The 2002 version is available at [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2019-01/iasc\\_six\\_core\\_principles\\_relating\\_to\\_sexual\\_exploitation\\_and\\_abuse\\_2002.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2019-01/iasc_six_core_principles_relating_to_sexual_exploitation_and_abuse_2002.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Interview with the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

<sup>6</sup> UNAT, *Makeen v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2024-UNAT-1461, para. 34.

<sup>7</sup> The judgment refers to United Nations staff regulations 1.2 (f) and 10.1 (b).

<sup>8</sup> UNDT, *Kavosh v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*. Judgment No. UNDT/2024/020. In paragraph 133, the Tribunal references principle 7 of the UNHCR code of conduct, “prevent, oppose and combat all exploitation and abuse of refugees and other persons of concern”.



*The United Nations victims' rights statement offers guidance for a victim-centred approach to policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and their implementation.*

29. The United Nations victims' rights statement,<sup>9</sup> endorsed by the Secretary-General's High-Level Steering Group on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse in 2023, reaffirms the Organization's commitment to placing victims of SEA at the centre of its response, prioritizing their dignity, safety and well-being. The statement outlines victims' rights in relation to actions taken by both the United Nations and relevant Member States. It identifies 10 core rights, including the right to respectful treatment, the right to access to assistance and support, the right to justice and accountability, the right to decide how to participate in United Nations processes, the right to be heard and kept informed, as well as the rights to protection, confidentiality and remedy, and the right to lodge complaints about treatment received from the United Nations. These rights are intended to empower victims and ensure they are treated with compassion, professionalism and fairness.

## **2. Extent of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations personnel and personnel of implementing partners (2017–2024)**

30. There is currently no single source that offers a complete and consolidated overview of SEA allegations involving United Nations system staff and associated personnel. However, two databases provide the most extensive publicly available records. The “Data on Allegations: UN System-wide” database<sup>10</sup> (also known as the iReport SEA Tracker or simply iReport) includes data on SEA allegations involving staff and affiliate personnel and personnel of implementing partners reported by entities other than peace operations. The “Conduct in UN field missions” database,<sup>11</sup> on the other hand, contains records related to SEA allegations concerning civilian and uniformed personnel at peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

31. With regard to the iReport, not all JIU participating organizations submit data on SEA allegations. Furthermore, the criteria used to record allegations vary across organizations. Some entities document all SEA allegations at the intake stage, while others only record them following a preliminary review. Approaches also vary with regard to the type of victim: several organizations include cases of sexual assault or rape in which their own personnel are victims, whereas others only report allegations involving victims who are beneficiaries or external to the organization. Notably, several participating organizations, including the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), do not report all SEA allegations involving their personnel in the iReport. As a result, more than 100 SEA allegations involving staff, affiliate personnel and personnel of implementing partners from these organizations are not captured in the data presented below. See chapter III, table 5, for findings on the system-wide harmonization of SEA allegation data.

32. The “Conduct in UN field missions” database primarily presents data by allegation; however, a single allegation may involve multiple alleged perpetrators and victims. Where such information is available, the figures below reflect the number of individuals involved. To fill gaps in the two databases, the present review also includes data submitted directly by participating organizations. Lastly, the data pertain to the 28 JIU participating organizations and therefore do not include information from IOM.

<sup>9</sup> The statement is entitled “Your rights as a victim of sexual exploitation or abuse committed by United Nations staff or related personnel”. Available at <https://un.org/en/victims-rights-first/victims-rights-statement>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/data-allegations-un-system-wide>.

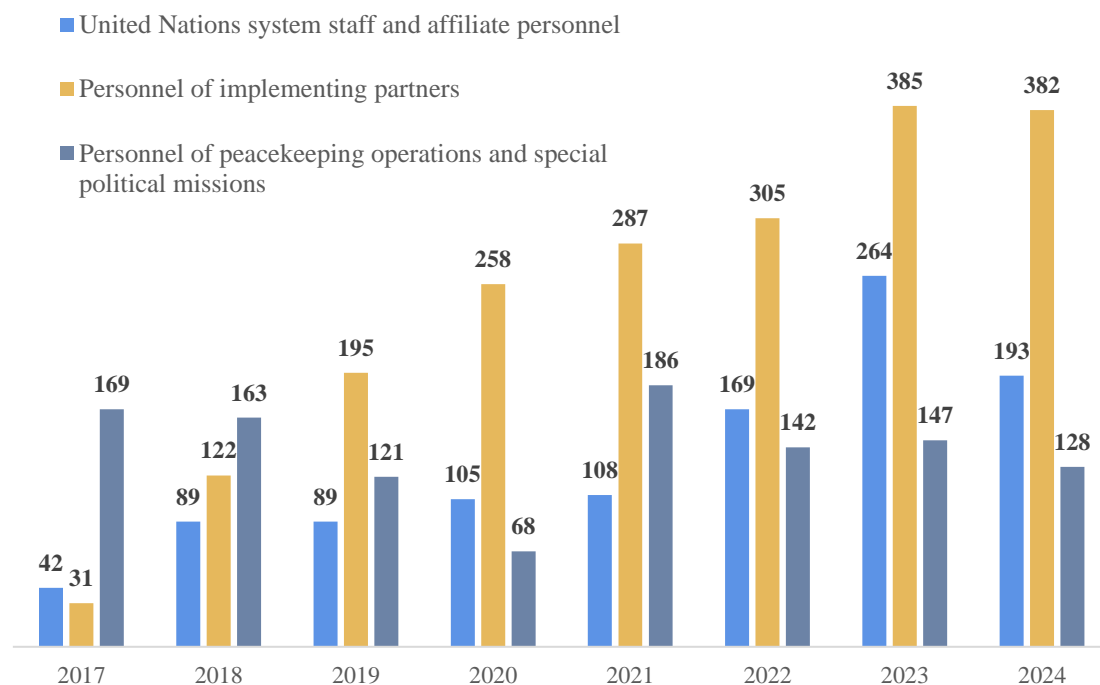
<sup>11</sup> <https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-data-introduction>.

*The total number of individuals recorded as alleged perpetrators in SEA allegations nearly tripled, between 2017 and 2024. These individuals were almost exclusively male.*

33. Between 2017 and 2024, the United Nations publicly reported SEA allegations against 4,148 individuals who were United Nations system staff and related personnel within JIU participating organizations. Of these, as recorded in the iReport, 1,059 were United Nations system staff and affiliate personnel (26 per cent), and 1,965 were personnel of implementing partners (47 per cent), and, as recorded in the “Conduct in UN field missions” database, 1,124 were civilian and uniformed personnel serving in peacekeeping operations and special political missions (27 per cent). In 2024, the number of allegations involving staff and affiliate personnel was approximately 4.6 times higher than in 2017, while the number of allegations against personnel of implementing partners grew more than twelvefold. In contrast, in 2024, the number of allegations against civilian and uniformed personnel in peace operations was approximately 24 per cent lower than that in 2017. See figure I for the breakdown by year.

Figure I

**Number of personnel involved in sexual exploitation and abuse allegations, by personnel type, reported by Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations, 2017–2024**



Source: iReport SEA Tracker and “Conduct in UN field missions” database, both accessed 13 March 2025.

34. Data from the investigation units of JIU participating organizations<sup>12</sup> indicate that 99 per cent of alleged SEA perpetrators among United Nations system staff, affiliate personnel and personnel of implementing partners were male. Although similar data are unavailable for alleged perpetrators in peace operations, it is highly likely that a comparable proportion were also male.

35. The figures presented should be interpreted with caution as they are likely driven primarily by persistent underreporting, while in some contexts they potentially also reflect some degree of growing confidence in reporting mechanisms. SEA cases are

<sup>12</sup> The data were submitted between 2017 and 2023 in response to the corporate questionnaire for SEA allegations, which was administered as part of the JIU review.

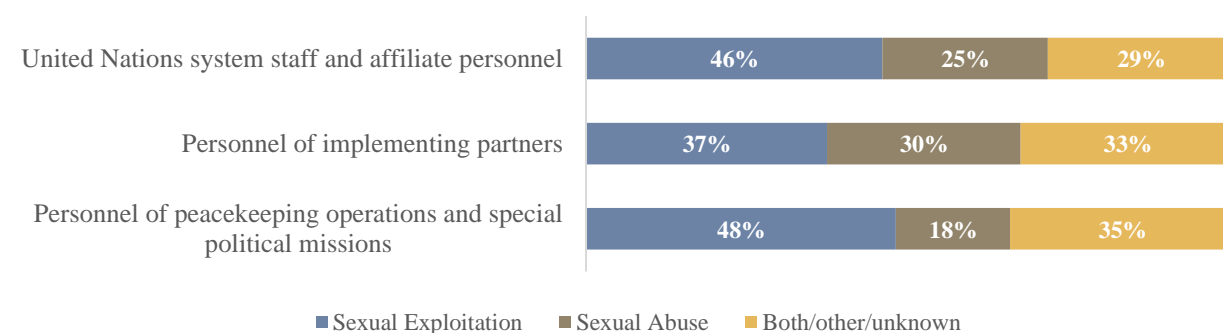
widely recognized as being underreported due to a range of barriers victims face when deciding whether to come forward. These barriers include emotional and perceptual factors, social and cultural stigma, institutional shortcomings, legal obstacles and economic constraints, and they are often amplified among vulnerable populations. (Underreporting is further discussed in chapter VIII, which focuses on responses to SEA.) At the same time, some reported cases may reflect improvements in awareness, reporting mechanisms and/or protection measures. Therefore, the data presented here cannot be seen as providing a complete picture of the scale of SEA in participating organizations.

*The majority of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations concern sexual exploitation.*

36. Between 2017 and 2024, about 43 per cent of all allegations were related to sexual exploitation, including exploitative relationships, transactional sex, including through solicitation of sex workers, and trafficking for SEA. Around 25 per cent of allegations involved sexual abuse, such as rape, sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence. The remaining 32 per cent were linked to both sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, classified as “unknown” or fell into other categories. Figure II provides the percentage distribution of allegations by nature and type of alleged perpetrators.

Figure II

**Percentage of allegations by nature and type of personnel, 2017–2024**



Source: iReport SEA Tracker and “Conduct in UN field missions” database, both accessed 13 March 2025.

*Sexual exploitation and abuse has occurred both in the field and at headquarters locations, across all operational contexts, including humanitarian, development and peace settings.*

37. Nearly all SEA allegations against personnel of implementing partners, peacekeeping operations and special political missions occurred in the field, given the operational nature of their work. In contrast, according to data from the investigation units of JIU participating organizations, approximately 4 per cent of allegations against United Nations system staff and affiliate personnel took place at headquarters locations. These allegations included both sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and were reported across a range of organizations, from small headquarters-based organizations to large development and humanitarian entities. SEA allegations related to solicitation of sex workers were also reported in locations where sex work is legal.

*Sexual exploitation and abuse allegations against 1,079 United Nations system staff and related personnel were substantiated between 2017 and 2024.*

38. Between 2017 and 2024, investigations into SEA allegations involving 3,129 individuals were concluded. Allegations against 1,079 individuals (34 per cent) were substantiated, including 107 United Nations system staff and affiliate personnel, 636 personnel of implementing partners, and 62 civilian and 274 uniformed personnel from peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Allegations against 750 individuals (24 per cent) were found to be unsubstantiated or not classified as SEA. The remaining allegations involving 1,300 individuals (42 per cent) were closed due to insufficient information, lack of participation from victims or witnesses, the resignation of the alleged perpetrators during the investigation or other reasons. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the outcomes of the investigations.

Table 1

**Outcome of sexual exploitation and abuse investigations, by personnel category, 2017–2024**

<i>Outcome of investigation</i>	<i>United Nations system staff and affiliate personnel</i>	<i>Personnel of implementing partners</i>	<i>Personnel of peace operations</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage of total</i>
Allegation substantiated	107	636	336	1 079	34
Allegation unsubstantiated or incident determined not to be SEA	279	446	25	750	24
Insufficient information, no participation from victims or no jurisdiction	375	579	234	1 188	38
Subject was dismissed, resigned or separated during process	31	81	–	112	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>1 742</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>3 129</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* iReport SEA Tracker and “Conduct in UN field missions” database, both accessed 13 March 2025 (status of allegations summarized by JIU).

39. It is important to recognize that unsubstantiated allegations do not necessarily indicate that the allegation was false or that sexual misconduct did not occur. Meeting evidentiary standards is often challenging due to delayed reporting, security constraints and the absence of physical evidence, among other issues (see chapter VIII for additional information). Victims may also be unwilling to participate in investigations due to fears of retaliation and safety concerns. As reflected in the data above, many cases were closed or left pending due to insufficient information or a lack of victim participation.

*Although sexual exploitation and abuse is classified as serious misconduct in relevant policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, not all substantiated allegations resulted in dismissal or separation from service.*

40. Of the 107 United Nations system staff and affiliate personnel with substantiated SEA allegations, 74 were separated from service, dismissed or had their contract terminated by their employing organizations; 21 left before the allegations were found to be substantiated; and 12 received sanctions other than separation. Similarly, of the 636 personnel from implementing partners with substantiated allegations, 618 were dismissed and 18 were subject to sanctions other than separation.

41. Of the 336 personnel in peacekeeping operations and special political missions with substantiated SEA allegations, 62 were civilian personnel and 274 were uniformed personnel. Of the 62 civilian personnel, 38 were separated or dismissed, 4 resigned before the process was concluded and 1 was subject to an administrative measure. The remaining cases were either pending disciplinary proceedings or had been closed.

42. Of the 274 uniformed personnel with substantiated allegations, 236 were repatriated by the United Nations. Their respective troop- and police-contributing countries subsequently imposed administrative and disciplinary measures, including 84 jail sentences, 25 dismissals, 45 demotions, 16 financial sanctions, 10 service suspensions, 33 administrative actions and 2 forcible retirements. Such measures were imposed as a single action or in combination. The remaining cases were either pending disciplinary proceedings or had been closed.

*Between 2017 and 2024, sexual exploitation and abuse allegations involved 4,061 victims, including 1,058 children.*

43. The SEA allegations made against United Nations system staff, affiliate personnel and personnel of implementing partners, peacekeeping operations and special political missions, concerned 4,061 victims overall. A total of 864 paternity claims, including from child victims, were submitted along with the allegations.<sup>13</sup>

44. Among the victims involved in SEA allegations against United Nations system staff, affiliate personnel and personnel of implementing partners, 87 per cent were female, 5 per cent were male and the rest were either non-binary or their gender unknown. See table 2 for further details. Gender-disaggregated data for victims involved in SEA allegations against personnel of peace operations are unavailable.

Table 2

**Gender disaggregation of victims involved in allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against United Nations system staff, affiliate personnel and personnel of implementing partners, 2017–2024**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Victims involved in allegations against United Nations system staff and affiliate personnel</i>	<i>Victims involved in allegations against personnel of implementing partners</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage of total</i>
Female	915	1 712	2 627	87
Male	65	75	140	5
Non-binary or unknown	79	178	257	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 059</b>	<b>1 965</b>	<b>3 024</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: iReport SEA Tracker, accessed 13 March 2025.

45. Regarding the age of the alleged victims of SEA, 26 per cent were children (under 18 years old). See table 3 for the age breakdown.

Table 3

**Age disaggregation of victims involved in SEA allegations against United Nations system staff and associated personnel, 2017–2024**

<i>Age</i>	<i>Victims involved in allegations against United Nations system staff and affiliate personnel</i>	<i>Victims involved in allegations against personnel of implementing partners</i>	<i>Victims involved in allegations against personnel in peace operations</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage of total</i>
Adult	593	825	814	2 232	55
Child	187	652	219	1 058	26
Unknown	279	488	4	771	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 059</b>	<b>1 965</b>	<b>1 037</b>	<b>4 061</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>13</sup> iReport SEA Tracker and “Conduct in UN field missions” database, both accessed 13 March 2025.

Source: iReport SEA Tracker and “Conduct in UN field missions” database, both accessed 13 March 2025.

46. Substantiated allegations during the review period involved approximately 1,177 victims, including children,<sup>14</sup> and 342 paternity claims. Of the eight paternity claims linked to substantiated SEA cases involving United Nations system staff and affiliate personnel, two were confirmed. Of the 100 paternity claims involving implementing partner personnel, 11 were confirmed.

47. The status of the 234 paternity claims linked to substantiated allegations against personnel in peace operations during the review period is unavailable. However, as at 20 March 2025, of the 759 paternity claims received since data-collection began for this category of personnel, 29 claims have been confirmed, 519 remain pending and 211 either have not been confirmed or have been withdrawn.<sup>15</sup>

## **II. Analysis of policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and related frameworks in Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations**

48. As outlined in chapter I, several key documents form the basis of PSEA policies across United Nations organizations, namely the 2003 Secretary-General’s bulletin, the IASC Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the ICSC Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service (see annex I for additional information). This chapter examines how JIU participating organizations apply PSEA principles from these sources and beyond to establish regulatory and legal frameworks governing personnel conduct. It also identifies gaps and challenges that may hinder effective enforcement, particularly in holding personnel accountable for SEA-related misconduct.

### **A. Policies at Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations**

*Not all participating organizations have a robust regulatory framework in place to establish an effective accountability mechanism for addressing sexual exploitation and abuse committed by their personnel.*

49. As underscored by the General Assembly,<sup>16</sup> an organization’s policies, staff regulations and rules, and standards of conduct in relation to PSEA are crucial to establishing clear expectations for the behaviour of personnel. Collectively, these documents serve as an accountability mechanism, enabling the organization to hold perpetrators accountable through the disciplinary process.

50. As discussed in chapter I and detailed in annex I, the 2003 Secretary-General’s bulletin is the most influential document shaping PSEA policies across the United

<sup>14</sup> The precise number of victims of substantiated incidents of SEA in peace operations is unavailable, as the database is organized by allegation, with many cases involving multiple subjects and victims, and the status of investigations can vary for each subject within a single allegation.

<sup>15</sup> Paternity Claims, “Conduct in UN Field Missions” database. Available at <https://conduct.unmissions.org/paternity-data> (accessed 20 March 2025).

<sup>16</sup> Following an investigation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of United Nations Secretariat of SEA perpetrated on refugees by aid workers in West Africa (see [A/57/306](#)), in April 2003, in its resolution [57/306](#), the General Assembly encouraged United Nations system organizations and NGOs to incorporate into their codes of conduct specific responsibilities of humanitarian aid workers to prevent and respond appropriately to SEA and to adopt appropriate disciplinary procedures for dealing with such violations when they occur. It also requested the Secretary-General to expedite the issuance of a policy bulletin and report on any new cases of SEA and measures taken to address them.

Nations system. Nine JIU participating organizations have adopted it as their primary PSEA policy whereas 14 others have developed their own policies while either incorporating the bulletin's definitions and principles or referencing it directly. Out of 28 JIU participating organizations, 5 specialized agencies of the United Nations system – the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism), the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) – do not have a PSEA policy.

51. Regarding staff regulations and rules, 18 JIU participating organizations include references to SEA, and of these, 12 have in place the same staff regulations as those of the United Nations Secretariat (see annex II for details). This is notable as the Secretariat's most recent revision of the staff regulations and rules ([ST/SGB/2023/1/Rev.1](#), from 2023) is not wholly aligned with the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin, as an exception for underage marriage is no longer included. Underage marriage was previously permitted under the staff regulations and rules for cases where a staff member was legally married to a person under the age of 18 but above the age of majority or consent in their country; this exception is included in the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin. This change has created a misalignment between the bulletin and the staff rules and regulations of the Secretariat and of the 12 organizations that adopted them. The remaining 10 participating organizations do not include any SEA-related provisions in their staff regulations and rules.

52. Seventeen JIU participating organizations do not have personnel standards of conduct that explicitly address SEA. This includes those that rely on the ICSC Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service and have not developed their own version. It should be noted that the ICSC Standards of Conduct also serve as the guidelines for setting expectations for affiliate personnel in several participating organizations and are often appended to contracts to establish an accountability mechanism for misconduct. In contrast, 11 organizations have bespoke standards of conduct that include specific SEA provisions.

53. ICSC members informed the Inspectors that an update to the Standards of Conduct is planned, and the draft is expected to include a reference to SEA. However, the proposed text, as described to the Inspectors, will maintain a distinction between sexual harassment – defined as sexual misconduct occurring within an organization – and SEA, which is limited to acts committed against beneficiaries outside the organization. Regardless of whether the updated version addresses SEA separately or incorporates it under the broader umbrella of sexual misconduct, it has the potential to strengthen the legal basis for disciplinary actions related to sexual misconduct, irrespective of the location or status of the victim. This revision would have a significant impact on all JIU participating organizations that either adopt the Standards of Conduct as their own, integrate them into their respective framework and/or reference them in their conduct policies. The organizations that have developed their own standards of conduct and currently do not include provisions on SEA (IMO, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), ITU, UPU, WMO and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)) should update these documents. Reinforcing these frameworks would enhance their accountability mechanisms and provide greater support for disciplinary measures against personnel with substantiated allegations of SEA.

54. Comprehensive coverage of SEA in policies is essential for clearly defining misconduct and establishing a robust, multi-pronged defence especially before United Nations administrative tribunals. Beyond a dedicated PSEA policy, JIU participating organizations should also integrate PSEA into their standards of conduct as well as their staff regulations and rules. This ensures coherent expectations of staff behaviour

and clarity on administrative and disciplinary consequences for substantiated SEA allegations. Table 4 outlines the inclusion of PSEA across policies, staff regulations and rules, and standards of conduct, by organization. More details can also be found in annex II. Only five JIU participating organizations (UNHCR, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and World Food Programme (WFP)) have coherent SEA provisions across all three documents. In contrast, the remaining 23 organizations face increased risk that disciplinary decisions may be overturned by administrative tribunal judgments due to gaps or inconsistencies in their policy documents. Various tribunal rulings on SEA and sexual harassment have shown that alignment across all three documents strengthens an organization’s legal position in upholding accountability.<sup>17</sup>

55. JIU issues the following recommendation to ensure that PSEA is comprehensively covered in the accountability frameworks of participating organizations.

### Recommendation 1

**Executive heads of United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2027, review their respective policies, staff regulations and rules, and standards of conduct to ensure that they all include PSEA, are aligned and support disciplinary processes and procedures.**

Table 4  
Coverage of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in key documents

<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Existence of policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and policy and year of issuance, if applicable</i>	<i>Prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse included in staff regulations and rules</i>	<i>Prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse included in personnel standards of conduct</i>
<b>United Nations Secretariat, its funds and programmes and other bodies or entities</b>			
United Nations Secretariat	Yes <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> (2013)	Yes	No
UNCTAD	Yes <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> (2013)	Yes	No
UNEP	Yes <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> (2013)	Yes	No
UN-Habitat	Yes <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> (2013)	Yes	No

<sup>17</sup> The following judgments reference multiple documents to support dismissals for sexual misconduct: UNAT, *Kenneth Conteh v. Secretary-General of the United Nations* [in which the Secretary-General represented UNHCR], Judgment No. 2021-UNAT-1171, paras. 36–43; UNAT, *AAN v. Secretary-General of the United Nations* [in which the Secretary-General represented UNICEF], Judgment No. 2023-UNAT-1366, paras. 39–41; UNAT, *AAK v. Secretary-General of the United Nations* [in which the Secretary-General represented the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau], Judgment No. 2023-UNAT-1348, paras. 37–39; UNDT, *Khamis v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. UNDT/2020/147, para. 34; and UNAT, *Mohammad Yahya Al Othman v. Commissioner General of UNRWA*, Judgment No. 2022-UNAT-1196, paras. 83 and 84.



<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Existence of policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and policy and year of issuance, if applicable</i>	<i>Prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse included in staff regulations and rules</i>	<i>Prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse included in personnel standards of conduct</i>
UNODC	Yes <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> (2013)	Yes	No
UNDP	Yes <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> (2013)	Yes	Yes
UNFPA	Yes <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> (2013)	Yes	No
UNHCR	Yes <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> (2013) and UNHCR/HCP/2024/02 (2024)	Yes	Yes
UNICEF	Yes <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> (2013) and POLICY/DAPM/2024/001 (2024)	Yes	Yes
UNOPS	Yes <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> (2013)	Yes	No
UNRWA	Yes General Staff Circular No. 01/2024 (2024)	Yes	Yes
UN-Women	Yes <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> (2013)	Yes	No
WFP	Yes OED2023/011 (2023)	Yes	Yes
ITC	Yes ITC/EDB/2012/06 (2012)	Yes	No
UNAIDS	Yes WHO Policy on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct (2023)	No	Yes
<b>Specialized agencies and International Atomic Energy Agency</b>			
FAO	Yes Administrative circular No. 2024/10 (2024) Administrative circular No. 2024/09 (2024)	No	Yes
IAEA	Yes Guidance Note on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2021)	No	No
ICAO	Yes Personnel Instruction PI/1.3.1 (2021)	Yes	No
ILO	Yes Office Directive IGDS Number 568 (Version 1) (2020)	No	Yes
IMO	No	No	No
ITU	No	No	No

<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Existence of policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and policy and year of issuance, if applicable</i>	<i>Prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse included in staff regulations and rules</i>	<i>Prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse included in personnel standards of conduct</i>
UNESCO	Yes ETH/PI/POL/5 (2020)	No	Yes
UNIDO	Yes UNIDO/DGB/2023/13 (2023)	No	Yes
UN Tourism	No	No	No
UPU	No	No	No
WHO	Yes WHO policy on preventing and addressing sexual misconduct (2023)	No	Yes
WIPO	Yes Office Instruction No. 25/2019 (2019)	No	No
WMO	No	Yes	No

*Source:* Prepared by JIU based on the corporate questionnaire and desk review, data confirmed as at 31 March 2025.

*Protection of external individuals against retaliation is absent in most policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.*

56. Oversight officials and experts within the United Nations system have highlighted the elevated risks of retaliation, reprisals and intimidation faced by victims and witnesses associated with SEA cases. While all 28 JIU participating organizations have protection against retaliation or whistleblower policies, these primarily protect United Nations personnel who report misconduct of other United Nations personnel. Only a few policies extend protections to external parties.<sup>18</sup> Most ethics offices, which typically lead efforts on protection against retaliation, do not have a mandate to offer protective measures to external individuals. To address this gap, internal investigators in several participating organizations reported taking the lead in coordinating efforts to safeguard victims and witnesses in such cases, for example, by proactively warning subjects of investigations against taking retaliatory actions and reprisals or assessing security risks to victims and witnesses.

57. Although data on retaliation allegations in SEA cases remains limited, data from sexual harassment cases may serve as a proxy for estimating the prevalence of retaliation in sexual misconduct cases. Between 2016 and 2023, there were 53 requests for protection against retaliation and 29 prima facie determinations of retaliation in sexual harassment cases (see annex III for sexual harassment data from the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)). Given the pronounced power imbalance between United Nations personnel and community members, the risks of retaliation and other security threats are likely even higher in the context of SEA.

<sup>18</sup> The WHO protection against relation policy, which also applies to UNAIDS, is the only policy that includes persons external to the organizations in its definition of individuals who may seek protection from retaliation, as it includes “members of the local population where WHO provides health assistance”. That provision extends mutatis mutandis to locations where UNAIDS operates. See the WHO Policy on Preventing and Addressing Retaliation (2023) (also applies to UNAIDS), para. 1.6. Available at <https://who.int/publications/m/item/policy-on-preventing-and-addressing-retaliation>.

58. In 11 organizations, PSEA policies that reference respective protection against retaliation policies remind staff that retaliation is also misconduct and subject to disciplinary measures, which is considered a good practice.<sup>19</sup> **The Inspectors encourage executive heads to reference their organization’s policy on protection against retaliation in their respective PSEA policy to protect relevant witnesses and victims from retaliation, and consider this a good practice for the promulgation of a PSEA policy.**

*Most policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse have yet to address sexual exploitation and abuse risks associated with interactive technologies such as social media.*

59. One additional area that is not adequately covered in PSEA policies is cyber-related activities, such as the electronic distribution of child sexual abuse materials and other illicit materials. This has been a widespread issue in at least two United Nations peacekeeping operations and has resulted in dismissals as well as referrals to national authorities.<sup>20</sup> The improper use of electronic messages and social media posts has been a key feature of some United Nations system internal investigations and administrative tribunal cases related to SEA. Three recently issued PSEA policies of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) (also applicable to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)) include an acknowledgement of the issue and its potential reach, such as the WHO policy, which includes the following wording: “Sexual exploitation and abuse also includes the threat or use of electronic images or video of a sexual nature in a physical and/or virtual manner as a means of fear, coercion, duress, psychological oppression or abuse of power.”<sup>21</sup> **The Inspectors suggest that organizations address SEA risks associated with emerging technologies in the next revisions of their PSEA policies.**

*Donor-led assessments and benchmarks have also influenced policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.*

60. Member States and donors have played a pivotal role in influencing PSEA policies of United Nations system organizations. Even within the system, the World Bank Group, a large donor to United Nations system projects and programmes, has required SEA mitigation strategies in its agreements as well as community-based grievance mechanisms for SEA, and has provided tools and guidance for implementation of strategies and instruments for both NGOs and the private sector through the International Finance Corporation.<sup>22</sup> Other donors have provided benchmarks and key performance indicators that more directly influence SEA policies at an organizational level. While donors have raised the bar in terms of policy standards on SEA, participating organizations mentioned to the Inspectors that different donors have different standards and reporting requirements and harmonization between donors would be welcome, especially in view of the fact that funding and capacity have been reduced in some participating organizations.

<sup>19</sup> Organizations that reference their respective protection against retaliation policy in their PSEA policies include FAO, ICAO, ILO, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNRWA, WFP and WHO.

<sup>20</sup> See [A/79/189](#). A total of seven cases of distribution of child pornography were reported at the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) (one case) and at the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) (six cases). These were referred to national authorities for criminal prosecution between 2012–2015.

<sup>21</sup> WHO Policy on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct, para. 3.1.3.

<sup>22</sup> International Finance Corporation, *How to support your company to develop a community-based grievance mechanism for sexual exploitation and abuse* (Washington D.C., 2021).

61. MOPAN assessments of PSEA policies and procedures have revealed shortcomings among participating organizations. MOPAN, comprised of 21 member countries that share a common interest in improving the effectiveness of international organizations, has conducted assessments, including through 8 PSEA indicators, of 14 JIU participating organizations to date. An analysis of data related to PSEA on the 14 assessed organizations provided by the MOPAN secretariat indicates that none achieved a highly satisfactory rating for the overall PSEA indicator. All JIU participating organizations assessed by MOPAN received satisfactory ratings for the presence of a PSEA policy, except for UNEP and UN-Habitat. Their less than satisfactory ratings indicate that these organizations lack policies or strategies that translate the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin and other United Nations norms into their own concrete operational and institutional contexts. Aggregated MOPAN assessment data from all 14 organizations show deficiencies in several areas, including particularly low ratings for tracking of PSEA policy implementation, dedicated resources to support implementing a PSEA policy, actions taken in response to SEA allegations and public reporting; the two lowest rated areas related to the implementation of a victim-centred approach and accounting for SEA in risk analysis and intervention design.<sup>23</sup>

## B. Gaps in policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

*Unclear and incoherent language in policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse diminishes the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in several participating organizations.*

62. **The 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin versus the IASC Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.** As detailed in annex I, there are distinct differences between the language used in the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin and that of the IASC Six Core Principles. These differences are also evident in the policies of JIU participating organizations that are also IASC members operating in humanitarian and/or emergency contexts, compared to the policies of the rest of the participating organizations, particularly those concerning prohibited conduct related to SEA. Key differences between the policies are found in two areas: sexual relations between their personnel and beneficiaries of assistance, and underage marriage.

63. **There is inconsistency across policies with regard to sexual relations with beneficiaries.** In line with the IASC Six Core Principles, seven organizations explicitly state in their policies that sexual relations with beneficiaries that involve improper use of rank or position are "prohibited". Among these organizations, four are IASC members (FAO, UNICEF, WHO and WFP), while the remaining three (UNAIDS, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) are not. In contrast, the PSEA policies of other organizations, including the bespoke policies of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and ICAO, follow the language of the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin, which states that any relations with beneficiaries of assistance are "strongly discouraged".

64. Navigating this policy area can be challenging in certain organizational contexts, particularly when national personnel come from the same communities they serve and may already be in bona fide relationships with community members, which can also include beneficiaries of assistance. In this regard, PSEA policies, like that of

<sup>23</sup> The MOPAN aggregated ratings of the lowest rated SEA indicators for JIU participating organizations are as follows (on a scale of 1 to 4): policy implementation = 2.36; dedicated resources = 2.21; actions taken and public reporting = 2.43; victim-centred approach = 1.93; and intervention design and analysis = 1.83.

UNHCR, address the issue of sexual relationships involving the organization's personnel within the context of humanitarian emergencies and their potential impact on the safety and dignity of beneficiaries. However, they do not explicitly state that such relationships are prohibited; instead, the emphasis is placed on prohibiting the abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes.<sup>24</sup>

65. Interviews with PSEA coordinators and focal points at both headquarters and field locations across the system highlight the challenges of effectively communicating this aspect of PSEA policies to personnel. Nationally recruited staff, in particular, frequently raise questions about the guidelines. These discussions often focus on clarifying with whom personnel can or cannot engage in intimate relationships with, rather than on addressing the fundamental issue of abuse of power and authority for sexual gain, which is a primary driver of sexual misconduct. **With regard to sexual relations with beneficiaries, the Inspectors recommend that participating organizations frame their policy language around the conduct of personnel and the improper use of rank or position, while avoiding ambiguous or equivocal language that may hinder consistent interpretation or application across United Nations operating contexts.**

66. **Underage marriage remains permitted under certain circumstances in the policy documents of several organizations.** The 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin includes an exception for marriage with individuals under the age of 18 if legally permitted by their country of citizenship. All the organizations that have adopted the bulletin as their PSEA policy, as well as six other organizations – IAEA, the International Trade Centre (ITC), UNESCO, UNRWA, WIPO and WMO – include this exception for underage marriage either in their PSEA policy or staff regulations and rules. In the case of the United Nations Secretariat, its regulations and rules no longer include this exception, and for UNRWA, the exception is only included in its rules for international staff.<sup>25</sup> In 2024, the General Assembly recognized the harm caused by underage marriage,<sup>26</sup> and most United Nations system organizations have moved away from the exception found in the bulletin, though others still retain it or their regulatory frameworks are inconsistent in this respect (see annex II for a detailed overview by organization). **The Inspectors strongly request the organizations still permitting an exception to underage marriage for their personnel to eliminate this exception in relevant policy documents.**

67. **Although sexual exploitation is defined in relevant policies, its interpretation in practice often remains ambiguous, leading to inconsistent applications and enforcement.** A key challenge lies in how PSEA policies and related regulations address specific aspects of sexual exploitation, such as the distinction between consensual adult relationships and those that are exploitative in nature.<sup>27</sup> This lack of clarity has resulted in several conflicting judgments issued by United Nations system administrative tribunals. Some cases have prompted judges to

<sup>24</sup> UNHCR, document UNHCR/HCP/2024/02, para. 3.2.

<sup>25</sup> UNRWA, document Cod. I/61/Rev.6 (1 Jan 2017), rule 1.2 (e).

<sup>26</sup> In its resolution [79/158](#), the General Assembly recognized that “child, early and forced marriage is a harmful practice that violates, abuses or impairs human rights and is linked to and perpetuates other harmful practices and human rights violations and abuses, and that such violations and abuses have a disproportionately negative impact on women and girls”.

<sup>27</sup> [ST/SGB/2003/13](#) defines sexual exploitation as follows: “For the purposes of the present bulletin, the term ‘sexual exploitation’ means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.”

draw distinctions between consensual and exploitive relationships.<sup>28</sup> In other cases, such as the *Makeen* case, UNDT and UNAT reached opposing conclusions, with UNAT overturning the UNDT decision for incorrectly requiring proof of “undue advantage” to establish sexual exploitation.<sup>29</sup>

68. A 2024 independent review of SEA cases in the United Nations administrative tribunals notes, “from the UNDT and UNAT caselaw it appears clear that there is a wide variability in the standards as to what circumstances may amount to sexual exploitation and when relationships between UN officials and members of the local community would be considered exploitive”.<sup>30</sup> The analysis goes on to point out the crucial reason why a United Nations official, who in many countries and communities is held in high esteem, may hold undue influence over those community members: “Sexual exploitation is concerned with the vulnerability or power differential and how that may impact on the decision of the complainant to engage in the sexual act [with a United Nations official].”<sup>31</sup> Sexual exploitation, which represents the largest proportion of SEA cases, is not interpreted coherently across the United Nations system. This reinforces the need for PSEA policies to focus on the conduct of personnel, with particular attention devoted to abuse of power for sexual gain, the context in which the behaviour occurs and the power differential with the affected individual.

69. **Solicitation of transactional sex, including from sex workers, in PSEA policies.** Engaging in commercial sex acts is defined as an exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex and is considered sexual exploitation in both the 2003 Secretary-General’s bulletin and the IASC Six Core Principles. Some JIU participating organizations, such as FAO, WFP and WHO (also applies to UNAIDS), explicitly cite transactional sex as an example of sexual exploitation in their policies. UNHCR and UNIDO further clarify their stance by stating that transactional sex constitutes sexual exploitation “regardless of the legal status of sex-work”, addressing the potential conflict with national laws, particularly in their headquarters locations.<sup>32</sup> **The Inspectors suggest that PSEA policies should clearly state that solicitation of transactional sex, including from sex workers, is not tolerated in United Nations system organizations, underlining that clarity may be necessary for organizations that operate where solicitation of sex workers is legal.**

70. **Defining “zero tolerance”.** The term “zero tolerance” is found in the PSEA policies of 11 organizations<sup>33</sup> and defined, to some extent, in five policies.<sup>34</sup> The concept originated in national policing policies in Western countries and was later adopted by both public and private sectors to address issues such as sexual misconduct and fraud.<sup>35</sup> Within the United Nations system, “zero tolerance” became associated with the 2003

<sup>28</sup> In their judgments on the *Khamis* case, the Tribunals agree that the subject did not engage in sexual exploitation of a community member. See UNDT, *Khamis v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. UNDT/2020/147; and UNAT, *Khamis Ali Khamis v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2021-UNAT-1178.

<sup>29</sup> UNAT, *Makeen v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2024-UNAT-1461.

<sup>30</sup> Carla Ferstman and Franziska Fluhr, *Independent review of the adjudication of claims pertaining to sexual exploitation and abuse by the United Nations internal justice system (UN Dispute Tribunal and UN Appeals Tribunal)* (University of Essex Human Rights Centre, 2024).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> In both Austria and Switzerland, sex work is legal and regulated to some extent by the respective Governments.

<sup>33</sup> The organizations with policies that mention “zero tolerance” include FAO, ICAO, ILO, ITU, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNRWA, WFP and WHO.

<sup>34</sup> The organizations with policies that provide a definition of “zero tolerance” include FAO, UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNICEF and WHO.

<sup>35</sup> In both the United States of America and Sweden the concept of zero tolerance was used in illicit drug policies and the policing thereof. See Jack R. Greene, “Zero Tolerance and Policing”, in Michael D. Reisig, and Robert J. Kane (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Police and Policing* (2014).

Secretary-General's bulletin and the term has been widely used in policies, training and awareness-raising materials as well as in speeches and outreach activities across United Nations system organizations in relation to not just SEA but also sexual harassment.

71. Despite its prevalence, the term is poorly defined and is challenging to translate consistently across languages, operational contexts and cultural settings. In some United Nations environments, it has come to be perceived as referring to “zero cases”, which potentially deters reporting.<sup>36</sup> Independent evaluations have also pointed to the need for greater clarity with regard to the meaning of “zero tolerance” and its practical application and enforcement, including the latest iteration of its use, “zero tolerance for inaction” which can compound the confusion.<sup>37</sup>

72. Additionally, reference to “zero tolerance for inaction” without further explanation can appear to emphasize the processes associated with handling sexual misconduct allegations rather than the outcomes of substantiated allegations. Even the United Nations Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse includes a definition of a zero-tolerance policy that emphasizes process over outcome.<sup>38</sup> Both the WHO PSEA policy (also applies to UNAIDS) and the Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment (CAPSEAH)<sup>39</sup> (see below for more information on CAPSEAH) provide an expanded definition of the term that puts the victim at the centre and serves as a reminder that retaliation against those who report misconduct is also not tolerated. **The Inspectors request that, to set consistent, realistic and clear expectations regarding the organizational stance and commitment to addressing sexual misconduct, participating organizations either fully define “zero tolerance” or use more accessible language in their PSEA policies and outreach and training materials as well as in their disciplinary procedures related to SEA.**

*Defining sexual exploitation and abuse based on the status or category of the victim rather than on the misconduct by subject can cause further harm.*

73. One of the most concerning policy approaches is the restriction in some PSEA policies on who qualifies as a SEA victim. While, as discussed above, the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin is generally problematic in its phrasing, its language also seems to have inspired JIU participating organizations to narrowly define who can be considered a SEA victim in their PSEA policies, especially as a criterion to distinguish between SEA and sexual harassment. For example, the UNESCO policy indicates in its definition of SEA victim that it includes “any individual or group of individuals external to the Organization”. Other organizations expand their definition of victim to specify that, in

<sup>36</sup> The implicit message that the absence of cases is expected may lead personnel to withhold reports for fear of disappointing senior managers and/or damaging the reputation of the organization and/or the concerned official. This sentiment was observed by the Inspectors in one United Nations peacekeeping mission and was cited in investigation reports as an organizational cultural barrier to reporting SEA misconduct.

<sup>37</sup> WFP, *Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Centralized evaluation report – Volume I* (Rome, 2024); United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations, *Evaluation of the prevention, response and victim support efforts against sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations Secretariat staff and related personnel* (2021); *Final Report of the Independent Commission on the review of sexual abuse and exploitation during the response to the 10th Ebola virus disease epidemic in DRC* (WHO, 2021); and IASC, *External Review of Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment* (2021).

<sup>38</sup> The United Nations Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (second edition) defines “zero-tolerance policy” as a policy establishing that “every transgression will be acted upon”.

<sup>39</sup> In CAPSEAH, “zero tolerance” means “zero tolerance for acts of SEAH; zero tolerance for inaction to prevent, report or respond to SEAH; and zero tolerance for retaliation against victim-survivors or whistleblowers. It does not mean having zero cases of SEAH being reported. Reporting is strongly encouraged and should not be penalised”. See <https://capseah.safeguardingsupporthub.org/common-approach>.



addition to beneficiaries, it can also include staff (as in the case of the International Labour Organization (ILO)) and individuals in external locations (such as the UNDP policy which recognizes that victims can be “both in the workplace and outside”).

74. The preoccupation with defining victims in a particular way may restrict the interpretation of SEA to incidents outside workplace settings or to those affecting only individuals defined as beneficiaries, thereby potentially excluding other forms of SEA, including solicitation of transactional sex; sexual misconduct involving community members, personnel of implementing partners and vendors, and unaffiliated individuals; or even sexual assault and rape committed by United Nations personnel against their colleagues. This overlap of definitions occurs, for example, in the inter-agency context, where the United Nations system-wide model sexual harassment policy,<sup>40</sup> includes sexual assault and rape of United Nations system staff by other staff. The issue is further confused by the Secretary-General’s bulletin addressing sexual harassment (ST/SGB/2019/8), which states: “Sexual harassment is prohibited under staff rule 1.2 (f) and may also constitute sexual exploitation or abuse under staff rule 1.2 (e).”<sup>41</sup> This ambiguity can undermine the experiences of victims<sup>42</sup> and may result in the lesser disciplinary measures attached to sexual harassment policies. It can also result in tribunal cases that must utilize both SEA and sexual harassment frameworks.

75. Policies that narrowly define SEA victims based on their status (e.g. as beneficiaries) or location (e.g. incidents outside the workplace) risk overlooking the central issue: the misconduct itself and its damaging impact on an organization’s effectiveness, its relationship with the community and the broader reputation of the United Nations system. The language used in these types of policies is crucial, as the policies should not be open to interpretation, create limitations for victims or confuse United Nations system personnel when communicating what conduct is unacceptable. **PSEA policy should focus on the prohibited conduct, rather than on the status of the victim and/or setting of the misconduct.**

*A victim-centred approach has not yet been mainstreamed in all policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.*

76. The Secretary-General’s 2017 PSEA strategy (see [A/71/818](#) and [A/71/818/Corr.1](#)) emphasized that priority must be given first and foremost to strengthening the support given to victims of SEA. Under the strategy, the Victims’ Rights Advocate position was also established. In 2023, the IASC defined a victim-centred approach as placing “the rights, wishes, needs, safety, dignity and well-being of the victim/survivor at the centre of all prevention and response measures concerning sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment”.<sup>43</sup> The United Nations victims’ rights statement, as discussed in chapter I, outlines SEA victims’ rights in relation to actions taken by both the United Nations and relevant Member States. CEB adopted a victim-centred approach for victims of sexual harassment in 2021. Efforts have also been made to apply a victim-centred approach in internal investigations of both SEA and sexual harassment.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> CEB, *UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment* (2018).

<sup>41</sup> See section 1.7, entitled, “Addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority”.

<sup>42</sup> For example, when some participating organizations classify staff members who are sexually assaulted by another staff member as victims of sexual harassment.

<sup>43</sup> IASC, *IASC Definition & Principles of a Victim/Survivor Centered Approach* (2023).

<sup>44</sup> IASC, *Expert Panel on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment Investigations: Final Report* (2025). In 2025, the IASC will release *The Investigators’ Manual: Investigation of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Complaints with a Victim-centred approach*.



77. Eight PSEA policies of participating organizations, all developed or updated within the past five years, reference a victim-centred approach and related provisions. Among these, the policies of FAO, UNICEF, UNRWA and WHO (also applies to UNAIDS) outline specific measures under that approach, such as ensuring victims' access to assistance, informed consent and participation in accountability processes. The policies of the other three organizations – UNESCO, UNIDO and WFP – mention a victim-centred approach only in general terms. As noted above, the indicator relating to a victim-centred approach received the lowest rating in the MOPAN assessment of nearly all JIU participating organizations, with only one organization, UNHCR, rated as “exceeds conditions”. In 2020, UNHCR adopted a dedicated policy to apply a victim-centred approach to all allegations of sexual misconduct, including both SEA and sexual harassment. That same year, it also introduced standard operating procedures to support the application of this approach in investigations. However, no internal oversight charter across the JIU participating organizations includes any reference to a victim-centred approach. **The Inspectors encourage organizations to incorporate a victim-centred approach in their PSEA policies and internal oversight charters and to develop corresponding standard operating procedures.**

### C. A path forward: establishing a comprehensive sexual misconduct policy

78. Most PSEA policies across JIU participating organizations contain significant gaps, including ambiguous language, outdated provisions and limited coverage of current trends and emerging challenges. More importantly, the lack of a comprehensive policy approach to sexual misconduct is confusing to United Nations personnel, and in some crucial cases, to the final arbiters on the matter: the administrative tribunals of the United Nations system. This is apparent in two cases in which UNDT judges reinterpreted – or, arguably, misinterpreted – the organization's definition of sexual exploitation, ultimately ruling in favour of a former staff member over the Secretary-General.<sup>45,46</sup>

*Distinctions between sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment are arbitrary in the United Nations system.*

79. The distinction between SEA and sexual harassment is confusing for personnel in at least two scenarios: (a) when United Nations system personnel are victims of sexual abuse perpetrated by other United Nations system personnel; and (b) when United Nations system personnel sexually harass individuals who are outside the United Nations system. As pointed out above, some PSEA policies specifically establish that SEA victims can only be individuals external to the organization. Therefore, when acts of sexual abuse, including rape and sexual assault, are committed within an organization, they are categorized as sexual harassment. Based on data provided by CEB, at least 14 United Nations system organizations have recorded sexual assault cases and at least 3 organizations have reported rape cases

<sup>45</sup> UNDT, *Makeen v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. UNDT/2023/071, paras. 64–80; UNAT, *Khamis Ali Khamis v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2021-UNAT-1178, para. 86; UNDT, *Massah v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, UNDT/2011/218, para. 59.

<sup>46</sup> UNAT, *Makeen v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2024-UNAT-1461, para. 75. In Carla Ferstman and Franziska Fluhr, *Independent review of the adjudication of claims pertaining to sexual exploitation and abuse by the United Nations internal justice system (UN Dispute Tribunal and UN Appeals Tribunal)* (University of Essex Human Rights Centre, 2024), the authors also comment that, “in *Makeen*, UNAT makes clear that the UNDT erred when it concluded that a showing of actual undue advantage is a requirement for sexual exploitation to occur. Sexual exploitation is concerned with the vulnerability or power differential and how that may have impacted on the decision of the complainant to engage in the sexual act”.

where their own personnel were victims and classified these cases as sexual harassment (see annex III for more information). In some organizations these types of cases may also be reported as SEA in iReport, which further undercuts system-wide coherence (see chapter III).

80. Labelling rape or sexual assault as sexual harassment based solely on the status of employment of the victim applies a less serious characterization to the misconduct. This can also mean that the way that allegations for this type of misconduct are reported<sup>47</sup> as well as the related disciplinary process may diverge as organizational policies are typically different between the two overlapping categories of misconduct.<sup>48</sup> The overlap in SEA and sexual harassment policies with language primarily concerned with the status of the victim may also exclude some potential victims such as community members and personnel of implementing partners and vendors.

81. An example of how policy language can limit its own application can be found in a recent ILO Administrative Tribunal judgment. In this case, the Tribunal ruled in favour of an IOM staff member who allegedly sexually harassed personnel of a local vendor (i.e. a category of personnel considered to be a party external to IOM). The sexual harassment policy of IOM states that its application is limited to internal misconduct only.<sup>49</sup> The specific focus of the IOM sexual harassment policy on what type of victim the policy does and does not apply to (i.e. victims comprise personnel and not individuals external to the organization), reinforces the importance of a policy that would – and should – focus on the behaviour of personnel rather than the location and status of victims.

82. CAPSEAH provides benchmarks and a model for bringing together SEA and sexual harassment. Developed in 2024, CAPSEAH has since been endorsed by hundreds of international organizations and national Governments,<sup>50</sup> and includes common principles, minimum actions and guidance for organizations. The approach uses the comprehensive term “SEAH”, which refers to sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment, to recognize the power imbalance and inequality inherent in both SEA and sexual harassment and identifies that linking them encourages action to tackle all harmful and unwanted sexual behaviour by people delivering assistance, regardless of where the incident occurs or who the victim is.<sup>51</sup>

83. The six common principles of CAPSEAH synthesize several key documents on PSEA that are used across the United Nations system (such as the 2003 Secretary-General’s bulletin and the IASC Six Core Principles) and outline recommended actions that align with action plans and indicators found in other benchmarks, such as the MOPAN indicators for PSEA, and operational plans, such as the IASC Minimum Operating Standards on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Own Personnel. CAPSEAH represents a good practice in the development and dissemination of policy on sexual misconduct and can serve as a resource for JIU participating organizations, regardless of their operational context.

<sup>47</sup> In some organizations, sexual harassment allegations are reported to units exercising functions other than independent oversight offices.

<sup>48</sup> UNDT, *ATR v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. UNDT/2024/100, para. 17 and footnote 1 (which refers to UNDT, *Sophocleous v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. UNDT/2024/080).

<sup>49</sup> ILO Administrative Tribunal, *F. v. IOM*, Judgment No. 4936. In paragraph 6, the Tribunal states: “It is improbable that [the victim] could accurately be described as a contractor or otherwise a person working at the IOM ... If so, the Policy had no application to her. The harassing conduct towards her was not proscribed by the Policy. She was beyond its reach”.

<sup>50</sup> Among JIU participating organizations, at present, only WHO has endorsed CAPSEAH.

<sup>51</sup> See <https://capseah.safeguardingsupporthub.org/>.

## D. Conclusion

*A holistic and principle-based sexual misconduct policy focused on personnel behaviour helps establish clear expectations and standards of conduct.*

84. Policies, such as those promulgated by UNHCR and WHO (also applies to UNAIDS), that consolidate all three forms of sexual misconduct – sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment – into a single, unified policy document can provide greater clarity and be a more effective tool for promoting organizational culture change across the United Nations system. Such a comprehensive sexual misconduct policy recognizes power imbalances, gender inequality and abuse of power and position as the root causes of sexual misconduct and focuses on the behaviours of an organization's personnel both within and outside the workplace. Taking an approach to policy centred on sexual misconduct may also open more channels for reporting by both victims and bystanders, especially if the policy clearly defines zero tolerance, reminds personnel of the repercussions of retaliation and incorporates a victim-centred approach.

85. A holistic sexual misconduct policy that covers both sexual harassment and SEA can also help bridge misconduct that falls into grey areas, such as some forms of sexual exploitation, including solicitation of transactional sex, sexual relations with beneficiaries and child pornography. It can also offer management and leaders with a more effective, consistent and approachable way to communicate about SEA and sexual harassment, while addressing potential gaps or areas of confusion. A distinctive approach was adopted by UNICEF, whereby the three forms of sexual misconduct are integrated into its overarching safeguarding policy, which is designed to prevent and address any harm that may arise from its operations or personnel. This enables UNICEF to address a wide range of risks, not just sexual misconduct, in a holistic manner.

86. It is important to note that the Inspectors are recommending policy-level coverage of sexual misconduct with full awareness that the procedures for handling sexual harassment and SEA during the reporting, allegation intake, investigation and disciplinary measures stages will likely vary. This approach is intended to focus on the conduct of personnel, in order to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment against any individuals. It is not intended to conflate the two types of misconduct, as both include a spectrum of behaviours, from unwelcome sexually suggestive comments to criminal conduct, such as sexual assault and rape.

87. Implementation of an approach to policy centred on sexual misconduct will also differ based on organizational contexts and operational particularities. Nevertheless, change management will be necessary in all contexts to implement this approach. Both UNHCR and WHO have implemented extensive change management processes in the rollout of their respective sexual misconduct policies. These efforts emphasized the importance of an integrated approach to the issue, supported by committed and visible senior leadership.<sup>52</sup>

88. Given the impending updates to the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin and the ICSC Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, all participating organizations should seize the opportunity to review and update their policies related to sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment, staff regulations and rules and their standards of conduct documents. Due consideration to the language used and the scope of coverage of a policy is crucial, including a focus on the behaviours of the personnel rather than the status of the victim, inclusion of use of technology to

<sup>52</sup> Based on interviews with UNHCR and WHO officials from across various functions and senior leadership.

perpetrate sexual misconduct, integration of a victim-centred approach into policy documents as well as a reminder to personnel that retaliation also constitutes misconduct. As noted above, a third of participating organizations use the 2003 Secretary-General’s bulletin as their SEA policy and it is widely referenced both inside and outside the United Nations system. Its revision could serve as an important lever for a new approach. **Given its system-wide influence and external reach, the Secretary-General should consider the findings in the present review when revising the 2003 bulletin.**

89. All organizations should consider a more holistic approach by exploring the promulgation of a sexual misconduct policy as a single, stand-alone document that focuses on outlining the behaviours of personnel committing such misconduct rather than defining victims and their possible settings. As governing bodies have shown interest in PSEA, and most require reporting on it, JIU is issuing the following recommendations to enhance accountability in participating organizations.

#### **Recommendation 2**

**Executive heads of United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2027, review sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment policies to more broadly cover sexual misconduct by focusing on the prohibited conduct of personnel, affirming victims’ rights, defining “zero tolerance” and incorporating good practices, such as those related to protection against retaliation and the improper use of technology.**

#### **Recommendation 3**

**At the beginning of 2028, legislative organs and/or governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should request an update from the executive heads of their respective organization with regard to progress made in reviewing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment policies as well as any change management procedures associated with the revisions.**

### **III. Inter-agency coordination for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**

90. Harmonizing PSEA policies and their implementation across United Nations system organizations is vital to ensure that expectations around conduct, reporting, investigation and accountability are clear and consistent for all personnel, regardless of their organization or duty station. Such alignment promotes equal standards across entities, ensuring that similar violations are addressed in a consistent manner. This reduces disparities in responses and reinforces the credibility of the United Nations system in preventing and addressing SEA. It also helps external stakeholders, including victims, communities and partners, to understand what they can expect from the United Nations in terms of protection and response. This chapter analyses inter-agency mechanisms that support policy harmonization and promote the exchange of lessons learned and good practices in the implementation of PSEA policies.

#### **A. Inter-agency coordination mechanisms**

*Three key inter-agency coordination mechanisms and functions are in place to primarily address protection from sexual exploitation and abuse for the United Nations system.*

91. The Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (hereafter referred to as the Special Coordinator) is the designated system-wide lead for coordination of PSEA efforts. This position was established in 2016 by the Secretary-General ([A/70/729](#), para. 87).<sup>53</sup> The Special Coordinator is charged with overseeing the United Nations protection and response to PSEA efforts across the United Nations system and aligning PSEA approaches and enhancing coordination, cooperation and system-wide coherence in line with the Secretary-General's 2017 Strategy. Based on interviews and responses to the review's questionnaires, the work of the Special Coordinator is appreciated as it provides high-level visibility into the activities of PSEA coordinators and focal points, especially at the field level, as well as senior-level engagement for inter-agency PSEA efforts.

92. The Victims' Rights Advocate position was created in 2017 to report directly to the Secretary-General, to "work with United Nations entities across the system to ensure that every victim receives appropriate personal care, follow-up attention and information on the progress of his or her case" ([A/71/818](#), para. 28). The United Nations protocol on the provision of assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse of 2019 designates the Victims' Rights Advocate the role of monitoring, overseeing and coordinating the strategic vision for victim assistance system-wide, including providing policy support and advice to United Nations system organizations. The Victims' Rights Advocate is also charged with working with all parts of the United Nations system, at headquarters locations and in the field, Member States, national legal and human rights institutions, civil society, national and international NGOs, the media and others to build networks of support and to assist in ensuring the accountability of perpetrators, remedies for victims and the resolution of paternity claims for children born as a result of SEA.

93. IASC is the primary coordination mechanism to facilitate a coherent and timely international response to emergencies and to formulate policy to strengthen humanitarian action. It brings together executive heads from 19 United Nations organizations, including 10 JIU participating organizations and NGO partners. Its approach and key documents on PSEA are widely respected and adhered to by IASC members as well as other organizations outside the humanitarian sector. A technical advisory group is convened monthly with protection from sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment (PSEAH) focal points for IASC members, and a network of PSEA coordinators meets regularly as a community of practice. IASC hosts high-level meetings with their principals and deputy principals, and PSEA has been on some agendas for discussion. Of note has been the practice of establishing a rotating IASC Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment. The Champions "set the tone for all entities, convening IASC and external stakeholders around the shared vision and a cohesive multi-year approach to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. They promote long-term cultural and attitudinal change to all forms of sexual misconduct and bolster the implementation of IASC policies and commitments".<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> The Secretary-General "appointed, for a time-bound period, a special coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse". 'Time-bound' for the first incumbent meant that the position was not full-time and duties would be covered as needed. In 2022 the position was converted by the Secretary-General to a full-time position at the Under-Secretary-General level (see [A/76/702](#)).

<sup>54</sup> IASC, *IASC Vision and Strategy: Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual Harassment (PSEAH) 2022–2026*.

94. Details, including staffing for each mechanism, reporting lines and coordination activities of the Special Coordinator, the Victims' Rights Advocate and IASC can be found in annex IV.

*The system-wide roles and responsibilities of the Special Coordinator and the Victims' Rights Advocate are often conflated with their perceived leadership roles with respect to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and victim assistance within United Nations Secretariat entities.*

95. Although, under the mandate of the Special Coordinator, the position holds a system-wide role, the Inspectors observed and were informed by key stakeholders, including high-level officials at the United Nations Secretariat, that the Special Coordinator is perceived to be the lead for all Secretariat activities related to PSEA, in addition to holding a system-wide coordination role. One Secretariat official commented that the lead for PSEA in the Secretariat is "an unanswered question". This ambiguity was not just present in Secretariat headquarters locations but also in the field where many believed that the Special Coordinator was the default lead for all issues related to PSEA and were unclear about the roles of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and other offices, such as the Department of Operational Support and the Department of Peace Operations on policy-level issues concerning PSEA. **The Inspectors advise the United Nations Secretariat to clarify the roles and responsibilities with respect to PSEA within the organization, giving strong consideration to the fact that the Special Coordinator has a system-wide mandate.**

96. A similar pattern is evident with respect to the Victims' Rights Advocate, as reflected in the responses from the United Nations Secretariat and other entities regarding the designated roles and responsibilities for victim assistance. The United Nations Secretariat, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) all confirmed that the Victims' Rights Advocate is considered the designated person responsible for providing assistance to SEA victims in cases where their own personnel are the alleged perpetrators (see also table 19 in chapter VIII). This conflation of roles is particularly concerning, and these misconceptions underscore the fact that these entities have not established or designated this critical role within their own organizational structures. The 2019 United Nations protocol on victim assistance clearly states that United Nations entities are responsible for providing assistance to victims of SEA perpetrated by their personnel. **As the Victims' Rights Advocate holds a system-wide mandate rather than an operational role within individual organizations, the Inspectors advise the United Nations Secretariat, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC to assign roles and responsibilities within their own structures for providing assistance to victims of SEA perpetrated by their own personnel, and to clearly define these responsibilities to ensure effective support in line with a victim-centred approach.**

*Current inter-agency coordination mechanisms related to sexual misconduct demand significant time and resources from Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations.*

97. PSEA focal points in headquarters locations have indicated that there are several inter-agency activities, meetings and demands on their time, and in addition to PSEA, most also cover sexual harassment within their organizations. CEB also has an executive group on sexual harassment that convenes regular meetings. This group evolved from the CEB task force on addressing sexual harassment within United Nations system organizations and includes all JIU participating organizations that are CEB members. The executive group has sustained high-level engagement from senior officials as well as focal points. Many of the same PSEA focal points also participate in the CEB executive group meetings and the meetings organized by the Special Coordinator and

IASC. While IASC and the Special Coordinator have made attempts to coordinate their meetings and streamline their efforts, PSEA focal points indicated that between the various system-wide mechanisms – including the CEB sexual harassment initiatives – streamlining and better coordination on PSEA would be welcome.

*Efforts to ensure protection from sexual exploitation and abuse have a limited system-wide reach across United Nations system organizations.*

98. Unlike the system-wide focus and attention on sexual harassment, activities on PSEA have had limited reach across the United Nations system in terms of overall participation by CEB members and other United Nations entities. The High-Level Steering Group on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse which is coordinated by the Special Coordinator and his office and chaired by the Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations Secretariat, includes heads of Secretariat departments and deputy directors of its funds and programmes. It was established in 2017 to ensure a coordinated, system-wide approach to combating SEA across United Nations operations, involving various Secretariat departments, and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. At the July 2024 biannual meeting, the only specialized agencies represented were IOM and WHO, both of which are also IASC members.

99. Inter-agency activities for PSEA have been largely carried out by operational organizations, primarily those working in humanitarian and development contexts. In interviews with several officials, SEA is perceived to be a peacekeeping or humanitarian issue, occurring in field operations, and is not perceived to be an issue for headquarters-based and/or normative organizations. The Inspectors noted that several senior officials from these organizations indicated that SEA was simply not a problem in their organization. The Secretary-General conveyed in his 2017 high-level address on the United Nations response to SEA that “sexual exploitation and abuse is not a problem of peacekeeping, it is a problem of the entire United Nations. Contrary to the information spreading that this is a question related to our peacekeeping operations, it is necessary to say that the majority of the cases of sexual exploitation and abuse are done by the civilian organizations of the United Nations, and not by uniformed personnel in peacekeeping operations.”<sup>55</sup>

100. Through data collection and interviews, the JIU confirms that there have been SEA allegations in several of the United Nations system organizations outside the peacekeeping and humanitarian contexts (see also chapter I, section D.2). Even small, headquarters-based JIU participating organizations have had SEA cases, but they have categorized them as sexual harassment for various reasons, including insufficient policy guidance and/or perhaps to minimize public attention. As pointed out in the previous chapter, at least 14 organizations have reported sexual assault allegations and at least 3 organizations have reported rape allegations (by United Nations personnel against another United Nations personnel) as sexual harassment, a distinction that may downplay the gravity of the act. As noted by the Secretary-General, SEA can occur in any organizational context and is not limited by its definition in terms of where it occurs or to whom.

*The lack of policy coherence and uneven inter-agency engagement on sexual exploitation and abuse, in contrast with the more unified approach taken towards sexual harassment, has hindered system-wide efforts, highlighting the need to address both under a common framework on sexual misconduct.*

101. Although much has been accomplished in terms of developing tools and materials to address SEA in humanitarian and emergency contexts, and to some extent in the development context, the current inter-agency bifurcation with respect to coverage of

<sup>55</sup> <https://un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-09-18/secretary-generals-sea-address-high-level-meeting>.

SEA and sexual harassment has left SEA behind in terms of policy coherence (as outlined in the previous chapter) and limited the engagement of some United Nations system organizations with inter-agency initiatives (as noted above). Inter-agency coordination on sexual harassment through the CEB mechanism has been able to secure the participation of all CEB member organizations. In contrast, inter-agency participation in SEA-related efforts remains voluntary, and engagements by some entities working in normative and development settings has been limited or sporadic.

102. Inter-agency coordination within the United Nations system would benefit on many fronts from SEA and sexual harassment, writ large, being addressed as sexual misconduct (or as SEAH, as some might prefer). With greater coordination and focused resources dedicated to tackling sexual misconduct, including recognizing the common root causes of both SEA and sexual harassment, more can be accomplished than the separate workstreams have generated, in terms of policy, prevention and training. This pivot for these entities – the Special Coordinator, the Victims’ Rights Advocate, IASC and CEB – would provide the United Nations system with further clarity and reach for PSEA, as it is considered within the policy rubric of sexual misconduct. The shift to focusing policy on sexual misconduct and on personnel conduct (outlined in the previous chapter) has already been championed by IASC and some donors and has been adopted by a few participating organizations that have recognized the benefits of addressing the root causes of the issue with a combined policy.

*A new approach and strategy for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse are necessary to move the United Nations system forward.*

103. The Secretary-General’s 2017 strategy (see [A/71/818](#) and [A/71/818/Corr.1](#)) provided an approach to addressing SEA that was reflective of a particular context and constituted a response to a crisis. The strategy laid the foundation for inter-agency functions and response mechanisms; however, as time has passed, it has fallen short in several key areas that have evolved since its launch. The lack of coherence and harmonization across the system in the areas of policy (see chapter II), prevention and safe recruitment (see chapters IV–VII), disciplinary actions and implementation of a victim-centred approach can only be addressed effectively with an updated strategy and a new approach.

104. This new approach and strategy could mobilize the inter-agency effort in developing comprehensive prevention and organizational tools that focus on the conduct of personnel rather than on the status and location of the victim of the alleged sexual misconduct. The Inspectors are cognizant that there are context-specific issues related to both sexual harassment and SEA that would require a particular focus as appropriate, such as in humanitarian and emergency settings and the issues particular to peacekeeping operations. That said, the comprehensive efforts to tackle sexual misconduct as a system-wide topic and to develop a new strategy that builds on the 2017 Secretary-General’s strategy, would also assist those organizations with minimal engagement on the topic in building their capacity to develop policies and practices to address the wider issues identified as sexual misconduct.

105. The following recommendation is intended to build on system-wide efforts to address SEA and sexual harassment and capitalize on leadership to promote inter-agency coordination and coherence for a new approach and strategy to address sexual misconduct; it is complemented by recommendation 15 (see chapter IX).

#### **Recommendation 4**

**By the end of 2026, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should take individual and/or collective action, in consultation with the executive heads of other CEB organizations, preferably within the framework of existing inter-agency mechanisms, to comprehensively address and coordinate with regard to the**



prevention of and response to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (sexual misconduct) and create a new strategy that builds on the approach set out in the Secretary-General's 2017 report (A/71/818 and A/71/818/Corr.1), focusing on prevention, response and integrating a victim-centred approach.

## **B. System-wide data collection and reporting on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse**

*Despite improvements to system-wide reporting mechanisms, gaps remain as several United Nations system organizations have not joined centralized sexual exploitation and abuse reporting mechanisms, limiting the coherence, transparency and completeness of data across the system.*

106. In the wake of the 2003 investigations into sexual exploitation of refugees by aid workers in West Africa, the General Assembly laid the foundation for more transparent and consistent reporting on SEA allegations against humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel. There are two main databases for recording SEA allegations and updating cases, which are based on operational context. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/306 (para. 10) of 2003, requested data on SEA allegations in peacekeeping missions and humanitarian operations to be maintained.

107. The “Conduct in UN field missions” database,<sup>56</sup> collects SEA allegations against personnel of peacekeeping operations and special political missions while the iReport SEA Tracker records allegations against United Nations system staff and affiliate personnel, personnel of implementing partners outside the peace operations and non-United Nations forces working under a Security Council mandate. A series of resolutions<sup>57</sup> have guided the development of the two systems, and attempts have been made to merge them for comprehensive reporting of allegations against both uniformed and civilian personnel without success. Data collected by each tool is found in the annexes of the Secretary-General’s annual reports on special measures for SEA.<sup>58</sup> These annexes present allegations disaggregated by type of personnel and organization, with analysis of data for United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes, and for peacekeeping and special political missions. The information on peacekeeping and special political missions includes more granular information, including, among other details, the nationality of the personnel involved.

108. These annual reports include data from both the iReport, which is managed by the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OSC-SEA), and the “Conduct in UN field missions” database, managed by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance. While the “Conduct in UN field missions” database records only data on SEA allegations from peacekeeping and special political missions, the iReport is a system-wide database used by agencies, funds and programmes, as envisaged in the Secretary-General’s 2017 PSEA strategy (see A/71/818, para. 41). As of 2021, 26 United Nations organizations had agreed to participate in the effort to centralize reporting of SEA allegations to the Secretary-General. According to OSC-SEA, all except six (ICAO, IMO, ITU, UPU, WIPO and WMO) JIU participating organizations

<sup>56</sup> See <https://conduct.unmissions.org/data>.

<sup>57</sup> In its resolution 57/306, paragraph 7, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that “clear and consistent procedures for impartially reporting and investigating instances of sexual exploitation and related offences are in place in all United Nations peacekeeping missions and humanitarian operations.” See A/71/818 for reporting on non-United Nations forces; A/71/818 for implementing partners and vendors.

<sup>58</sup> See <https://conduct.unmissions.org/reports-secretary-general-special-measures-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-sexual-abuse>.

officially agreed to provide information on SEA allegations to the Secretary-General. Under the arrangement, the organizations agreed that, “if such [SEA] allegations were made, they would be reported using [iReport] and would also be readily available to the public on the system-wide reporting site”.<sup>59</sup> The agreement does not limit reporting of allegations to humanitarian contexts or only to those SEA allegations involving beneficiaries. To support system-wide harmonization and coherence, ICAO, IMO, ITU, UPU, WIPO and WMO should consider participating in the centralized reporting of SEA allegations through the iReport SEA Tracker.

*The iReport SEA Tracker lacks harmonization in terms of how and when data is reported and coherence with respect to what is reported.*

109. Interviews with oversight offices of JIU participating organizations revealed inconsistencies in how SEA allegations are reported in the iReport. These inconsistencies result from variances in how organizations use the platform, including lack of harmonization regarding what should be reported, at what stage of an allegation a report should be made and in what operational context, and unclear designation of responsibility for entering certain data. Additionally, the database lacks fields to capture key categories of alleged perpetrators. For example, commercial vendors are not included as a category, and there is no way to differentiate between personnel from non-governmental implementing partners and those from governmental implementing partners. Given that implementing partners account for the largest share of SEA allegations (see figure I in chapter I), the ability to disaggregate data on governmental partners is crucial. This distinction is important because this group poses specific challenges in terms of responding to SEA due to political and, in some contexts, operational complexities.

110. The Inspectors have reviewed various memorandums and notes attempting to harmonize the iReport, and OSC-SEA has acknowledged awareness of some of the concerns raised. Participating organizations note that there are fields in the database that are largely ignored by organizations, and there are harmonization issues in the iReport in terms of (a) at what point are allegations entered and how often are they updated; and (b) who enters the data when an implementing partner has multiple United Nations agreements to avoid double counting.

111. The larger question for the iReport is how to ensure coherence across organizations in terms of: (a) whether the status of the victim determines if a SEA allegation is entered (e.g. when the victim is not a beneficiary); (b) whether to enter allegations of sexual abuse (acts such as sexual assault and rape) perpetrated by United Nations personnel against other United Nations personnel.

112. These issues, some of which are covered in more detail below, are related not only to the transparency of data on SEA allegations but also to the integrity and intent of the database to represent system-wide SEA data in a coherent manner. Moreover, since the largest proportion of allegations are against personnel of implementing partners, the ability to disaggregate by the type of implementing partners is a key missing component. In addition, there is limited information on SEA allegations involving vendor personnel, as the iReport does not include a dedicated category for this group. The Inspectors also note that there are opportunities for the iReport to enhance public transparency by including more detailed data, such as information on investigation and disciplinary proceeding timelines, criminal referrals, final

<sup>59</sup> “United Nations entities participating in the reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations to the Secretary-General of the United Nations”, provided to JIU by OSC-SEA. Available at [https://un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/sites/www.un.org.preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/files/list\\_of\\_participating\\_un\\_entities.pdf](https://un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/sites/www.un.org.preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/files/list_of_participating_un_entities.pdf).

consequences for perpetrators in substantiated cases and assistance provided to victims and/or the communities at large.

113. The following recommendation is aimed at enhancing system-wide coherence, harmonization and transparency of SEA data.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**By the end of 2026, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should take individual and/or collective action, in consultation with the executive heads of other CEB member organizations, preferably within the framework of existing inter-agency coordination mechanisms, to establish a working group to address the coherence and harmonization of SEA data, including what data are reported and in what context, when allegations should be entered and updated as well as the addition of data fields and functions to improve the analysis, transparency and integrity of SEA data.**

### **C. Access to sexual exploitation and abuse data and transparency with respect to allegations**

*Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators and inter-agency coordinators for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse lack insight into the actual number of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations within their operational contexts.*

114. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators and inter-agency PSEA coordinators interviewed reported limited awareness of their ability to access anonymized SEA allegations disaggregated by country from the iReport,<sup>60</sup> often relying instead on their own spreadsheets based on spotty reporting and updates from country team members. Up-to-date, country-level data on SEA allegations and their status would enhance the critical function played by Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators and inter-agency PSEA coordinators by improving risk assessments, action plans, victim assistance and the design of prevention activities. **The Inspectors advise the Special Coordinator to ensure systematic reporting on SEA allegations to the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators and inter-agency PSEA coordinators, particularly to support the development of annual PSEA action plans.**

*The submission of incomplete sexual exploitation and abuse allegation data to the iReport by the United Nations Secretariat and some of its entities highlights a lack of transparency.*

115. Most agencies, funds and programmes report SEA allegations in the iReport<sup>61</sup> regardless of the operational context in which the incidents occurred or the type of victim involved, as the inter-agency agreement does not stipulate that allegations must relate to a particular setting and does not provide a set of criteria for reporting allegations.<sup>62</sup> In interviews with United Nations system oversight professionals, many understood that the agreement was to report on all SEA allegations, and Member States have come to rely on this level of transparency from some organizations, which

<sup>60</sup> Country-specific allegations are included in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report on special measures for PSEA for the respective year.

<sup>61</sup> Most CEB member organizations joined this system-wide reporting mechanism by the end of September 2021.

<sup>62</sup> For example, the supplementary information in [A/78/774](#) includes reporting from FAO, ILO, IOM, OCHA, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, United Nations Volunteers, UNOPS, UNRWA, WFP and WHO.

refer Member States directly to the iReport for updates on specific cases. Data in the iReport for United Nations system organizations that have signed on to the agreement and have recorded cases are then aggregated into the Secretary-General's annual report on special measures for PSEA, which is intended to include all SEA allegations as reported by all the United Nations system organizations that agreed to track and report allegations. However, the review found a significant number of SEA allegations handled by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) that have not been publicly reported in the Secretary-General's annual report, the iReport or the "Conduct in UN field missions" database.

116. OIOS handles misconduct allegations, including those related to SEA, for the United Nations Secretariat entities as well as ICAO, ITC, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), UNODC and UN Tourism. A comparison of SEA allegation data submitted to JIU by OIOS for the period 2017 to 2023 with the data available in the three main public reporting channels mentioned above (i.e. the Secretary-General's annual report, the iReport SEA Tracker, and the "Conduct in UN field missions" database) reveals that more than 100 SEA allegations involving United Nations Secretariat personnel and personnel of its implementing partners are not reflected in those public sources. Allegations involving personnel from UNCTAD and UNEP have never been publicly disclosed, and several cases from UNODC, UN-Women and ITC are also missing from these channels. Table 5 provides further details.

**Table 5**  
**Number of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations from the period 2017 to 2023 that have not been publicly reported**

<i>Participating organization and category of personnel with allegations</i>	<i>Number of allegations reported by the Office of Internal Oversight Services to the Joint Inspection Unit</i>	<i>Number of allegations not included in the Secretary-General's annual report on special measures</i>	<i>Number of allegations not included in the iReport or "Conduct in UN field missions" database</i>
<b>United Nations Secretariat</b>			
Staff	185	100	102
Affiliate personnel	35	12	11
Personnel of implementing partners	32	13	5
<b>UNCTAD</b>			
Staff	4	4	4
<b>UNEP</b>			
Staff	2	2	2
Personnel of implementing partners	1	1	1
<b>UN-Habitat</b>			
Staff	6	5	5
Personnel of implementing partners	1	1	1
<b>UNODC</b>			
Staff	4	2	2
<b>UN-Women</b>			
Staff	6	5	—
<b>ITC</b>			
Staff	3	3	3
Affiliate personnel	1	1	—

<i>Participating organization and category of personnel with allegations</i>	<i>Number of allegations reported by the Office of Internal Oversight Services to the Joint Inspection Unit</i>	<i>Number of allegations not included in the Secretary-General's annual report on special measures</i>	<i>Number of allegations not included in the iReport or "Conduct in UN field missions" database</i>
<b>Total number of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations not publicly reported</b>		<b>149</b>	<b>136</b>

*Source:* JIU corporate questionnaire, the Secretary General's annual reports on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and iReport SEA Tracker and "Conduct in UN field missions" database, both accessed 13 March 2025.

117. This issue of missing SEA allegations in public reports has already been highlighted in the OIOS evaluation of SEA conducted in 2021, where it was pointed out that the United Nations Secretariat only reports allegations occurring specifically in peacekeeping and humanitarian contexts and at the time did not record in the iReport or in the Secretary-General's annual report 51 SEA allegations occurring in non-peacekeeping settings between 2015 and 2019.<sup>63</sup> The Secretariat did not accept the OIOS recommendation in the evaluation that SEA allegations against all types of Secretariat staff should be reported in the Secretary-General's report on special measures for PSEA, noting that the General Assembly had not asked for that type of reporting (i.e. specifically, allegations of SEA regardless of victim profile).<sup>64</sup>

118. This response from the United Nations Secretariat takes a narrow interpretation of the various General Assembly resolutions that guide the reporting of SEA allegations and to the General Assembly's call for transparency set out in its request to be kept informed, following its original request of 2003.<sup>65</sup> The Secretariat's response also furthers the lack of harmonization on the reporting of SEA allegations across United Nations system organizations, especially as it is the organization that is charged with managing and reporting on the data system-wide. JIU issues the following recommendation with the aim to harmonize reporting across the United Nations system and provide Member States with full transparency on SEA allegations received in all United Nations Secretariat entities.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**At its eighty-first session, the General Assembly should request that all allegations of SEA in United Nations Secretariat entities be recorded in the iReport SEA Tracker and included in the Secretary-General's annual report on special measures for PSEA.**

## **D. Conclusion**

119. Significant gaps and challenges remain in the inter-agency coordination and system-wide response to SEA. While mechanisms coordinated by the Special Coordinator, the Victims' Rights Advocate and IASC have advanced efforts in some operational contexts, their impact remains limited by unclear mandates, fragmented participation and a narrow focus on peacekeeping and humanitarian settings. PSEA

<sup>63</sup> OIOS, *Evaluation of the prevention, response and victim support efforts against sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations Secretariat staff and related personnel* (2021), para. 91 and footnote 56.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., annex II, recommendation 10. Since 2017, all United Nations system-wide data on allegations of SEA that fall within SGB/2003/13 are reported publicly online at <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/data-allegations-un-system-wide>. The reporting mechanism is not limited to peace operations but includes humanitarian and development settings.

<sup>65</sup> See General Assembly resolution 57/306, para. 12.

remains largely sidelined compared to the response to sexual harassment, which has benefited from a more coherent and coordinated system-wide approach at a high level. Data collection and reporting remain inconsistent, with major discrepancies in the public disclosure of SEA allegations, particularly within the United Nations Secretariat. These shortcomings undermine the effectiveness of current efforts and point to an urgent need for a unified inter-agency coordination mechanism that brings together SEA and sexual harassment under a comprehensive, principle-based framework. Strengthening inter-agency coordination and improving data transparency are essential steps toward a more accountable and effective response to sexual misconduct across the system.

#### **IV. Implementing strategies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and the commitment of leadership**

120. The Secretary-General's 2017 strategy (see [A/71/818](#) and [A/71/818/Corr.1](#)) laid the groundwork for establishing “tone at the top” across United Nations system organizations to address SEA, emphasizing executive leadership and capacity development for PSEA at all levels. The commitment of an organization's leadership is demonstrated in multiple ways, including, among other things, through clear policies and consistent actions, well-defined roles and accountability, sustained resource allocation and a commitment to transparency. This chapter focuses on how the commitment of leadership is tangibly demonstrated through the institutionalization of PSEA as an organization priority, with other elements of leadership addressed throughout the report.

##### **A. Accountability and capacities at the organizational level**

*Submission of annual management letters to the Secretary-General regarding protection from sexual exploitation and abuse efforts has been routinely carried out by most participating organizations, contributing to keeping the issue on the leadership's agenda at least once a year.*

121. As called for in the Secretary-General's new approach to PSEA of 2017 ([A/71/818](#), para. 50), executive heads of all JIU participating organizations, except UN Tourism, have submitted annual management letters. These letters certify that all credible SEA allegations within their responsibility have been accurately and fully reported, appropriate preventive and responsive measures have been taken, and victims have received necessary assistance. This process helps strengthen accountability and the transparency of PSEA efforts.

122. The annual letters offer executive heads an opportunity to reflect and report on their handling of SEA allegations and provide an update on their efforts related to PSEA. A review of these letters revealed varying quality, with most focusing primarily on SEA prevention. Notably, none of the participating organizations have received feedback from the United Nations Secretariat on their letters, which may encourage a “check-the-box” approach to the preparation of the letters rather than fostering meaningful engagement.

123. For organizations that have received SEA allegations, reflections on their responses were limited, particularly regarding key actions taken and lessons learned that could serve as valuable learning opportunities for other organizations. This may suggest a broader reluctance among United Nations system organizations to openly discuss (even anonymized) SEA allegations. In addition, in several letters where the number of allegations was reported, discrepancies were found between the stated figures in the letters and the numbers recorded in the iReport, indicating a lack of data

transparency and harmonization, as mentioned in the previous chapter. In most of these letters, information on measures taken to assist SEA victims is notably absent.

124. The annual management letters can serve as a valuable means for organizations to demonstrate their commitment to transparency and accountability in PSEA efforts while also serving as a resource for cross-learning among organizations. **The Secretary-General should ensure that these letters are stored in a centralized, publicly accessible repository and should request that they give greater emphasis to reflections regarding responses to SEA and how victims' rights are upheld.**

*A small number of participating organizations have incorporated indicators related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse into their corporate results frameworks, institutionalizing their commitment and accountability to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.*

125. Most participating organizations have stand-alone PSEA strategies and annual action plans that, in many cases, cascade key actions and results from headquarters to the regional and country levels. However, nine organizations have incorporated key PSEA outputs and outcomes into their corporate results frameworks, an approach that enhances visibility, institutionalizes PSEA and enables monitoring and tracking of progress related to PSEA across all organizational levels. These entities include FAO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN-Women, WFP and WHO (see table 6). This serves as a good practice.

Table 6

**Corporate indicators related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations**

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Corporate results framework and indicator related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse</i>
FAO	<p><b>Director-General's Medium-Term Plan 2026–2029 and Programme of Work and Budget 2026–2027</b></p> <p>Outcome 9.3: Direction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output 9.3.6 Strengthened prevention, mitigation and response to sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse in FAO operations.</li> <li>• Number of countries where FAO is implementing a PSEA work plan (baseline: 0, target in 2027: 50, target in 2028: 80)</li> </ul>
UNDP	<p><b>Integrated Results and Resources Framework 2022–2025</b></p> <p>Outcome 2.3: Inclusive working culture that is free from discrimination and exploitation and/or abuse continued to be built</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of Country Offices that have a sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse action plan in place</li> <li>• Percentage of Country Offices that have a system in place to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, with the following sub-indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Percentage of country offices that informed all personnel of SEA standards (target: 100 per cent)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Percentage of country offices that assessed and as appropriate reflected SEA risks in the risk logs of UNDP programmes/projects (target: 80 per cent)
- Percentage of country offices that informed implementing partners about UNDP standard with regards to SEA (target: 90 per cent)
- Percentage of country offices that have a reporting mechanism in place for SEA allegations (target: 80 per cent)
- Percentage of country offices that identified local victim/survivor support providers to assist victims/survivors of SEA (target: per cent)

UNFPA

### **Integrated Results and Resources Framework 2022–2025**

Organizational effectiveness and efficiency outcome 2: Optimized management of resources

- Proportion of country offices that have systems in place to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (target: 100 per cent)

Output 2: Quality of care and service: OP2.13: Access to sexual exploitation and abuse channel

- Proportion of countries that have a mechanism where women, adolescents and youth have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse

UNHCR

### **Global Results Framework 2022–2026**

Outcome area: Gender-based violence

- Percentage of operations that have used the organizational marker on PSEA/sexual harassment
- Number of people that received information on available protection services related to gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse and trafficking

Outcome area: Community engagement and women's empowerment

- Percentage of sites reached with awareness raising materials and/or activities on PSEA, including how to report sexual exploitation and abuse and how to access victim-centred assistance
- Percentage of UNHCR personnel trained using the 1-day internal PSEA learning package
- Percentage of people who know how to report abuse or misconduct by aid workers

UNICEF

### **Strategic Plan (2022–2025)**

Result area: Decentralized and empowered internal governance and oversight

- Percentage of country offices that have a system in place to prevent and respond to SEA with the following composite indicators
  - Status of PSEA Action Plan
  - Status of roll-out of UNICEF Reporting System
  - Status of implementation of UN Victims Assistance Protocol
  - Status on PSEA capacities of implementing partners

Result area: Children are protected from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect

- Number of children and adults who have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian, development, protection and/or other personnel who provide assistance to affected populations



UNOPS	<p><b>Expanded results framework 2024–2025</b></p> <p>Result area: People culture – inclusive, fair and positive workplace culture where people can contribute, grow and development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share of corporate targets met on PSEAH (target: 95 per cent)</li> </ul>
UN-Women	<p><b>Integrated Results and Resources Framework of UN-women Strategic Plan 2022–2025</b></p> <p>Output 4: Nurturing an empowered workforce and advancing an inclusive UN-Women culture</p> <p>UN-Women has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified to the Secretary-General and the UN-Women Executive Board that it has reported all allegations of SEA that have been brought to its attention and has taken all appropriate measures to address such allegations, in accordance with established rules and procedures for dealing with cases of staff misconduct.</li> </ul>
WFP	<p><b>Corporate results framework 2022–2025</b></p> <p>Result area: accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of beneficiaries reporting they were provided with accessible information about WFP programmes, including PSEA</li> <li>• Number of children and adults who have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian, development, protection and/or other personnel who provide assistance to affected populations</li> <li>• Percentage of WFP cooperating partners registered in the UN Partner Portal which have been assessed using the UN Implementing Partner PSEA Capacity Assessment</li> </ul> <p>Result area: people management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of employees completing mandatory training on both PSEA and preventing and responding to abusive conduct at WFP (harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination)</li> <li>• Percentage of country offices with designated PSEA focal points who have successfully completed the Ethics Office PSEA WeLearn Course for Focal Points on prevention and response to SEA</li> <li>• Percentage of country offices which have implemented corporate SEA prevention and outreach tools aimed at employees, cooperating partners, and front-line workers</li> </ul>
WHO	<p><b>General Programme of Work</b></p> <p>Output 4.2.2. The Secretariat operates in an accountable, transparent, compliant and risk management-driven manner, including through organizational learning and a culture of evaluation – Principal Risk 7: Sexual misconduct not prevented or addressed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of workforce that did not complete mandatory training on sexual misconduct/SEAH</li> <li>• Percentage of staff/personnel for which screening has not been performed</li> <li>• Percentage of country offices without SEAH annual risk assessments</li> <li>• Percentage of leaders (Heads of WHO Country Offices, Regional Directors, Assistant Director-Generals) not submitting annual management letters on PRS to DG</li> <li>• Percentage of sexual misconduct-related disciplinary actions later than 80 days after substantiated investigation report</li> </ul>

Source: JIU corporate questionnaire and desk review, data as at 31 March 2025.

*Roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse have been established in most Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations.*

126. Dedicated PSEA units or individuals have been designated to oversee the implementation of PSEA policies within participating organizations. Their placement varies across organizations, with some integrated within executive offices to maintain a direct reporting line to executive heads. Other types of units housing PSEA functions include ethics, human resources, administration, legal, operations and programmes. Notably, at FAO, the PSEA function is uniquely positioned within the Office of Emergencies and Resilience. Table 7 provides an overview, and further details are available in annex V.

Table 7

**Organizational units that house functions related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations**

<i>Organizational unit</i>	<i>Participating organization</i>
Emergency	FAO
Ethics	ITU, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNRWA, UN Tourism
Executive office	IAEA, ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR <sup>a</sup> , WFP, WHO
Human resources	United Nations Secretariat <sup>b</sup> (and UNCTAD), UNOPS, UPU, UN-Women, WIPO, WMO
Legal	UNEP, UN-Habitat
Operation/administration	ICAO, IMO, UNODC
Programme	ITC, UNICEF

*Source:* JIU corporate questionnaire, data as at 31 March 2025

<sup>a</sup> From October 2025, responsibility for PSEA will be moved to the human resources unit.

<sup>b</sup> As discussed in chapter III.A of the present report, the coordination role for PSEA at the United Nations Secretariat is unclear.

127. When the Secretary General's new approach to PSEA was introduced in 2017, several participating organizations assigned staff within their ethics offices to lead prevention and outreach efforts, building on their mandate related to staff conduct. However, experts and interviews with officials at JIU participating organizations indicate a key limitation to this arrangement: PSEA is not well integrated across the organization and lacked visibility, often being perceived as a side project of the ethics office. This was initially the case for UNHCR, WFP and WHO, which have since repositioned the PSEA function within their respective executive offices. Four other organizations have done the same; this shift has elevated the visibility of PSEA and demonstrated high-level commitment to the issue, while also enhancing the ability to coordinate prevention and response across functions.

128. The implementation of corporate PSEA strategies and action plans is overseen by designated PSEA units or individuals in all participating organizations, except for IMO. In most organizations, internal oversight units handle the receipt and management of SEA allegations. However, at UPU and UN Tourism, allegations are reported to human resources. Most internal oversight units oversee SEA investigations against their personnel. The ethics function is responsible for undertaking protective measures against retaliation in all participating organizations.

In most participating organizations, the process to execute administrative or disciplinary measures against personnel with substantiated SEA allegations is managed by human resources, typically in collaboration with legal offices.<sup>66</sup>

*Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations with field locations have made significant efforts to enhance their human resource capacities for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. However, investment in strengthening capacities for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse within headquarters-based organizations has remained limited.*

129. Substantial resources have been invested to strengthen PSEA capacities both system-wide and at JIU participating organizations. At the system-wide level, the mandate of the Special Coordinator has been extended to further enhance the United Nations response to SEA. The Office of the Special Coordinator has received additional resources, including to make the Special Coordinator a full-time role in 2022, along with increases to staffing and budget allocations over the years. The establishment of the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate in 2017, which also received a budget increase in 2025, and the appointment of the first Victims' Rights Advocate, further demonstrate concrete system-wide commitments to PSEA.

130. Since 2017, JIU participating organizations have not only strengthened their regulatory frameworks related to PSEA, as discussed in chapter II, but have also allocated dedicated resources to oversee the implementation of PSEA policies and strategies. However, the level of investment varies, with participating organizations that have an extensive field presence generally allocating more resources to PSEA capacities compared to those with little or no field presence. Across 11 participating organizations, a total of 40 full-time positions for PSEA have been established at headquarters locations, of which several are at the director level. Another 90 full-time positions for PSEA have been allocated to regional and country offices. As PSEA is a specialized field, the allocation of resources for these dedicated technical positions reflects an organization's commitment to addressing SEA. Table 8 provides a summary of these positions with more details provided in annex IV.

Table 8

**Number of full-time positions for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at headquarters, regional and country offices**

Participating organization	Headquarters				Regional level	Country level
	Number of full-time positions	Position by category and level	Funding source			
FAO	3	P-4, consultants	Extrabudgetary	–	11	
United Nations Secretariat	4	OCHA: P-5, P-4, Junior Professional Officer OHCHR: P-4	Regular budget	1	–	
UNDP	2	P-4	Extrabudgetary	–	–	
UNFPA	5	P-5, P-4, P-3, consultants	Regular budget	–	10	
UNHCR	6	D-1, P-5, P-4, P-3, G-7	Voluntary contributions	–	–	
UNICEF	3	P-4, P-3	Regular budget and emergency funding	5	28	
UNOPS	1	IICA-3	Regular budget	–	5	
UNRWA	1	P-4	Regular budget	–	–	

<sup>66</sup> At ICAO, this process is undertaken by its Bureau of Administration and Services and the Office of the Secretary General of ICAO.

Participating organization	Headquarters				
	Number of full-time positions	Position by category and level	Funding source	Regional level	Country level
UN-Women	1	P-3	Extrabudgetary	–	–
WFP	5	D-1, P-4, P-3, consultants	Regular budget	–	4
WHO	9	D-1, P-5, P-4, P-3, G-5, consultants	Regular budget	10	16

Source: JIU corporate questionnaire, data as at 31 March 2025.

131. In addition to full-time positions for PSEA, over 2,000 individuals across JIU participating organizations contribute part of their time to responsibilities related to PSEA, including serving as regional or country-level PSEA focal points.

132. The capacity across the system, and particularly in the 11 organizations listed in table 8, to support PSEA initiatives and efforts has been substantial, albeit uneven and precarious. Based on recent reductions in personnel and austerity measures in several United Nations system organizations, funding is expected to further decrease in humanitarian, development and emergency contexts, and PSEA capacity will likely also be impacted, especially positions that are not funded through an organization's regular budget (see annex IV for information on the impact of budget cuts on human resources related to PSEA).

## B. Accountability and capacities in the field

*Accountability for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse is formally delegated to senior management outside of headquarters locations in many participating organizations, reinforcing its institutionalization within the organization.*

133. In addition to assigning accountability for PSEA at headquarters locations, executive heads of 15 participating organizations have formally extended this responsibility to their senior management at the regional and country levels. The specific areas of responsibility vary across these organizations. Table 9 below provides further details on the delegation of accountability for PSEA to senior management in the field. The Inspectors noted that inter-agency coordination on PSEA at the field level is not clearly delegated in many participating organizations.

Table 9

### **Accountability of senior managers for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in field locations at Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations**

Participating organization	Delegation of accountability for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse to senior management outside of headquarters location
FAO	Heads of decentralized offices hold overall responsibility for implementing SEA prevention, mitigation and response measures in FAO operations at the country level.
ILO	Senior officials/directors are required to submit a written confirmation outlining their fulfilment of responsibilities, including reporting any SEA incidents and assessing and managing SEA risks.
United Nations Secretariat	Heads of office or mission and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators are required to submit an end-of-year management letter on PSEA.

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Delegation of accountability for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse to senior management outside of headquarters location</i>
UNAIDS	All representatives are required to report all instances of SEA and are accountable for conducting PSEA capacity assessments of implementing partners and mitigating associated risks.
UNDP	Heads of office are expected to endorse their office's PSEA action plan, confirming that relevant activities have been implemented and that their obligations on SEAH have been fulfilled. Bureau directors submit a certificate of compliance to the Administrator.
UNESCO	Managers are responsible for communicating the zero-tolerance policy on SEA and ensuring that their personnel complete the mandatory PSEA training. Directors/ heads of field offices or institutes are responsible for creating and maintaining an environment that prevents SEA, appointing PSEA focal points in the field and ensuring that implementing partners comply with requirements for PSEA.
UNFPA	Heads of office are responsible for submitting an annual managerial compliance certification, reporting on completion rate of mandatory training on PSEA, the appointment of PSEA focal points and the reporting of all SEA allegations.
UNHCR	Regional and country-level representatives are responsible for mandatory training undertaken by all personnel in their operation, victim support, feedback and response mechanisms, focal point appointment and consideration of SEA risks.
UNICEF	Heads of office are accountable for ensuring safeguarding measures are implemented, including those on PSEA (e.g. the implementation of the PSEA action plan and timely reporting of SEA allegations).
UNIDO	Heads of field offices are responsible for representing UNIDO at inter-agency PSEA networks, creating and maintaining an environment that prevents SEA and reporting any SEA allegations in a timely manner.
UNOPS	Country-level representatives are required to submit an annual management letter on PSEA and formulate a PSEA action plan.
UNRWA	Field directors have the responsibility to report any credible SEA allegations while ensuring support to victims, and to take measures for effective prevention.
UN-Women	Regional directors and country representatives are required to submit an annual management certification on PSEA.
WFP	PSEA accountabilities are included in the Executive Director entrustment letters to regional/country directors in line with the Executive Director circular on PSEA. In addition, PSEA is included in the corporate risk taxonomy, which all offices use for the annual planning and mid-year risk register exercises to assess risk levels and assign mitigation measures.
WHO	Regional directors are, inter alia, responsible for implementing global strategies on protection from sexual misconduct, appointing senior coordinators and ensuring that all heads of WHO country offices conduct annual risk assessments and develop mitigation plans. They are also tasked with integrating protection from sexual misconduct into emergency responses, taking disciplinary action when required, and holding personnel accountable to related corporate indicators. They must engage Member States in capacity-building, allocate resources for victim/survivor support, drive culture change, communicate progress and promote gender parity at senior levels to sustain efforts regionally.  Country representatives are required, inter alia, to appoint and support at least one PSEA focal point (with duties accounting for a minimum 50 per cent of the person's time), ensure PSEAH capacity in graded emergency operations,

Participating organization	Delegation of accountability for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse to senior management outside of headquarters location
	complete at least one SEA risk assessment and develop a risk mitigation plan, ensure financial resources allocated for the risk mitigation plan and facilitate the provision of victim assistance.

Source: JIU corporate questionnaire, as at 31 December 2024.

134. End-of-year management letters have also been utilized as a reporting mechanism to ensure accountability in the field at ILO, the United Nations Secretariat, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Women and WFP. As mentioned above, it is crucial that these letters include meaningful reflections on prevention activities, SEA allegations and victim assistance, where applicable, rather than following a standardized, generic format. Technical feedback from headquarters should also be provided. However, most of the letters examined by the Inspectors from a sampling of such submissions were missing these key elements.

135. Since the majority of SEA allegations involve personnel in field locations, it is essential to establish clear accountability for PSEA for senior management in these offices as well as to indicate any resources available to support their authority in terms of prevention and response. **The Inspectors call on JIU participating organizations with a field presence that have not yet done so to consider formally delegating roles and responsibilities related to PSEA to senior management outside headquarters and providing necessary resources.**

*Coordinators and focal points in the field face significant resource challenges in implementing activities relating to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, often limiting the effective fulfilment of their roles.*

136. Interviews and surveys with PSEA coordinators and focal points in country offices of JIU participating organizations revealed that resource constraints, especially related to time, funding and capacity, are a key challenge to implementing PSEA activities at the field level.

137. A survey of 140 PSEA coordinators and focal points for JIU participating organizations across 14 case study locations showed that only 15 individuals serve in their PSEA roles full-time. The rest fulfil their responsibilities related to PSEA alongside their primary duties, with most reporting that they allocate between 5 per cent and 20 per cent of their time to PSEA activities. Many emphasized the need for a full-time position dedicated to PSEA to enhance the effectiveness of PSEA efforts. Nearly a quarter of respondents expressed the need for capacity development, particularly training tailored for their roles relating to PSEA.

138. Another significant concern among respondents was the lack of dedicated funding for PSEA activities. Without earmarked funds, PSEA initiatives must be funded through general operational or programmatic budgets, which are often insufficient. Among the 84 respondents who indicated having a PSEA action plan for their office, 20 per cent reported full funding for the plan, 30 per cent stated their plan was mostly funded, 23 per cent noted partial funding and 19 per cent indicated that their plan had received no funding at all.

139. Among the 15 full-time PSEA coordinators surveyed, 5 stated that funding for their post was secured for the next two years, 9 were uncertain and 1 indicated that no funding would be available. In essence, PSEA has been institutionalized at the field level, at least in terms of institutional arrangements, but its full implementation is often constrained by resource limitations and inconsistencies across geographical locations.

*Funding for inter-agency coordinator positions, which support accountability for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse of Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators and strengthen the capacity for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse of the respective country team, remains uncertain and inconsistent, often stalling or disrupting progress.*

140. United Nations Resident Coordinators hold system-wide responsibility for ensuring the development and implementation of a collective PSEA strategy and country-level PSEA action plan in collaboration with entities represented on the United Nations country team). They are also accountable for the effective coordination and operation of a PSEA network and for ensuring that the country team has a strategy to meet its obligation to provide and facilitate assistance and support to SEA victims.<sup>67</sup> When also serving as a United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, the additional responsibilities of Resident Coordinators include, among others, ensuring that PSEA is integrated into coordination structures across humanitarian, development, peace and political operations.<sup>68</sup>

141. To effectively fulfil their PSEA responsibilities, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators require both technical expertise and financial resources. Inter-agency PSEA coordinator positions play a crucial role in providing the necessary technical and coordination support. However, these roles are not standardized, regardless of the SEA risk level, in the operations of their offices. A range of strategies has been employed to sustain these positions, including time-bound donor funding, ad hoc financial contributions from one or two United Nations entities, cost-sharing among country team members, secondments and assignment of existing staff to take on the role part-time.

142. Table 10 presents data from 13 case study locations, showing the presence of inter-agency coordinators alongside the number of SEA allegations reported in each operation. The table highlights a clear mismatch between the volume of SEA allegations and the availability of technical inter-agency capacity in certain contexts. This gap is evident in countries like Kenya, with no inter-agency coordinator, and in the case of Uganda, which had the highest number of allegations among the case study locations but only with a part-time coordinator whose contract ended in 2024 with no replacement planned. The position in Ukraine is at risk to be discontinued after May 2025. Based on focus groups and interviews in three of the case study locations,<sup>69</sup> these positions have been crucial for inter-agency coordination, supporting PSEA capacities of the country team members, particularly for entities that lack PSEA expertise and resources. These coordinators play a key role in engaging with implementing partners and host governments as well as filling the gaps in victim assistance.

Table 10

**Number of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse compared with presence of inter-agency coordinators for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, by case study location**

<sup>67</sup> See UN Sustainable Development Group, *Management and accountability framework of the UN development and resident coordinator system: consolidated version* (2021).

<sup>68</sup> See IASC, *Leadership in Humanitarian Action: Handbook for Humanitarian Coordinators* (2024), available at [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/Leadership%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action\\_Handbook%20for%20Humanitarian%20Coordinators\\_2024.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/Leadership%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action_Handbook%20for%20Humanitarian%20Coordinators_2024.pdf); and IASC, “Statement by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment”, 30 July 2024.

<sup>69</sup> Central African Republic, Republic of Moldova and Uganda.

Country	Total number of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations (2017–2024) <sup>a</sup>	Inter-agency coordinator for prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse at the Office of Resident and/or Humanitarian Coordinator
Bangladesh	163	Full-time, P-4, funded by all country team entities and Australian Aid. Contract managed by UNFPA, funded until 15 June 2025.
Central African Republic	110	Full-time, P-4, funded by Inter-Agency PSEA Capacity Project until the end of 2025 contract managed by OCHA
Colombia	45	Full-time, P-4, funded by PSEACap until July 2026 Full-time, service contract, seconded by WFP
Ecuador	15	Head of the Resident Coordinator's Office, P-4, dedicating 5 per cent of time
Kenya	109	No active position
Lebanon	54	Full-time, P-4, funded by the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund until the end of 2024
Mali	7	Full-time, P-4, funded by PSEACap until October 2026, contract managed by OCHA
Moldova	2	Inter-agency coordinator for refugee response, funded by UNHCR, P-3, serving 50 per cent of time
Nigeria	83	Full-time, P-4, funded by WHO
Thailand	16	Head of the Resident Coordinator's Office, P-4, dedicating 10 per cent of time
Uganda	200	Vacant (until December 2024, the role was filled by a UN-Women Gender Adviser dedicating 50 per cent of time)
Ukraine	4	Full-time, P-5, funded through UNFPA until May 2025 under extrabudgetary funding. UNDP is exploring the possibility of funding the post in the next funding cycle.
Yemen	37	UNICEF Programme Specialist/PSEA, dedicating 50 per cent of time

Source: JIU corporate questionnaire and surveys, data as at 31 December 2024.

<sup>a</sup> The information on allegations is intended to provide a factual context of the current situation. It helps to illustrate the scale and nature of reported incidents but should be interpreted with caution and in conjunction with other qualitative and contextual information. A comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of PSEA efforts requires looking beyond numbers to examine the systems, safeguards and support mechanisms in place.

143. The importance of inter-agency PSEA coordinators cannot be overstated. They provide essential technical support to Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators in harmonizing efforts on PSEA across country team entities, facilitating joint engagement with local partners and stakeholders and advancing inter-agency PSEA action plans. Their in-depth experience and acquired understanding of local contexts, particularly cultural norms and practices, is key to effective PSEA activities. However, when funding for these positions is discontinued or unstable, resulting in high turnover, critical institutional knowledge and inter-agency coordination capacity are often lost. In contexts presenting high risks of SEA, such as the Central African Republic, Uganda, and Ukraine, the inability to secure sustained funding for these roles raises serious concerns about the United Nations system's commitment to PSEA.

## C. Conclusion

144. Most JIU participating organizations have demonstrated strong organizational and leadership commitment to prioritizing and institutionalizing PSEA by assigning clear roles, responsibilities and accountability, strengthening human resource capacity and continuing to embed PSEA into their corporate agenda. However, personnel designated to lead PSEA efforts, as well as senior leaders in the field, often lack the necessary resources to fully carry out their responsibilities. Similarly, while Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators hold inter-agency responsibilities for PSEA, the availability of resources remains inconsistent, even in contexts with high risks of SEA. These high-risk countries must be prioritized to receive adequate human and



financial resources to effectively address and mitigate SEA risks. The Inspectors stress the importance of making decisions with respect to these key positions that ensure sustainable and predictable funding. The following recommendation is intended to prioritize and standardize inter-agency PSEA coordination within resident and humanitarian coordinator offices for high-risk and priority countries.

#### **Recommendation 7**

**By the end of 2026, the Secretary-General should commission a report with regard to the feasibility of establishing shared and/or common services to support sustained and regular funding for inter-agency PSEA coordinators in high-risk and priority countries.**

## **V. Addressing the conduct of United Nations system personnel through training, outreach and change management initiatives**

145. It is crucial that personnel have a clear understanding of the expected standards of conduct and the consequences of any violations, including those related to SEA. This chapter examines the SEA prevention efforts of JIU participating organizations, focusing on measures to manage the conduct of their personnel and personnel of implementing partners and vendors.

### **A. Training and awareness-raising with respect to policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse for United Nations personnel**

*Training on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse is mandatory for United Nations system staff and, to varying degrees, for affiliate personnel in most organizations, and the completion rates of such trainings are generally high.*

146. Except for IAEA,<sup>70</sup> IMO, ITU, UNIDO, UN Tourism and WMO, all JIU participating organizations require their staff to complete an online training specifically on PSEA upon joining the workforce. For most, this is a one-time requirement. However, FAO mandates annual refresher training, while ICAO, UNHCR, WFP and WHO require staff to complete a refresher training every three years. UNESCO recommends a refresher training every three years and conducts annual training for personnel at high-risk duty stations. Several organizations impose consequences for failing to complete the mandatory training, which is a good practice. Table 11 provides examples of staff activities and benefits contingent on completion of mandatory courses including those on PSEA.

Table 11

#### **Good practices of Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations in enforcing consequences for non-compliance with mandatory training on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Staff activities and benefits contingent on completion of all mandatory training courses</i>
ICAO	Receiving a rating of “consistently exceed expectations” or “occasionally exceeds expectations” in performance evaluation

<sup>70</sup> The IAEA mandatory training entitled “Values in action” includes PSEA as a topic.

Participating organization	Staff activities and benefits contingent on completion of all mandatory training courses
	Receiving a staff award
ILO	Accessing staff development funds and participating in staff development opportunities
UNAIDS	Receiving within-grade salary increases
UNDP	Registering for any formal learning programme
UNEP	Travelling on field missions
UN-Habitat	Travelling on field missions
UNHCR	Applying for vacant posts or being eligible for contract extensions
UN-Women	Requesting external training
WHO	Completing the performance management cycle (the form cannot be signed)
	Deploying to health emergency response initiatives

Source: JIU corporate questionnaire, data as at 31 March 2025.

147. In most organizations, the completion rate for the mandatory training courses, including those on PSEA, is monitored to ensure staff receive reminders as needed. According to the JIU corporate questionnaire, the completion rate for the PSEA training in 2023 ranged from 67 per cent (UNESCO) to 98 per cent (UNAIDS)<sup>71</sup> (excluding organizations that do not track completion rates).

148. Sixteen organizations mandate training on PSEA for affiliate personnel, such as consultants, service contract personnel, United Nations volunteers and interns. These include FAO, ICAO, ITC, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UPU, WFP and WHO. **Since affiliate personnel play a vital role in supporting the United Nations system in fulfilling its mandate, participating organizations are encouraged to require PSEA training for their affiliate personnel.**

149. Civilian personnel assigned to peacekeeping and special political missions must complete the civilian pre-deployment training provided by the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support. For uniformed military and police personnel, it is the responsibility of the troop- and police-contributing countries to deliver pre-deployment training in line with General Assembly resolution 49/37. These countries must also certify that their personnel have completed the training. To date, the completion rate is reported to be 100 per cent.

*Standard mandatory training on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse may not fully address gaps in understanding of policies and expected conduct, as cultural norms and practices can influence interpretation. Supplementary training and awareness-raising activities on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse help contextualize prohibited conduct and enhance comprehension of relevant policies.*

<sup>71</sup> The exact staff completion rates of training on PSEA in 2023 was as follows: FAO, 97.4 per cent; ILO, 93 per cent; ITC, 96.6 per cent; Secretariat, 82.3 per cent; UNAIDS, 98 per cent; UNDP, 96 per cent; UNESCO, 67 per cent; UNFPA, 91 per cent; UN-Habitat, 70.3 per cent; UNHCR, 91 per cent; UNICEF, 94 per cent; UNOPS, 96 per cent; UNRWA, 80.6 per cent; UN-Women, 78 per cent; WFP, 82 per cent; WHO, 92 per cent; WIPO, 95 per cent.

150. Mandatory PSEA training is crucial for ensuring that personnel understand the relevant policy and expected standards of conduct; however, it may not always result in behavioural change that effectively deters SEA. A key limitation is that standard training often lacks cultural and social context, which makes it difficult to produce standard materials that fully resonate with all participants, despite recent efforts to incorporate real-life scenarios into these materials.

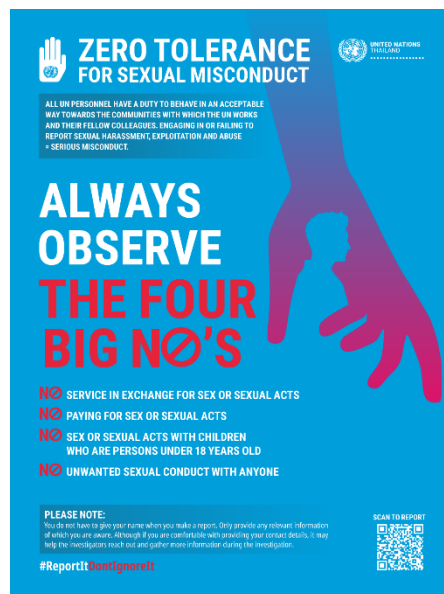
151. A 2024 global survey by OSC-SEA found that over 96 per cent of 68,316 United Nations personnel recognized that engaging in sexual activities with a sex worker is unacceptable, even where sex work is legal. However, more than 2,500 respondents held a different view. Similarly, while 99 per cent of those surveyed understood that sexual relations with anyone under 18 is unacceptable even with consent, 609 respondents disagreed. These results highlight persistent gaps in understanding, likely influenced by cultural and social norms, underscoring the importance of continuous, context-sensitive training and awareness efforts.

152. In addition to mandatory training, organizations and inter-agency PSEA networks have conducted various learning initiatives at both the headquarters and field level to raise awareness and deepen understanding of PSEA; this includes ongoing efforts by UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR and WHO. These initiatives support personnel in applying PSEA policies within their specific contexts, especially where understanding prohibited conduct, such as solicitation of sex workers and engaging in sexual relations with minors, or fulfilling the duty to report may be complicated by social and cultural norms. Officials responsible for PSEA noted that interactive sessions that allow for discussion of real-life scenarios are more effective than self-paced online trainings. However, such interactive efforts are limited by resource constraints, and several focal points reported a lack of support from senior management for the provision of resources for such activities.

153. A review of awareness-raising materials on PSEA for personnel showed that most materials distributed at both headquarters and field locations are generic, primarily outlining prohibited acts as stated in policy documents, the zero-tolerance policy and reporting channels. While these materials help reinforce daily awareness of PSEA, they may not effectively address location-specific nuances, including SEA risks unique to a particular setting or operational context. The case study revealed some good practices employed in the materials designed by the inter-agency PSEA networks in Bangladesh, Moldova and Thailand. A PSEA poster for personnel in Bangkok (see figure III), available in English and Thai, for example, breaks down prohibited conduct into “The Four Big No’s”. One key message, “No paying for sex or sexual acts”, simplifies and clarifies a policy statement commonly found in PSEA materials, which is typically phrased as “Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, is prohibited”. By simplifying and adapting policy language to the local context, the poster directly addresses SEA risks relevant to both personnel stationed in and those visiting Thailand.

Figure III

**Poster on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, developed by the United Nations country team in Thailand**



154. Overall, mandatory PSEA training, along with various capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives, has contributed to most United Nations personnel being familiar with policies related to PSEA. According to the OSC-SEA 2024 global survey, 99.2 percent of respondents (50,325 individuals) agreed or strongly agreed that PSEA training effectively raised the awareness of their duties and responsibilities in preventing SEA. However, concerns remain regarding how personnel in certain operational contexts, particularly those at headquarters locations, perceive the relevance of SEA in relation to their conduct. Additionally, several headquarters-based organizations with little or no field presence have not prioritized PSEA training, and, as discussed in chapter II, some lack a PSEA policy altogether. It is crucial to recognize that the risk of SEA is not limited to organizations with a field presence. As noted in chapter I, SEA has occurred both in the field and at headquarters locations across all operational contexts. **Participating organizations are encouraged to initiate or continue providing mandatory PSEA training while also delivering additional context-specific capacity-building and awareness-raising activities for their personnel and ensuring that a victim-centred approach is incorporated.**

*Mandatory training on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse for implementing partner personnel has not been systematically conducted or monitored.*

155. Implementing partners that enter into cooperative agreements with JIU participating organizations are generally required, under clauses concerning PSEA, to implement measures for preventing and addressing SEA, including providing training to their personnel (see chapter VII.C for more information on implementing partner requirements). However, implementing partners are typically not required to submit evidence of having conducted mandatory training on PSEA. Through the capacity-assessment process (covered in detail in chapter VII), several participating organizations, such as UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS and WHO, monitor implementing partners to ensure the delivery of mandatory PSEA training, particularly for personnel in organizations identified as having weak capacity for PSEA. Beyond these efforts, capacity development for PSEA for implementing partners is primarily managed by relevant field offices that work directly with them. While this approach enables context-specific PSEA training and materials, its effectiveness largely depends on the PSEA capacity of United Nations personnel in field offices, which, as noted in chapter IV, varies significantly.

156. In all 14 case study locations, country offices of JIU participating organizations reported regularly providing PSEA training to implementing partners, either individually, in collaboration with other United Nations entities, or through inter-agency PSEA networks. In some instances, PSEA was integrated into broader training programmes, such as the UNDP training on the harmonized approach to cash transfers and the onboarding training delivered by UNICEF to its civil society implementing partners, which is a good practice. In two emergency contexts, in the Republic of Moldova and in Ukraine, UNHCR delivered extensive training to its implementing partners.

*Training on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse for vendor personnel remains extremely limited.*

157. JIU participating organizations generally do not require vendor personnel to complete PSEA training, regardless of the SEA risk level associated with their services. However, similar to the clauses on PSEA used in agreements with implementing partners, most organizations incorporate provisions on PSEA into their commercial contracts with vendors, obligating them to implement appropriate measures for preventing and responding to SEA (see chapter VII for more information). Nonetheless, compliance with these provisions is not monitored.

158. The responses to the JIU corporate questionnaire indicated that only a few participating organizations have implemented measures targeted at vendors considered to pose a high risk of SEA. For example, UNOPS developed a specialized toolkit on PSEA and sexual harassment for contractors involved in infrastructure projects and delivered related training in selected locations. WFP includes a PSEA component in onboarding training for vendors at the country level. Case studies highlight additional training and awareness-raising efforts, though these are still limited. In Kenya, UNICEF conducted PSEA briefing sessions for key vendors identified as “high risk” due to their direct interaction with communities. In Yemen, WHO integrated PSEA into induction sessions for new vendors and conducted several PSEA training sessions. UNHCR in Yemen also provided PSEA training to vendor personnel, including cleaners, security guards and interpreters.

*Case studies indicate low confidence in the adherence of personnel from government implementing partners and vendors to United Nations policies, procedures and the code of conduct related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.*

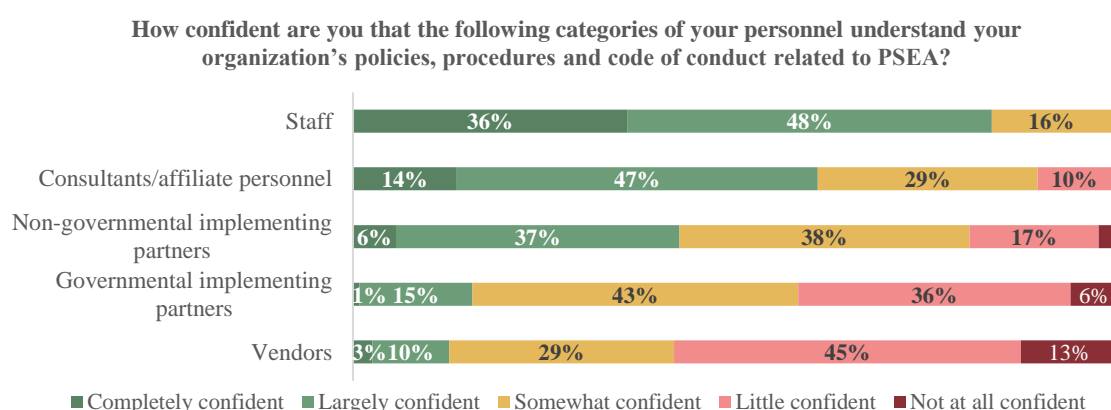
159. The analysis of PSEA training and awareness-raising efforts across different categories of personnel indicates that most efforts have focused on training staff, with some attention given to affiliate personnel. In recent years, training for implementing partners has expanded, though it has primarily targeted non-governmental partners. PSEA training for vendors, however, remains very limited.

160. Consistent with these findings, the survey of PSEA coordinators and focal points at case study locations revealed that their levels of confidence in the understanding of different personnel categories of organizational policies, procedures and the code of conduct related to SEA varied. Among respondents, 84 per cent expressed complete or high confidence in staff members’ understanding, while 61 per cent felt the same about consultants or affiliate personnel. However, confidence levels dropped significantly for other groups: 43 per cent expressed high confidence in the understanding of personnel of non-governmental implementing partners, 16 per cent with respect to governmental implementing partners (with 42 per cent reporting little or no confidence at all in that category), and only 13 per cent for vendor personnel (with 58 per cent expressing little or no confidence at all). See figure IV for more details.

161. Similarly, when asked about their level of confidence in the adherence of different personnel categories to policies, procedures and the code of conduct related to SEA, 91 per cent of respondents expressed complete or high confidence in staff, while 72 per cent felt the same for consultants or affiliate personnel. Confidence levels were much lower for other groups, with 50 per cent expressing high confidence in the adherence of personnel of non-governmental implementing partners, 23 per cent with respect to government partners (with 35 per cent reporting little or no confidence at all) and only 21 per cent for vendor personnel (with 42 per cent expressing little or no confidence at all). See figure V for more details.

Figure IV

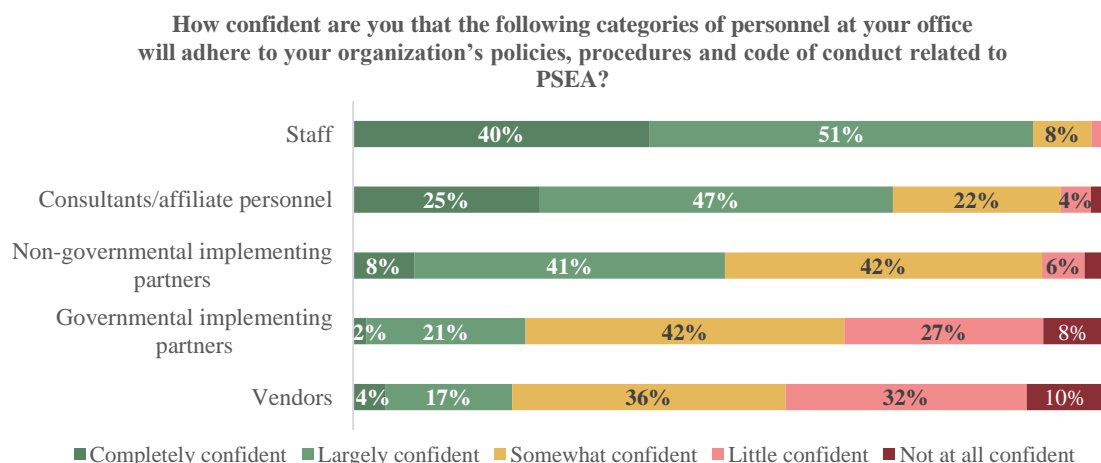
**Level of confidence of focal points for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in personnel's understanding of the organization's policies, procedures, and code of conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse, by category of personnel**



Source: JIU Survey of PSEA focal points of JIU participating organizations in case study locations.

Figure V

**Level of confidence of focal points for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in personnel's adherence to the organization's policies, procedures, and code of conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse, by category of personnel**



Source: JIU Survey of PSEA focal points of JIU participating organizations in case study locations.

162. In view of the increasing number of SEA allegations against implementing partners (see chapter I for related data), the lack of confidence in the understanding and compliance of partner personnel, particularly those from government implementing partners and vendors, with United Nations policies and procedures on SEA is particularly notable. **JIU participating organizations are encouraged to develop and implement outreach and training materials tailored to government implementing partners and vendors.**

## **B. Beyond mandatory training: innovative prevention strategies addressing the root causes of sexual exploitation and abuse**

163. While mandatory PSEA training and learning activities are essential for helping personnel understand policies and expected standards of conduct, such activities are not sufficient on their own to address the underlying causes or contributing factors of SEA, nor do they offer a single sustainable solution. As discussed in chapter I, the causes of SEA are complex and multifaceted, often rooted in structural, organizational and socio-cultural factors. Several JIU participating organizations have taken steps to address these underlying causes and mitigate SEA risks through organizational culture change. This section highlights examples of such efforts as good practices.

*Shifts in the organizational culture towards fostering respectful workplaces and encouraging a speak-up culture against misconduct help create a positive, enabling environment for preventing sexual misconduct.*

164. An organizational culture that perpetuates power imbalances, gender discrimination and impunity creates an environment where abuse of power and sexual misconduct can thrive. In recent years, several participating organizations have increasingly prioritized transforming organizational culture as a long-term, sustainable strategy to prevent sexual misconduct, including SEA. For example, UNHCR engaged its senior management in “reflective leadership dialogues”, aimed at providing the necessary tools to recognize and address the underlying factors that contribute to power imbalances and abusive workplace culture, which can lead to SEA and sexual harassment. UNAIDS launched a cultural transformation initiative in 2020 to build an internal culture of equality and to promote gender equality, diversity and social justice. Lastly, UNICEF has worked towards promoting a values-based culture since 2019, adopting a “whole of UNICEF approach”, promoting core values and a speak-up culture and focusing on creating psychologically safe and inclusive work environments.

165. Another key factor in transforming organizational culture is fostering a speak-up environment, where personnel feel safe, supported and empowered to report sexual misconduct, whether they are victims or bystanders. To facilitate a speak-up culture, UNHCR provides its personnel with the online platform entitled “NotOnlyMe”.<sup>72</sup> This third-party platform allows victims of sexual harassment to anonymously document their experiences and receive notifications if the individual they named has been identified in other reports. The platform also provides access to resources and support, including the option to communicate anonymously with a victim care officer. The goal is to give victims greater control and help them decide whether to report misconduct, especially when others have faced similar experiences. At WHO, regular online open forums with leadership invite questions about policies and procedures related to sexual misconduct. In addition, monthly programmes for PSEA focal points

<sup>72</sup> <https://notonlyme.org/home>.

help socialize and institutionalize an intentional organizational change management initiative.

*The perception of impunity has been shifted through increasing transparency around allegations and disciplinary actions.*

166. To address the perception of impunity of perpetrators, 20 participating organizations publish an annual report that discloses disciplinary measures taken against their personnel, including those related to SEA (see chapter IX for more details). This can serve as an effective deterrent as it reinforces accountability, increases transparency and signifies the organization's commitment to zero tolerance for inaction against SEA allegations. However, the Inspectors note that the level of detail in these reports varies, and smaller organizations may not be able to disclose much information about the subjects due to confidentiality concerns. Nevertheless, several participating organizations have the opportunity to strengthen the use of these reports as a prevention tool by including details such as the nature of allegation, the level of seniority of the subjects and administrative or disciplinary measures taken, as is done, for example, by UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNOPS and WHO. WHO also provides regular updates on disciplinary actions for sexual misconduct on its website.

## C. Conclusion

167. Most mandatory PSEA training only raises awareness of policies and channels to report misconduct. In many of the outreach materials and messages, basic information on policies is repeated and an ill-defined concept of zero tolerance (see chapter II) is prominently conveyed. A speak-up culture remains elusive in many organizations; system-wide surveys<sup>73</sup> and independent evaluations covering PSEA<sup>74</sup> have consistently identified a lack of confidence in administration of justice processes and/or procedures and fear of retaliation as the main reasons misconduct is not reported. Prevention of and protection from SEA, and sexual misconduct more broadly, requires more than a mandatory check-the-box training to have an impact. Some good and innovative practices have been highlighted in this chapter. More innovative and context-specific training and outreach need to be undertaken across the system to prevent sexual misconduct perpetrated by United Nations personnel, and such an initiative should be considered as a wider organizational change management effort.

168. Effective change management is crucial to support shifts in organizational culture, such as the adoption of policies addressing sexual misconduct. Evaluations covering sexual misconduct point to resistance in middle management and field operations as hindrances to effective PSEA implementation<sup>75</sup> and the importance of applying organizational change management principles for updating sexual

<sup>73</sup> These include the JIU reviews [JIU/REP/2018/4](#) and [JIU/REP/2016/4](#) and the results of the OSC-SEA 2024 annual survey on facts and perceptions of United Nations personnel related to the prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse (not published).

<sup>74</sup> See *Independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse* (UNICEF, 2018); WFP, *Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Centralized evaluation report – Volume I* (Rome, 2024); *Final Report of the Independent Commission on the review of sexual abuse and exploitation during the response to the 10th Ebola virus disease epidemic in DRC* (WHO, 2021).

<sup>75</sup> See *Independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse* (UNICEF, 2018); and WFP, *Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Centralized evaluation report – Volume I* (Rome, 2024).



misconduct policies.<sup>76</sup> Change management principles can be found in the strategies employed by UNHCR and WHO which complement their recent policy shifts. **The Inspectors encourage executive heads to use change management principles to implement updated policies and procedures for the prevention of and response to sexual misconduct, including using context-specific training for their personnel and innovative outreach strategies.**

## VI. Safe recruitment practices: screening and vetting personnel for sexual misconduct

169. The United Nations has a duty of care to both its personnel and the communities it serves; this includes safeguarding against harm by hiring only individuals who meet its high ethical standards. This entails excluding candidates with a known history of serious misconduct, including sexual offences. This chapter examines measures taken by JIU participating organizations to prevent the recruitment of individuals with a record of sexual misconduct and to ensure that personnel who were dismissed for such misconduct are not rehired by other United Nations entities and partners.

### A. ClearCheck: the system-wide screening database on sexual misconduct

170. To fulfil a key part of the Secretary General's new approach to PSEA, launched in 2017 (see [A/71/818](#) and [A/71/818/Corr.1](#)), a screening database, ClearCheck, was introduced in 2018 to prevent United Nations system organizations from hiring individuals whose working relationship with any system organization was previously terminated due to substantiated allegations of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment. The database also allows for the inclusion of individuals who had allegations against them but left an organization before an internal investigation or disciplinary process was completed. To date, ClearCheck is available to 42 United Nations system entities,<sup>77</sup> including all JIU participating organizations.

*The use of ClearCheck has not been effectively institutionalized in many Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations.*

171. ClearCheck can serve as an effective tool for preventing sexual misconduct. Between its launch and 31 December 2024, JIU participating organizations carried out a total of 414,146 search transactions<sup>78</sup> using ClearCheck; eight of these entities<sup>79</sup> have automated the verification process on their recruitment platforms. As a result, 14 individuals who had been dismissed for substantiated cases of sexual misconduct by a United Nations system entity were prevented from being hired by JIU participating organizations. However, the practices for using ClearCheck for verification and screening vary across JIU participating organizations, both in terms of how the process is governed and the categories of personnel subjected to screening.

172. Of the 28 JIU participating organizations, 15 do not have their own standard operating procedures for the application and use of ClearCheck.<sup>80</sup> Most participating organizations rely on the United Nations Secretariat's generic standard operating

<sup>76</sup> See Deloitte, *Independent review of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS policies and procedures to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH)* (Copenhagen, 2019).

<sup>77</sup> Thirty are CEB members and 12 are not CEB members.

<sup>78</sup> Based on the data shared by the Department of Management, Strategy, Policy and Compliance on 15 January 2025.

<sup>79</sup> The Secretariat, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNODC, UN-Women and WFP.

<sup>80</sup> UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRWA, ICAO, ILO, IMO, ITU, UN Tourism, UPU, WIPO and WMO.

procedures and have not tailored the procedures to their specific contexts, including references to their own legal frameworks (see annex VI for more details). While this may seem like a bureaucratic exercise, creating ClearCheck standard operating procedures specific to the context of an organization signifies the institutionalization of the use of ClearCheck. Such procedures establish clear roles and accountability for focal points responsible for the entry and removal of names in ClearCheck and for screening of personnel. In the case of ITU, for example, the lack of tailored standard operating procedures resulted in a 213-day open request for information from another organization in 2024 which was only resolved when the United Nations Secretariat, the database's administrator, intervened.<sup>81</sup> **The Inspectors call on JIU participating organizations that do not yet have their own standard operating procedures for ClearCheck to develop such procedures, reflecting their own context, policies and functions.**

*The variations in the criteria used to screen new hires through ClearCheck across participating organizations expose them to unnecessary risks.*

173. All JIU participating organizations stated that they screen candidates for international professional positions through ClearCheck. However, UNESCO, UNICEF, WIPO and WMO only conduct this screening if candidates disclose previous employment with a United Nations system organization in their application (see annex VII for more details). Consequently, individuals listed in ClearCheck could potentially evade the screening by omitting their prior United Nations system employment from their application.

174. For nationally recruited staff positions,<sup>82</sup> ILO, UPU and WMO do not screen their candidates under this category at all, while UNESCO, UNICEF and WIPO only carry out screening if an applicant indicates prior work experience within the United Nations system. Despite some of the operational quirks of ClearCheck, the time and effort required to fully and comprehensively screen all candidates, including candidates from outside the United Nations system, far outweighs the risk of not running all candidates through the database.

175. For affiliate personnel, which accounted for an estimated 43 per cent of the total workforce in United Nations system organizations in 2022,<sup>83</sup> only 14 of the 28 JIU participating organizations – ICAO, FAO, ITC, ITU, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN Tourism, UN-Women, WFP and WHO – screen candidates in this category. JIU participating organizations that do not screen their affiliate personnel through ClearCheck expose themselves to avoidable risks by potentially selecting and rehiring individuals with a sexual misconduct history. However, it is noted that the level of risk for sexual misconduct can vary depending on the duties and functions of personnel. For example, individuals that have direct access to beneficiaries and community members, particularly vulnerable groups such as minors, may pose a higher risk of perpetrating SEA. This elevated level of risk may not be relevant to all JIU participating organizations. Ideally, all new hires should be screened through ClearCheck, regardless of their role and contract type. However, **participating organizations should, at a minimum, apply risk-based criteria to determine the scope of their ClearCheck processes, ensuring thorough vetting of affiliate personnel who have access to beneficiaries or other vulnerable**

<sup>81</sup> Based on ClearCheck data provided by the Department of Management, Strategy, Policy and Compliance and verified in interviews with ITU and Secretariat officials.

<sup>82</sup> General Service staff and National Professional Officers.

<sup>83</sup> [JIU/REP/2023/8](#), entitled "Review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations".

**populations.** Box 1 provides a good practice example of how to assess potential SEA risks associated with a position.

**Box 1**

**Questions to identify the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and other safeguarding risks associated with a position (non-exhaustive)**

- Does the post involve one-to-one contact with children or other vulnerable groups as employees, customers or clients?
- What level of supervision will the post-holder receive? Is it unsupervised? Does it involve working in isolation?
- Does the post involve any direct responsibility for finance or items of value? Does the post involve direct regular contact with the public?
- Are there any safeguards which can be put in place to minimize potential risks?

*Source:* Safer Recruitment “Check List” and Guidance for Preventing Sexual Misconduct, Lebanon PSEA Network, 2020.

176. One category of personnel that is not screened through ClearCheck is uniformed personnel in peacekeeping operations and special political missions. As at 31 December 2024, over 55,000 uniformed personnel were serving in 11 peacekeeping operations around the world.<sup>84</sup> Prior to deployment, these personnel are screened through the United Nations Secretariat’s internal database, the Case Management Tracking System,<sup>85</sup> which contains names of individuals who are under investigation for misconduct, including SEA and sexual harassment. However, uniformed personnel are not screened through ClearCheck. In addition, the United Nations also relies on the troop- and police- contributing countries to certify that their nominated personnel “have not committed, or are alleged to have committed, criminal offences and/or violations of international human rights laws and international humanitarian law”.<sup>86</sup> Since this category of personnel represents a significant proportion of SEA cases, uniformed personnel should be considered for ClearCheck screening as well.

*Inconsistent practices in terms of adding and removing names from ClearCheck undermine the integrity and effectiveness of the database.*

177. As at 15 January 2025, ClearCheck contained an active record of 899 subjects, of which 447 were civilians, 366 were military personnel and 86 were police personnel. The majority of the subjects (629) were recorded in the database for misconduct related to SEA, 263 for sexual harassment and the remaining 7 for other types of misconduct. All except seven individuals were male.

178. All 28 JIU participating organizations confirmed that the names of subjects who are dismissed for SEA or sexual harassment, following the completion of an internal investigation and a disciplinary process, are entered in ClearCheck. However, in

<sup>84</sup> <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data>, accessed 14 February 2025.

<sup>85</sup> The tracking system captures the full lifespan of the case management process at the United Nations Secretariat, including reception of a complaint, recording of information on allegations and associated persons, assessment of the complaint, a possible investigation process, administrative or disciplinary actions and subsequent appeals. See <https://conduct.unmissions.org/launch-case-management-tracking-system-cmts>.

<sup>86</sup> United Nations, “Policy on human rights screening of United Nations personnel” (11 December 2012).

certain circumstances, names may be added either temporarily or permanently before the investigation and disciplinary processes are concluded, mainly to enhance the effectiveness of the database. Practices in terms of when names are entered in ClearCheck vary across participating organizations, which may result in significant omissions and compromise the integrity of ClearCheck data. Table 12 summarizes these varied practices among JIU participating organizations.

Table 12

**Practices for recording names in ClearCheck by Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations**

<i>Circumstance under which a name is entered in ClearCheck</i>	<i>Participating organization</i>
The subject resigned before the completion of the investigation or disciplinary process and failed to cooperate with the proceedings	20 organizations: FAO, ILO, IMO, ITC, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, United Nations Secretariat, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, WFP, WHO
The subject resigned but the investigation continued and allegations were subsequently substantiated	20 organizations: FAO, ILO, IMO, ITC, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, United Nations Secretariat, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, WFP, WHO
The allegations were determined to constitute a high-profile case that poses a serious reputational risk to the organization	8 organizations: ILO, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UN-Habitat, United Nations Secretariat, UNODC, WHO
The allegations were substantiated by a competent national authority or the subject had prior criminal conviction(s) for sexual offence(s) which were not disclosed to the organization.	1 organization: UNDP

*Source:* JIU corporate questionnaire.

179. As shown in table 12, there is inconsistency in terms of how participating organizations manage cases involving individuals who resign or separate while under investigation or undergoing a disciplinary process for SEA or sexual harassment and fail to cooperate with the process. While 20 organizations add the subject's name to ClearCheck in such cases (see table 12), typically with the status "pending – subject resigned", <sup>87</sup> do not. Those that do not implement this practice typically either close the investigation or leave it pending in their records. Several cited limited resources as a reason for discontinuing investigations, making it difficult to determine whether the allegations could be substantiated. Others viewed the subject's departure as a positive outcome, allowing them to end a potentially lengthy and resource-intensive process.

180. Another argument the Inspectors heard against recording such cases in ClearCheck is that there is the potential for the subjects to challenge their inclusion in the database through relevant United Nations administrative tribunals, given that their misconduct was never formally determined. However, if an organization establishes a clear legal framework for the process of recording names in ClearCheck, such challenges would not be disputable. The jurisprudence of UNDT and UNAT shows that the tribunals have consistently upheld the Administration's practice of

<sup>87</sup> IAEA, ICAO, ITU, UNESCO, UN Tourism, UPU, WIPO and WMO.

adding names to ClearCheck.<sup>88</sup> As noted in a recent academic review of the United Nations administrative tribunals, “There are no known cases in which the Secretary-General has raised in an appeal the failure of the Administration to automatically place a staff member onto ClearCheck when the criteria for so doing have been met, nor are there any known cases in which the UNDT or UNAT have queried the ‘proportionality’ of a decision to place a staff member onto ClearCheck, which would clearly be outside the competence of those tribunals.”<sup>89</sup>

**181. System-wide coherence is critical in addressing this issue.** The ability for alleged subjects to resign without consequences before an investigation is completed creates a loophole that culpable individuals may exploit. Without their names recorded in ClearCheck, these individuals have no formal record linking them to sexual misconduct; therefore, they remain eligible for employment in other United Nations system organizations. A comparison of ClearCheck and iReport data revealed a significant discrepancy between the two databases. The Inspectors identified 45 subjects in iReport marked as “closed – subject resigned/separated pending investigation or disciplinary process”, while only 10 corresponding entries in ClearCheck were labelled as “pending – subject resigned”. The reason for the absence of the remaining 35 subjects in ClearCheck may be due to a variety of circumstances but is nonetheless concerning.<sup>90</sup>

**182.** The level of rigour and commitment to pursuing and investigating allegations of sexual misconduct varies among participating organizations. While some organizations are committed to ensuring that individuals with substantiated sexual misconduct allegations are not re-employed within the United Nations system, others take a more lenient approach, thus increasing the system’s vulnerability to the risk of sexual misconduct. During interviews, the Inspectors were informed of multiple cases where organizations purposely did not renew the contracts of personnel under investigation for sexual misconduct, letting the contracts expire and subsequently closing the investigations with the pretext that the subjects of investigation were no longer personnel of the concerned organization.

**183.** When names of former personnel with sexual misconduct records are not added to ClearCheck, other United Nations system organizations may hire – and in some cases they have hired – these individuals. The Inspectors were informed of instances where this occurred both at headquarters and in field locations. During JIU interviews with human resource officials from organizations that do not record in ClearCheck the names of individuals who separate during an investigation or disciplinary process, the officials stated that only a note is added to the subject’s personnel file. This note is shared if another United Nations system organization requests a reference check, effectively creating a workaround for ClearCheck and pressuring other organizations to adopt similar practices. Participating organizations should harmonize the practice of entering into ClearCheck names of subjects who resign while a SEA investigation or a disciplinary process against them is under way and label the status as “pending – subject resigned”.

<sup>88</sup> See UNAT, *Mihai-Tudor Stefan v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. 2023-UNAT-1375, paras. 92 and 93.

<sup>89</sup> Carla Ferstman and Franziska Fluhr, *Independent review of the adjudication of claims pertaining to sexual exploitation and abuse by the United Nations internal justice system (UN Dispute Tribunal and UN Appeals Tribunal)* (University of Essex Human Rights Centre, 2024).

<sup>90</sup> According to comments from the United Nations Secretariat, the 35 remaining subjects may have separated from the organization for reasons outside their control (e.g. mandatory retirement, end of contract, etc.). In such cases, OIOS may decide whether to investigate the matter further or close the case.

184. To advance the aim of ClearCheck to promote safe recruitment across the United Nations system, some organizations have introduced specific measures for placing names in the database. Some organizations enter individuals' names while an investigation is ongoing for various reasons (see table 12). UNDP may add a subject to ClearCheck if they are under criminal investigation or legal proceedings by national authorities. These entries are marked as "pending" in ClearCheck, which is considered a good practice, particularly when allegations concern individuals placed on administrative leave or those on temporary contracts that may expire before the investigation is concluded.

185. UNDP also has an additional criterion in its standard operating procedures, which IAEA has also recently adopted in practice as an extraordinary measure. UNDP enters subjects into ClearCheck if there is evidence of a prior criminal conviction related to a sexual crime. In practice, IAEA recently added a subject to the database who had a prior sexual criminal conviction. The staff member was dismissed for failing to disclose a criminal conviction related to sexual offences on his employment application and his name was added to ClearCheck to prevent his employment in other United Nations system organizations. The Inspectors learned of two other cases for which this measure could have been implemented. In both cases the United Nations system staff members were under criminal investigation for sexual offences and their fixed-term contracts expired while the investigations were under way. In one case the charges were dropped by the national authority. In the other, the former staff member was convicted and served prison time.<sup>91</sup> However, in neither case were the names of these subjects of criminal investigations added to ClearCheck at any point in the criminal process. The Inspectors recognize the UNDP practice of adding personnel with prior criminal convictions or those under criminal investigation for sexual offences, as well as the recent inclusion in ClearCheck by IAEA of a subject with a prior criminal conviction related to sexual offences, as good practices. Other participating organizations should consider incorporating such measures into updated versions of their ClearCheck standard operating procedures.

186. Another inconsistency identified relates to the process for removing names from ClearCheck. As at 15 January 2025, a total of 57 names have been removed (meaning that they were technically disabled within the database). There is consistency in the language used in the standard operating procedures of participating organizations for removing names from ClearCheck. Most participating organizations indicated that names are removed if allegations of SEA or sexual harassment are not substantiated, or if the determination that a substantiated allegation is subsequently rescinded by a competent tribunal, court or other authority.<sup>92</sup>

187. While the guidelines for removing names from ClearCheck is the same for all entities across the United Nations system, the Inspectors learned that the United Nations Secretariat held a different view, as in effect it does not remove a subject's name if a tribunal judgment does not specifically request its removal.<sup>93</sup> This approach may have been prompted by a UNAT judgment<sup>94</sup> that specifically ordered the removal of a name from ClearCheck, thereby inadvertently allowing for a reinterpretation of

<sup>91</sup> This case occurred at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat (UNFCCC). The staff member in question was convicted of sexual assault and served prison time in Germany. This incident occurred prior to the existence ClearCheck and UNFCCC is in discussions with the United Nations Secretariat to retroactively add the name.

<sup>92</sup> *ClearCheck – Screening Tool: Guidelines on the Components related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)* (undated). See articles 6.1.2, 6.1.3, 6.1.4 and art. 6.2.

<sup>93</sup> Interviews with United Nations Secretariat officials at the Office of Human Resources of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance.

<sup>94</sup> UNAT, Mihai-Tudor Stefan v. Secretary-General of the United Nations, Judgment No. 2023-UNAT-1375, para. 93.

the role of the tribunals in determining entry and removal of names into the database, and an abdication by the administration of its role. The Secretariat's practice poses a reputational risk to the United Nations system as it goes against its own procedures and denies due process to United Nations system staff whose cases have been rescinded by a United Nations administrative tribunal. UNDT has weighed in on this matter, stating that "deleting a name from ClearCheck is a corrective measure that logically follows from the Tribunal rescinding the impugned disciplinary sanction". It further stated that the Tribunal does not need to order the removal; rather, this should be done automatically.<sup>95</sup> Although there may not be many of these cases, coherence in terms of the practices for removal of names is essential for the credibility and integrity of ClearCheck and to ensure due process for United Nations system staff.

188. ClearCheck could be more effective in reducing risks related to SEA and sexual harassment if United Nations system organizations consistently used the database to screen all types of new hires, improved practices for recording names of individuals with substantiated allegations and enhanced their regulatory and legal framework for adding and removing names from ClearCheck. The United Nations Secretariat is currently piloting an expansion of the categories of misconduct for adding subjects to ClearCheck. While most participating organizations interviewed indicated that they would support such an expansion, others were cautious. Unfortunately, current practices and procedures among participating organizations remain fragmented and inconsistent, posing a risk to all organizations. This risk should be addressed both by each organization and collectively through an inter-agency forum facilitated through the CEB mechanisms.

189. The following recommendation is intended to promote coherent and harmonized use of ClearCheck across participating organizations and system-wide.

#### **Recommendation 8**

**At the beginning of 2026, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should take individual and/or collective action, in consultation with the executive heads of other CEB organizations, preferably within the framework of inter-agency mechanisms, to agree on system-wide coherence and harmonization of ClearCheck procedures, including with respect to entering subjects, name removal procedures, screening of candidates for affiliate personnel categories as well as the potential expansion of its use to include other types of misconduct.**

## **B. Beyond ClearCheck**

*There is a significant gap in terms of screening candidates from outside the United Nations system for past sexual misconduct, which could be addressed through the use of external screening and vetting services.*

190. The ClearCheck tool alone may be insufficient to screen one category of candidates: individuals coming from outside the United Nations system. To bridge this gap, only four JIU participating organizations – UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR and UNOPS – complement their screening by using the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme,

<sup>95</sup> UNDT, *Aguilar Valle v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. UNDT/2024/032, para. 38.

a reference-checking mechanism for sexual misconduct that includes participation from over 300 non-government organizations and these four United Nations entities.

191. Unlike ClearCheck, the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme is not a database of individuals but an initiative that facilitates employment verification checks among the Scheme's member organizations, in particular to assess candidates for any past sexual misconduct. The Scheme, administered by CHS Alliance in collaboration with the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, enables the exchange of information by member organizations to ensure informed recruitment decisions. Member organizations must agree to the terms of the Scheme and designate authorized personnel to respond to inquiries regarding current or former employees.<sup>96</sup> This designation of "authorized personnel" ensures that trusted and consistent interlocutors are responding officially on behalf of organizations, which is crucial for going beyond standard reference checks, where candidates can choose who a prospective employer contacts. References selected by candidates may include individuals unwilling or unable to disclose the full details of the candidate's tenure or departure from the organization, including circumstances involving dismissal for sexual misconduct or resignation during an ongoing investigation.

192. Since its launch in 2019 through the end of 2024, the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme has facilitated over 193,000 checks, resulting in 580 job applications being rejected due to sexual misconduct in previous employment.<sup>97</sup> The website of the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme indicates that there have been no legal challenges to the Scheme. At the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, the Administrative and Budgetary Committee of the Assembly (the Fifth Committee) recognized some of the limitations of ClearCheck and encouraged organizations to explore whether the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme could complement the aims of ClearCheck.<sup>98</sup>

193. Among the four United Nations organizations currently piloting participation in the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, UNHCR has adopted a phased approach to screening. Between 2023 and 31 August 2024, it screened 677 candidates for nationally recruited staff positions, 278 for internationally recruited staff positions and 349 for affiliate personnel positions in seven pilot country offices. None of the candidates checked were found to have a history of sexual misconduct with their previous employers. UNOPS joined the Scheme in 2024. As at 31 August 2024, it had screened 14 applicants for nationally recruited staff positions. Among them, one individual was found to have a prior history of sexual misconduct, resulting in the rejection of the person's job application. UNFPA had screened three nationally recruited candidates and two affiliate personnel, all of whom were cleared.<sup>99</sup> UNDP began piloting its participation in the Scheme in January 2025 for recruitment efforts in five high-risk countries, focusing on candidates for international and national professional positions. Six reference checks were made, with no matches identified.

194. Before joining the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, all four organizations reviewed their legal and regulatory frameworks and were able to take the necessary steps to participate in the Scheme. It should be noted that some United Nations system legal advisers are hesitant for their organizations to join the Scheme, particularly when it comes to sharing sensitive data on former personnel with non-United Nations entities. While this concern may be warranted in some cases, the experiences of current participants piloting the Scheme should be considered to better inform

<sup>96</sup> From the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme information sheet, 2018 and 2020. Available at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/614474241773374f8093f5d9/t/62053cf4b3f56046a4d3c162/1644510452979/Misconduct+Disclosure+Scheme+ENG.pdf>.

<sup>97</sup> <https://misconduct-disclosure-scheme.org>.

<sup>98</sup> See General Assembly resolution 76/274, para. 96.

<sup>99</sup> Based on the data provided to JIU by UNFPA, UNHCR and UNOPS, as at 31 August 2024.



decisions on future participation (see box 2 for the advice offered by UNHCR on joining the Scheme).

Box 2

**Introducing the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme to screen new hires: lessons from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**

UNHCR, which joined the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme in 2023 and has screened over 1,300 candidates in seven countries, offers the following advice for other United Nations system organizations interested in joining the Scheme:

- Conduct cross-functional mapping of recruitment and vetting processes from the outset to determine where to place MDS as an overall organizational process
- Implement MDS gradually such as through pilot sites to ensure that there is sufficient space and capacity to troubleshoot any unforeseen challenges without compromising or slowing down recruitments
- Regularly collect and use feedback, gather insights from stakeholders to address challenges and areas for improvements and to ensure that MDS remains effective and beneficial for all parties involved.

*Source:* JIU corporate questionnaire.

195. Another potential tool for screening candidates for a history of sexual misconduct, in addition to ClearCheck and the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, is Project Soteria of INTERPOL. Funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the aim of Project Soteria is to prevent individuals with a record of sexual misconduct from working in the aid sector. It provides organizations with expedited criminal background checks on applicants by utilizing the global policing capabilities of INTERPOL.<sup>100</sup> Another aim of Project Soteria, which is still in the pilot phase, is to include reports of substantiated sexual misconduct from participating organizations that may not have been reported to the police but that indicate a history of harmful behaviour.

*The United Nations system has a responsibility to disclose relevant information related to their former personnel who were dismissed for sexual misconduct when such individuals are seeking re-employment.*

196. There is no formal mechanism to prevent former United Nations personnel with sexual misconduct history listed in ClearCheck from being hired by external organizations. This gap not only presents reputational risks for the United Nations but also exposes other organizations, including key implementing partners, to potential harm. **JIU participating organizations should consider participating in the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme and Project Soteria in order to vet candidates who have worked in non-governmental and civil society organizations as well as to share information on subjects entered into ClearCheck with members of the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme and Project Soteria.**

<sup>100</sup> See <https://interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Capacity-building/Capacity-building-projects/Project-Soteria>.

197. Table 13 provides an overview of existing vetting mechanisms related to sexual misconduct that JIU participating organizations currently use or could potentially use to screen their candidates.

Table 13

**Overview of existing mechanisms to screen new hires for history of sexual misconduct**

	<i>ClearCheck</i>	<i>Misconduct Disclosure Scheme</i>	<i>Project Soteria</i>
<b>Coverage</b>	Former United Nations system personnel with substantiated sexual misconduct allegations (from 2018); some earlier cases have been retroactively entered	Personnel of member organizations, predominantly NGOs, with a record of substantiated sexual misconduct allegations	National criminal records, police reports and reports from participating organizations that are substantiated and meet a criminal threshold (from May 2021); focused on sexual crimes
<b>Applicability</b>	Candidates applying to United Nations organizations and entities	Candidates applying to member organizations of the Scheme	Participating organizations with missions dedicated to humanitarian and development assistance
<b>Vetting mechanism</b>	Database presents matches based on four identifiers: name, gender, nationality, date of birth	Matches records on sexual misconduct based on bilateral information exchange	INTERPOL facilitates the search in their databases, national criminal records and other police reports of 196 member countries and data on criminal sexual misconduct from participating organizations
<b>Requirement</b>	United Nations system organizations sign agreement for participation in ClearCheck through CEB mechanism	Member organizations join by committing to implementation through the host organization, CHS Alliance	Participating members sign a memorandum of understanding with INTERPOL
<b>Current state</b>	42 United Nations entities 899 subjects recorded (263 for sexual harassment, 629 for SEA and 7 for other) as at 15 January 2025 15 total matches to date	320+ member NGOs and 4 United Nations system organizations 193,000+ checks conducted 580 applications rejected (2019–2024)	In pilot phase (May 2021 to April 2026)
<b>Gaps</b>	Only for use by United Nations organizations  Entries are limited to former United Nations personnel dismissed for sexual misconduct since 2018, in most cases	Participation in the Scheme is limited to member organizations; the Scheme is primarily focused on the humanitarian sector (though potentially open to all types of organizations).	Limited to those with criminal records and police reports except for participating organizations that can share names of employees with substantiated SEAH via an internal investigation or reported to police.
<b>Ideal use for United Nations system organizations</b>	Vetting candidates who are United Nations personnel seeking positions in the United Nations system	Vetting candidates who have worked in the NGO sector seeking positions in the United Nations system	Vetting candidates from outside the United Nations system and/or the NGO sector seeking positions in the United Nations system; complements both ClearCheck and the

ClearCheck	Misconduct Disclosure Scheme	Project Soteria
		Misconduct Disclosure Scheme

Source: Prepared by JIU.

## C. Conclusion

198. All JIU participating organizations have gaps in their vetting and screening processes, namely with respect to conducting thorough background checks on applicants that have a history and/or record of sexual misconduct. While some organizations may face lower SEA risks than others, gaps persist across the United Nations system, particularly in terms of vetting candidates from outside the United Nations system. Even the use of ClearCheck remains inconsistent and lacks system-wide harmonization, with some organizations not applying it consistently, or at all. In addition, United Nations system organizations have also not sufficiently protected their external partners from hiring individuals who were dismissed for sexual misconduct while employed within the United Nations system. The following recommendation aims to address these gaps in the screening and vetting of new recruits within participating organizations.

### Recommendation 9

**Executive heads of United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2026, conduct an assessment of the mechanisms used for screening and vetting of personnel for substantiated sexual misconduct allegations, including identifying types of personnel to be screened and determining gaps as well as risks in not implementing the most comprehensive vetting and screening procedures.**

## VII. Assessments of risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and mitigation measures

199. Risk assessments enable organizations to identify and address potential threats that may affect their operations, finances and reputation. For United Nations organizations, risk assessments are particularly vital to safeguarding the individuals they serve. As discussed in chapter I, no organization is immune to misconduct by its personnel, including sexual misconduct. The nature of United Nations operations inherently carries SEA risks due to power imbalances, engagements with a wide range of stakeholders, such as implementing partners and vendors, and the extreme vulnerabilities of the populations served in many operational contexts. This chapter examines efforts by JIU participating organizations in assessing and mitigating SEA risks from both organizational and programmatic aspects. It also explores how these organizations assess the PSEA capacities of their implementing partners and vendors to identify potential SEA risks associated with these engagements.

### A. Risk assessments at the organizational level

*Sexual exploitation and abuse is included in the enterprise risk catalogues of 19 participating organizations, which indicates that it has been institutionalized within their operational frameworks.*

200. The enterprise risk management policies of 19 participating organizations<sup>101</sup> recognize SEA as a risk factor. Approaches to assessing SEA risk vary, primarily with respect to whether it is classified as a potential breach of personnel conduct standards or as a safeguarding risk that could result in harm to individuals. For example, FAO identifies SEA as both a corporate risk linked to ethical misconduct and as a safeguarding risk, while UNFPA includes it under safeguarding risks, acknowledging the potential harm its work may cause to people. Regardless of the approach, the explicit inclusion of SEA in corporate risk considerations signifies that PSEA has been institutionalized at the highest organizational level. In principle, this enables organizations to mitigate risks at the policy level when the underlying causes are systemic. This is considered a good practice. Table 14 provides examples of how SEA is included in risk catalogues.

Table 14  
**Examples of the placement of sexual exploitation and abuse in corporate risk catalogues**

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Placement of sexual exploitation and abuse and associated risk(s) in the corporate risk catalogue</i>
FAO	<p><b>Category: Breach of ethical standards</b></p> <p>FAO personnel or partners engage in unethical practices, such as SEA, fraud or harassment, causing harm to beneficiaries or personnel or loss of assets</p>
ILO	<p><b>Category: Ethics</b></p> <p>Sub-category: beneficiary mistreatment (the possibility that staff or beneficiaries are mistreated (sexual and other harassment, bullying, abuse of authority, exploitation, etc.))</p>
ITC	<p><b>Risk statement</b></p> <p>ITC personnel committing, being exposed to or wrongly accused of discrimination, abuse of authority, harassment, including sexual (control: Access to all existing United Nations and ITC systems around prohibited conduct, including fraud, SEA.)</p>
United Nations Secretariat	<p><b>Category: Ethical behaviour</b></p> <p>Failure of the organization to take appropriate measures to protect the populations in situations of vulnerability from exposure to SEA by United Nations staff and related personnel</p>
UNDP	<p><b>Category: Social and environmental</b></p> <p>Sub-category: SEA</p>
UNESCO	<p><b>Category: Human resource capacities</b></p> <p>Due to lack of protection/unethical behaviour, acts of SEA may be committed by and/or against UNESCO staff/UNESCO implementing partners, which would lead to violation of universally recognized international legal norms and standards.</p>
UNFPA	<p><b>Category: Safeguarding</b></p>

<sup>101</sup> FAO, IAEA, ILO, ITC, United Nations Secretariat, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNODC, UNRWA, UN-Women, WFP and WHO.

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Placement of sexual exploitation and abuse and associated risk(s) in the corporate risk catalogue</i>
	Risks of unintended harm to people (including UNFPA beneficiaries, personnel, and implementing partners) or the environment as a result of programmes and operational activities. These include social and environmental risks such as the risk of harassment, sexual harassment, SEA, violations of security, health and safety standards, risks posed by labour and working conditions, and environmental damage, among other risks that impede sustainability and accountability of UNFPA programming
UNHCR	<p><b>Category: Protection and Solutions</b>, relating to the efforts of UNHCR to provide and facilitate protection and solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless people</p> <p>Sub-category: PSEA</p>
UNRWA	<p><b>Type of risk: Institutional/reputational</b></p> <p>Failure to prevent or appropriately respond to SEA incidents and/or case(s) enter the public sphere</p>
WFP	<p><b>Category: Lack of protection</b></p> <p>Sub-category: SEA</p>
WHO	<p><b>Category: Principal Risk No. 7</b></p> <p>Sexual misconduct not prevented or addressed (inability to prevent, detect and manage cases of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and other forms of misconduct thereby harming people and affects the reputation of the organization.)</p>

*Source:* JIU corporate questionnaire and desk review.

201. Among the 19 participating organizations mentioned above, 17 have included SEA in their risk registers, recognizing it as a strategic corporate risk. The remaining two organizations – UNEP and UN-Habitat – reported that, based on their assessments, SEA does not constitute a risk to their organization. UNEP specifically determined that SEA is not a risk due to the normative nature of its operations.

202. Nine participating organizations – ICAO,<sup>102</sup> IMO, ITU, UNIDO, UNOPS, UN Tourism, UPU, WIPO and WMO – do not explicitly recognize SEA as a risk in their enterprise risk management processes. Some of these organizations do not classify SEA as a risk, citing their limited or non-existent field presence as the reason, while others indicate that SEA is implicitly considered under personnel ethical standards. A few organizations, such as UNIDO and WIPO, focus on risks related to sexual harassment.

## B. Risk assessments in the field

*Sexual exploitation and abuse risk assessments for United Nations operations in the field are not carried out consistently or adequately.*

203. Most enterprise risk management policies also apply to regional and country offices as business units. Consequently, regional and country offices of participating

<sup>102</sup> The ICAO risk register includes sexual misconduct under the category “compliance – breaches of obligations”.

organizations that include SEA in their risk catalogue have the opportunity to incorporate SEA into their office's risk assessment process. For example, in 2024, UNHCR reported that among 77 operations, 75 per cent included SEA in their risk registers. Of the 85 identified risks related to SEA and sexual harassment, 21 were classified as high, 60 as medium and 4 as low.

204. For peacekeeping and special political missions, the Department of Field Support of the United Nations Secretariat launched a SEA risk management toolkit and required that SEA risk assessments be carried out regularly or as needed, depending on the mission's size and context. Peacekeeping and special political missions routinely consider SEA in their enterprise risk management process, and conduct and discipline units incorporate identified risks into their workplans. The peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic,<sup>103</sup> which was one of the case studies of the review, showed evidence of progress in conducting SEA risk assessments and integrating lessons learned. For example, SEA risks associated with temporary bases, which were linked to major SEA allegations, were incorporated into risk assessments, as were risks specific to each region of the country.<sup>104</sup>

205. In recent years, IASC and several participating organizations have developed risk assessment tools specific to SEA to strengthen PSEA efforts in their field operations. These tools are intended to be used either alongside enterprise risk management processes or as a stand-alone exercise. The tools include, inter alia:

- IASC Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Overview (SEARO) index<sup>105</sup> and IOM *Inter-Agency Risk Assessment on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (IARA SEA) Toolkit*<sup>106</sup>
- FAO SEA risk mitigation checklist
- *Misconduct/Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Management Toolkit* of the United Nations Secretariat<sup>107</sup>
- UNDP Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Management Tool<sup>108</sup>
- UNHCR Risk management tool: tackling sexual exploitation and abuse<sup>109</sup>
- WHO SEAH Risk assessment tool

206. In addition to risk assessments at the business unit level, some organizations now require risk assessments specifically dedicated to SEA. For example, UNAIDS country directors must complete a 43-question SEAH risk assessment. Similarly, WFP country and regional offices must certify the completion of a PSEA self-assessment checklist, while WHO heads of country offices are mandated to conduct an annual SEAH risk assessment using a designated tool.

207. At the programme and project levels, several participating organizations have made SEA risk assessments a mandatory component, either as a standalone exercise or integrated into broader risk or safeguarding assessments. The review identified examples of this practice at FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNOPS.

<sup>103</sup> United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

<sup>104</sup> Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/297.

<sup>105</sup> <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-sea-risk-overview-index>.

<sup>106</sup> [https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/sites/www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/files/inter-agency\\_risk\\_assessment\\_on\\_sea\\_iara\\_sea\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/sites/www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/files/inter-agency_risk_assessment_on_sea_iara_sea_toolkit.pdf).

<sup>107</sup> [https://conduct.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/risk\\_management\\_toolkit\\_aug\\_2024-public.pdf](https://conduct.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/risk_management_toolkit_aug_2024-public.pdf).

<sup>108</sup> <https://info.undp.org/sites/ERM/Shared%20Documents/UNDP%20SEA%20Risk%20Assessment%20Tool.docx>.

<sup>109</sup> [https://emergency.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/SEA---Risk-Management-Tool\\_V2.pdf](https://emergency.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/SEA---Risk-Management-Tool_V2.pdf).

208. Since SEA risk levels vary depending on the context, a comprehensive SEA risk assessment, which requires technical expertise and resources, may not be necessary in every situation. UNDP demonstrates a good practice by streamlining the assessment process through the use of a set of questions that helps project teams quickly identify potential risks. If any question is answered “yes”, the corresponding risk and mitigation measures must be included in the project’s risk register. Box 3 sets out the questions used by UNDP.

**Box 3**

**United Nations Development Programme screening questions to identify risks of sexual exploitation and abuse in its projects**

1. Will the project have limited oversight or monitoring (e.g. due to remote or hard-to-reach project locations)?
2. Will project activities involve one-on-one, unsupervised interactions with community members?
3. Will the project involve exchange of money, employment, goods or services between project staff and community members?
4. Will the project be implemented near brothels or in areas known for transactional sex?
5. Will the project provide temporary housing for regular/influx staff or community members?

*Source:* UNDP SEA risk assessment – project level.

209. Besides stand-alone SEA-specific risk assessments, there are opportunities to integrate SEA risk factors into ongoing assessments. A notable example and a good practice is the tool used by UNHCR, the *Gender-Based Violence Safety Audit Toolkit*.<sup>110</sup> Carrying out audits based on this toolkit helps UNHCR and its partners to assess situations of gender-based violence within their operations as part of the annual planning processes, ensuring the safety of persons of concern during service delivery and within their communities. Case studies revealed that the gender-based violence safety audit conducted of the Ukraine Refugee Response<sup>111</sup> in the Republic of Moldova resulted in the closure of several refugee accommodation centres identified as posing high risks of SEA.

210. Data on the number of United Nations operations conducting country-level, inter-agency SEA risk assessments are unavailable. Case studies reveal that out of operations in 13 countries<sup>112</sup> led by a Resident Coordinator (some of whom were also serving as Humanitarian Coordinator), only those in the Republic of Moldova, Uganda and Ukraine had carried out a comprehensive SEA risk assessment in the past three years. Notably, several operations with high numbers of SEA allegations, such as operations in Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Nigeria and Uganda, have not conducted such assessments. Interviews with inter-agency

<sup>110</sup> [https://unhcr.org/gbv-toolkit/wp-content/uploads/sites/62/2023/08/GBV-Safety-Audit-Toolkit\\_FULL-VERSION.pdf](https://unhcr.org/gbv-toolkit/wp-content/uploads/sites/62/2023/08/GBV-Safety-Audit-Toolkit_FULL-VERSION.pdf).

<sup>111</sup> The Ukraine Refugee Response is part of the Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation, a United Nations inter-agency effort. A regional refugee response plan is usually developed by UNHCR and co-led by relevant United Nations agencies.

<sup>112</sup> Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Colombia, Ecuador, Kenya, Lebanon, Mali, Republic of Moldova, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine and Yemen.

stakeholders cited limited resources and expertise as major challenges, in line with the JIU findings regarding PSEA capacities and resources (see chapter IV).

211. The JIU analysis of SEA risk assessment implementation, whether conducted as a stand-alone exercise or integrated into broader risk assessments, indicates that progress has been made. However, this progress has been limited to a few entities and/or at specific operational levels. This finding is consistent with the results of MOPAN assessments. For example, of the 12 JIU participating organizations<sup>113</sup> who were assessed by MOPAN between 2020 and 2024, only three – UNDP, UNICEF and WHO – were rated as “meets conditions” with respect to indicator E.5.4.5, “intervention design is based on contextual analysis including potential risks of sexual abuse and other misconduct with respect to host populations”. Four organizations received the rating “approaches conditions” and five received the rating “partially meets conditions”.

*Country-level action plans on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse are not always informed by sexual exploitation and abuse risks.*

212. An analysis of PSEA action plans at both the inter-agency and participating organization levels in the field shows that most lack prioritization and contextual relevance. This is largely due to the absence of SEA risk assessments, rigid templates that hinder contextual adaptation and limited access to allegation data that could be used to improve the understanding of SEA situations within the operation (as discussed in chapter III).

213. In view of the limited resources available for PSEA, it is crucial for entities to prioritize and allocate scarce resources to areas that can maximize the effectiveness of prevention efforts. A notable example of risk-informed action is the strategy implemented by IASC Inter-agency PSEA Capacity Project (PSEACap),<sup>114</sup> which facilitates the rapid deployment of experienced PSEA coordinators to the 15 humanitarian contexts with the highest risk of SEA. Additionally, prevention plans should adopt a graded approach, ensuring that the level of prevention efforts and resource allocations correspond to the severity of SEA risk. **The Inspectors commend the efforts of some participating organizations in developing SEA risk assessment methodologies. However, the frequency and depth of these assessments require further examination, as these directly influence the quality and effectiveness of PSEA action plans.**

*Activities informed by risks of sexual exploitation and abuse can play a crucial role in preventing harm to vulnerable individuals.*

214. While this review does not provide an in-depth analysis of SEA risk assessments at the programme and project levels, case studies demonstrate the positive impact such assessments can have on prevention of SEA. For instance, in Bangladesh, the Empowered Aid initiative<sup>115</sup> used participatory research with refugee women and girls to identify key SEA risks in the aid distribution process. This led World Vision Bangladesh, a key implementing partner of the United Nations, to implement significant changes at distribution points in the targeted refugee camp. These included improving the male-to-female staff ratio from 8:1 to 3:2, introducing sex-segregated lines and latrines and enhancing information on PSEA and complaints mechanisms,

<sup>113</sup> FAO, ILO, OCHA, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNRWA and WHO.

<sup>114</sup> <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-champion-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-and-sexual-harassment/inter-agency-psea-capacity-project-pseacap>.

<sup>115</sup> Empowered Aid is a multi-year, multi-country participatory action research project led by the Global Women’s Institute at the George Washington University, aimed at preventing SEA in humanitarian settings.



particularly for low literacy beneficiaries. Following these changes, a household survey showed that 80 per cent of female respondents felt comfortable reporting incidents to staff, representing a 59 per cent increase compared with previous results.<sup>116</sup>

215. As SEA risks continue to evolve, proactive identification and mitigation measures are crucial. The IASC checklists to protect from SEA during coronavirus disease (COVID-19)<sup>117</sup> and for integrating PSEA in the response to mpox<sup>118</sup> offer a good practice. From case studies, the COVID-19 checklist was adapted by the inter-agency PSEA networks in Bangladesh, Columbia and Lebanon. Another example of timely action comes from the Central African Republic, where the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator issued an inter-office memorandum to the country team members, emphasizing the importance of integrating SEA risk mitigation into the response to the flood that was affecting different areas of the country. The memo also highlighted existing gaps among humanitarian and development entities in meeting minimum standards relating to PSEA, particularly those involving personnel or contractors who have direct contact with beneficiaries. In the current context where significant funding reductions are affecting United Nations operations, particularly in the humanitarian and peace contexts, it is essential to identify potential heightened SEA risks resulting from these cuts and to implement appropriate mitigation measures.

### C. Screening and vetting processes for implementing partners and commercial vendors

216. The 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin defines the PSEA-related responsibilities of non-United Nations entities and individuals entering into a cooperative agreement with the United Nations. These responsibilities include accepting and adhering to the standards of conduct outlined in the bulletin, implementing preventive measures against SEA, investigating allegations and taking corrective action when SEA occurs. Failure to comply constitutes grounds for termination of the cooperative arrangement with the United Nations (ST/SGB/2003/13, sect. 6). In 2017, the Secretary-General introduced a new approach to PSEA, pledging to "establish clear procedures to address unacceptable behaviour by implementing partners and commercial vendors who operate in the name of the United Nations" (A/71/818, para. 51). This was followed by the introduction of the United Nations protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving implementing partners in 2018. This protocol outlines the obligations of the United Nations, including its funds and programmes, to ensure adequate safeguards and appropriate actions related to SEA when working with implementing partners including their sub-contractors. Considering the high number of allegations against personnel of implementing partners (see chapter I), these practices are particularly crucial. This section examines the progress made in achieving this vision, as well as good practices and key challenges encountered by JIU participating organizations.

*Most participating organizations incorporate clauses on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse into their cooperative agreements with implementing partners, thereby formally holding them accountable for preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse.*

<sup>116</sup> See The Global Women's Institute and World Vision, *Empowered Aid: Reducing Risks of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Aid Delivery: Bangladesh Practice Brief* (2023). Available at <https://empoweredaid.gwu.edu/empowered-aid-reducing-risks-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-aid-delivery>.

<sup>117</sup> <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/resources/iasc-checklist-psea-during-covid-19>.

<sup>118</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/interim-guidance-checklist-integrating-psea-country-preparedness-and-response-mpox-november-2024>.

217. The 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin requires United Nations system entities to inform non-United Nations partners of the standards of conducts on SEA and obtain written confirmation of their acceptance when entering into a cooperative agreement. Among the 24 JIU participating organizations that work with implementing partners,<sup>119</sup> all except ICAO, ITC, UPU and WMO formally extend the obligation to prevent and address SEA to their external partners. The mechanisms for implementing and enforcing these policies vary, but most include PSEA clauses in cooperative agreements with implementing partners (including an attached declaration form where the partner accepts the proposed requirements) that contain some or all of the following key elements:

- Definitions of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
- A list of prohibited conduct relating to SEA
- Requirements for partners to implement measures to prevent SEA (e.g. screening of personnel for sexual misconduct history)
- Obligations to promptly report SEA allegations to the entity
- Timely investigation of allegations and communication of the process and outcomes with the entity

218. The list of prohibited conduct relating to SEA in cooperative agreements with implementing partners is generally consistent across participating organizations, including the prohibition on sexual activity with individuals under 18 years old, regardless of national consent laws. However, UN-Habitat, UNOPS, UNRWA and some entities under the United Nations Secretariat<sup>120</sup> include an exception in their agreements, stating that this prohibition does not apply if an implementing partner's personnel is married to a person under 18, provided the marriage is legally recognized in their country of citizenship. In contrast, the UNICEF agreement explicitly states that sexual activity with a child is always considered sexual abuse, even if there is a mistake about the age of the child, or the person is married to the child (see chapter II for more on this exception).

219. Overall, the UNICEF cooperative agreement template serves as a good practice as it not only includes all the key elements mentioned above but obligates partners to promptly inform and refer victims of SEA to available professional assistance. A victim-centred approach is also incorporated by emphasizing the need for the partners to obtain the consent and ensure the safety of the victim. Additionally, the agreement stipulates that such obligations remain in effect even after the agreement expires or is terminated should the incident occur during its term.

220. Incorporating key aspects of PSEA in cooperative agreements communicates the organization's commitment to PSEA and ensures partners are accountable for preventing and responding to SEA. **Participating organizations should review their current cooperative agreements and strengthen the accountability of implementing partners for PSEA, while ensuring the incorporation of a victim-centred approach.**

*Efforts to assess capacities for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and to address the capacity gaps of implementing partners vary across participating organizations.*

221. The United Nations protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving implementing partners requires United Nations entities to assess a partner's

<sup>119</sup> Four participating organizations indicated that they do not work with implementing partners: IAEA, ITU, UN Tourism and WIPO.

<sup>120</sup> The United Nations Secretariat does not have a standardized cooperative agreement used across its entities. A review of agreements from various entities revealed differences; for instance, the template used by OCHA does not include such an exception, whereas the one used by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs does.

capacity to mitigate SEA risks before entering into a cooperative agreement. In 2020, IASC, in collaboration with UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, introduced a harmonized assessment tool<sup>121</sup> which is based on eight standards covering policies, management, training, reporting, investigations and corrective actions. The tool standardizes assessments, promotes mutual recognition across entities and is meant to serve as a risk management tool to guide improvements rather than to disqualify partners. Accordingly, United Nations agencies may engage with implementing partners that have limited capacity, as long as they implement appropriate risk mitigation measures, including a time-bound capacity-strengthening plan.

222. Participating organizations differ in terms of how they roll out PSEA capacity assessment for implementing partners. Organizations reported that the process was resource-intensive, especially early on, requiring extensive capacity development and collaboration between headquarters, field offices and implementing partners. Most organizations using the harmonized assessment tools follow a phased, risk-based approach. Eight participating organizations – FAO, some parts of the United Nations Secretariat, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, WFP and WHO – have institutionalized the tool to varying degrees. They mainly assess non-governmental implementing partners, and work is ongoing to adapt this tool for use with government implementing partners. Priority is generally given to partners with direct contacts with beneficiaries, people of concern and/or community members, as detailed in table 15.

Table 15

**Types of implementing partners prioritized for assessment of capacity for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**

<i>Participating organization<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Year capacity assessments commenced</i>	<i>Category of implementing partners prioritized</i>
FAO	2024	All relevant NGO/civil society entities that enter into an agreement with FAO that have contact with communities in selected pilot emergency contexts
UNFPA	2020	All civil society/NGO partners selected for partnerships with UNFPA
UNHCR	2021	All NGO implementing partners that have direct contact with affected populations (starting in 2024)  For partners assessed as having low or medium PSEA capacity, a capacity strengthening and implementation plan must be developed prior to the signing of the project work plan.
UNICEF	2020	All civil society/NGO partners selected for partnership with UNICEF
UNOPS	2023	All NGO partners that have direct contact with beneficiaries, community members and populations of concern
WFP	2022	All NGO partners
WHO	2023	All NGOs that have an active partnership with WHO in 15 high-risk countries and 15 emergency countries

Source: JIU corporate questionnaire and desk review.

<sup>a</sup> Information was not available for the United Nations Secretariat.

<sup>121</sup> IASC, (Interim) *Harmonized Implementation Tool: United Nations Implementing Partner PSEA Capacity Assessment* (2020). Available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-accountability-affected-populations-and-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/un-implementing-partner-psea-capacity-assessment>.

223. With the launch of the PSEA module in the UN Partner Portal<sup>122</sup> in 2023, PSEA capacity assessments are now conducted online<sup>123</sup> by the eight participating organizations listed in paragraph 222, enabling the assessment results to be shared by users of the platform, enhancing efficiency and promoting mutual recognition.

224. For UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) of the United Nations Secretariat, and UN-Women, the assessment of their implementing partners' PSEA capacity has been integrated into a broader capacity-assessment tool, incorporating some or all of the eight standards from the harmonized tool. The UNAIDS and UNDP implementing partner assessment questionnaires include eight questions related to PSEA that correspond to the eight core standards of the harmonized tool. The UNEP due diligence tool for implementing partners includes only standard 1 (organizational policy). The risk-based capacity assessment of implementing partners used by UN-Women incorporates key requirements of the harmonized tool, which is applied to all implementing partners except for United Nations entities and inter-governmental organizations. OCHA conducts a comprehensive capacity assessment of all prospective NGO partners. The PSEA section of the assessment tool is aligned with the eight core standards and accounts for 20 per cent of a partner's initial risk rating.

225. As data is limited, determining the percentage of assessed implementing partners is difficult. For 2023, with regard to non-governmental implementing partners, UNDP estimated that 41 per cent had been assessed, while UNFPA reported 92 per cent, UNHCR 89 per cent, UNICEF 98 per cent, UN-Women 57 per cent, WFP 23 per cent<sup>124</sup> and WHO 56 per cent (of implementing partners in 15 high-risk priority countries).

226. The remaining JIU participating organizations that collaborate with implementing partners – ICAO, ILO, IMO, ITC, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNIDO, UNRWA, UPU and WMO – have no system in place to assess their partners' PSEA capacity. While the level of SEA risk varies among implementing partners, no organization is entirely immune to sexual misconduct (see chapter I). **JIU participating organizations are encouraged to establish, at minimum, a risk-based screening process and/or a set of minimum requirements for their implementing partners with respect to PSEA capacity.**

*Participating organizations face challenges in assessing and strengthening the capacities for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse of non-governmental implementing partners, but efforts have led to measurable improvements over time.*

227. The United Nations engages with a diverse range of non-governmental implementing partners with varying capacities. Findings from surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with PSEA coordinators and focal points from JIU participating organizations and their implementing partners in case study locations revealed that many partners struggle to understand or align with the United Nations PSEA principles. Commonly cited challenges are the prohibition against sexual relations with beneficiaries, and the prohibition in some PSEA policies against sexual relations with community members at large. These principles were particularly challenging for community-based organizations whose personnel are predominantly

<sup>122</sup> Launched in 2018, the UN Partner Portal, an online inter-agency platform, harmonizes work processes for United Nations entities partnering with civil society organizations. The current users are, within the United Nations Secretariat, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, OCHA and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as FAO, IOM, UNEP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UN-Women, WFP and WHO. See <https://www.unicc.org/news/2021/12/01/un-partner-portal-new-members-new-growth-new-capabilities>.

<sup>123</sup> Due to technical issues, reliable data and statistics on the implementation of these assessments could not be produced for the preparation of the present report.

<sup>124</sup> This percentage is based only on the assessments conducted in the UN Partner Portal from June 2023; assessments prior to this point were completed offline.

drawn from the same communities. Language and cultural differences further complicate understanding, as concepts like “exploitation” may lack a direct translation or be culturally interpreted in varying ways. Practices such as child marriage are also common in certain areas. Smaller partner organizations also lack the resources and expertise needed to fully comply with the PSEA standards, especially in terms of demonstrating their capacity to conduct SEA investigations.

228. Based on interviews and survey results, the process of assessing partners’ capacities was reported to be challenging due to limited time and expertise, with many viewing the process as bureaucratic and not necessarily reflective of actual PSEA capacities of partners. However, the Inspectors recognize that ongoing inter-agency efforts are being carried out through the UN Partner Portal, including regular updates of the dedicated resource library that includes guidance, templates and examples for implementing partners to use and adapt. Case studies have revealed examples of support for capacity development provided to implementing partners such as dedicated training and the establishment of pools of investigators to supplement the PSEA capacity gaps of some implementing partners.

*Significant gaps remain in assessing and strengthening the capacity for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse of government implementing partners.*

229. Currently, only UNHCR assesses the PSEA capacity of their government implementing partners, on a voluntary basis, using the harmonized tool. The harmonized tool is being adapted for government partners by the PSEA Implementing Partner Protocol Working Group, comprising FAO, ILO, IOM, the United Nations Secretariat (including OCHA), UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNICEF, UNODC, WFP and WHO.

230. Government entities are essential and, in many cases, indispensable implementing partners of the United Nations throughout the world. Standards of conduct for government personnel do not always fully align with the United Nations PSEA principles. Certain prohibited behaviours outlined in the 2003 Secretary-General’s bulletin, such as engaging in sexual relations with individuals under 18 and solicitation of commercial sex, remain legal or culturally accepted in many countries. Sexual exploitation is not always classified as a criminal offense. Participating organizations in field locations, particularly those in humanitarian settings, indicated in interviews that, despite operating in a constrained political space, they continue to engage bilaterally with their government counterparts on PSEA. However, they emphasized the need for a more coordinated and comprehensive approach by United Nations entities in engaging with governments, rather than relying on the bilateral efforts of individual organizations.

231. The Inspectors welcome the endorsement by the High-Level Steering Group on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse in May 2024 of a model PSEA clause for inclusion in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (see box 4). Inclusion of the clause in a country’s cooperation framework agreement would signify a joint commitment to PSEA by both the Government and the United Nations at the highest national level, while also facilitating engagement on PSEA between United Nations entities and their counterparts in line ministries.

#### Box 4

##### **Model clause on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**

“Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) is a key priority for the UNCT [United Nations country team] entities, with a special focus on prioritizing victims’ rights and creating an environment in which sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) do not occur. SEA is unacceptable behaviour and is prohibited for UN personnel and UN implementing partners. The UNCT entities will therefore pursue all appropriate means to protect against, prevent and respond to SEA, and will require a similar

commitment from its partners. In delivering on the obligations articulated in the present Cooperation Framework, the UNCT and the government of [insert name] affirm their commitment to preventing and responding to reports of SEA in connection with their personnel involved in common/joint projects. It is understood that this would entail the need to: (i) adhere to common values on PSEA, (ii) take preventative measures against SEA, (iii) investigate allegations, and (iv) take appropriate corrective action when incidents occur, including providing support to victims in accordance with a victim-centred approach.”

Source: IASC.

*Commercial vendors, especially those contracted to work in humanitarian and peace settings, are inadequately assessed for their capacity relating to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.*

232. Commercial vendors play a vital role as partners of the United Nations. In 2023, procurement spending reached \$24.9 billion, engaging thousands of suppliers<sup>125</sup> across all operational contexts, including development, humanitarian and peace settings. The primary method for screening commercial vendors for past misconduct, including SEA-related offences, is by checking the ineligibility list maintained by the United Nations Global Marketplace. The ineligibility list contains sanctioned commercial vendors from the United Nations Security Council Consolidated List, the World Bank Listing of Ineligible Firms and Individuals, the World Bank list of non-responsible vendors and lists of sanctioned or suspended suppliers maintained by United Nations organizations. However, it is unclear how many firms are included in the United Nations Global Marketplace ineligibility list as a result of SEA-related offences. Among JIU participating organizations, 22 reported that they check their vendors against the ineligibility list at one or more stages during the procurement process. Six organizations – UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNIDO, UN Tourism, UPU and WMO – do not follow this practice.

233. In 2017, alongside the Secretary-General’s new approach to PSEA (see [A/71/818](#) and [A/71/818/Corr.1](#)), the United Nations Supplier Code of Conduct<sup>126</sup> was revised to include several updates. Notably, paragraph 11, entitled “Harassment, Harsh or Inhumane Treatment”, was expanded to provide more detailed information on SEA. That revision includes a list of prohibited misconduct related to SEA and outlines suppliers’ responsibilities to prevent and respond to SEA. The 24 participating organizations<sup>127</sup> that manage their procurement processes through the United Nations Global Marketplace require all vendors that register with the platform to acknowledge and accept the Supplier Code of Conduct during the application process. With regard to the other four organizations, IMO requires new vendors to comply with the Supplier Code of Conduct in their vendor registration form, whereas UN Tourism, UNAIDS and UPU have not institutionalized this practice.

234. With respect to legal enforcement of compliance with United Nations PSEA principles, the standard terms and conditions in commercial contracts of all JIU participating organizations except IAEA, ICAO and ITU include provisions related to PSEA. These provisions typically address definitions of SEA and prohibited

<sup>125</sup> UNOPS, *2023 Annual Statistical Report on United Nations Procurement* (2023). Available at [https://www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/asr\\_report](https://www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/asr_report).

<sup>126</sup> <https://unhcr.org/lb/media/annex-f-un-supplier-code-conduct-dec-2017-pdf-0>.

<sup>127</sup> FAO, IAEA, ICAO, ILO, ITC, ITU, United Nations Secretariat, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, WFP, WHO, WIPO and WMO.

conduct and make reference to the organization's PSEA policy and vendor responsibilities in preventing and responding to SEA. Sixteen organizations<sup>128</sup> also include an exception allowing vendor employees to engage in sexual activity with individuals under the age of 18 if they are legally married and the marriage is recognized under the laws of the employee's home country. While this is in line with the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin, **this exemption has already been removed from most organizations' staff regulations and rules. Participating organizations should update their contractual terms and conditions accordingly and consider taking action to align their contractual terms and conditions with the upcoming revision of the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin.**

235. Beyond requiring self-declarations by commercial vendors that they will comply with United Nations contractual requirements, including those related to PSEA, there are no system-wide mechanisms to assess their PSEA readiness comparable to those used with implementing partners. Many organizations believe that vendors do not have direct interactions with local populations or beneficiaries, though in reality some deliver supplies to the communities, conduct third-party monitoring, provide security services to United Nations offices or build infrastructure. In many cases such interactions occur without any close supervision due to remoteness of the locations. Despite the SEA risks, mitigation efforts remain limited. SEA allegations against vendor employees have also not been systematically tracked, and there are no mechanisms in place to prevent re-employment of vendor employees dismissed for sexual misconduct. Commercial vendors also do not have access to either ClearCheck or the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme. Inspectors were informally made aware of several instances in which vendors employed former United Nations personnel or personnel from their implementing partners previously dismissed for sexual misconduct. **A risk-based approach should be adopted to prioritize the assessment of capacities for PSEA of vendors that pose a high risk of SEA.**

## D. Conclusion

236. SEA risk assessments are essential for developing effective SEA prevention strategies. Since 2017, JIU participating organizations have made notable progress in enhancing their capacities in this area by developing tools, building human resource expertise, allocating resources and updating policy frameworks to institutionalize these assessments. However, these efforts have been uneven. Critical gaps persist in certain operational context in terms of achieving full understanding of SEA risks, particularly with respect to engagement with government implementing partners and vendors. In addition, some organizations have yet to fully acknowledge the relevance of SEA risk to their operational contexts and dedicate the necessary attention and efforts. From a risk management perspective, SEA risks must be proactively addressed regardless of their assessed or perceived probability. Even when the probability of occurrence is considered low, the potential consequences are severe, posing significant harm to victims and the organization. In addition, in the context of increasing financial constraints across the United Nations system, SEA risk assessments are even more critical. Budget cuts that lead to reduced aid and services can intensify power imbalances between United Nations personnel and affected populations, while simultaneously weakening internal capacities to prevent and respond to SEA.

<sup>128</sup> IMO, ITC, United Nations Secretariat, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UPU, WFP, WIPO and WMO.

237. The following recommendation is intended to enhance accountability and mitigate the risk of SEA in participating organizations.

**Recommendation 10**

**By the end of 2026, executive heads of United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should incorporate SEA into their enterprise risk management processes to identify and mitigate risks of SEA at different operational levels, including risks associated with implementing partners and vendors, to inform their PSEA action plans.**

## VIII. Responding to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse

238. “Zero tolerance for inaction” with respect to SEA must go beyond simply responding to allegations; it also requires that actions taken be effective, timely, transparent and victim-centred. This chapter examines different aspects of the SEA response, from receiving allegations to conducting investigations, implementing administrative and disciplinary measures and providing assistance and support to SEA victims.

### A. Mechanisms for reporting and handling complaints at participating organizations

*At the organizational level, all Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations have established channels to receive complaints and allegations, including those related to sexual exploitation and abuse.*

239. All participating organizations have mechanisms to receive complaints or allegations of personnel misconduct not specific to SEA or sexual misconduct. Common channels include email, hotlines and web-based forms. Additionally, personnel in offices such as investigation, oversight, ethics, human resources, ombudsman and PSEA units may also be designated to receive SEA allegations.

240. There are no system-wide data on which channels receive the highest number of SEA allegations. FAO reported that 95 per cent of SEA allegations against its personnel were received through email directed to the investigation unit, while the remaining 5 per cent came through its web-based platform. At UNFPA, 42 per cent were received through email directed to the investigation unit, 33 per cent through the hotline email, 17 per cent through the web-based form and 8 per cent in person.

241. Although most participating organizations indicated that they prioritized SEA cases, only a few have established timelines for conducting intake assessments of SEA allegations. FAO aims to process SEA complaints at the intake stage within 48 hours, compared to 14 days for other cases, while the UNFPA target is five days.

*In field locations, multiple channels for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse are made available at both the inter-agency and individual organizational levels; however, their adequacy and suitability remain uneven.*

242. Beyond headquarters-based reporting channels for SEA, victims and witnesses in field locations where United Nations entities operate have multiple reporting options. Inter-agency PSEA networks have been instrumental in establishing joint complaint mechanisms and developing standard operating procedures; however, these



remain unavailable in many locations. Case studies highlight examples of joint SEA reporting channels, such as the United Nations country team in Nigeria, which operates an inter-agency PSEA toll-free hotline – funded and managed by UNFPA – to refer SEA allegations to the respective entities. In Ukraine, a dedicated email has been established primarily to receive SEA allegations, alongside a collection of hotlines operated by United Nations entities and their partners. The country team in the Central African Republic has a similar arrangement. In Uganda, UNICEF supports a government-operated child helpline where SEA complaints can be received.

243. In the case study locations, most of the reviewed inter-agency standard operating procedures for complaint handling include core elements of a victim-centred approach. These elements involve treating victims with care, sensitivity and respect; safeguarding the confidentiality of their identity; obtaining informed consent; providing information on available assistance; and explaining the relevant United Nations procedures, in line with the United Nations victims' rights statement. Notable examples of good practices are found in the inter-agency standard operating procedures of Bangladesh, Cyprus, the Republic of Moldova, Uganda and Yemen.

244. Country offices at JIU participating organizations have also set up their own reporting channels, tailored to specific target groups based on their operational and programmatic footprints, such as in a refugee context or at large construction sites. Various methods have been implemented, including physical complaint boxes in communities, electronic messages, emails, hotlines, designated community focal points and in-person inquiry desks. Key challenges remain, particularly regarding the inclusiveness of these channels, which are mainly technology- and/or literacy-dependent and may not be available in all languages spoken in a given location. Interviews highlighted another key concern: the potential confusion among community members due to the multitude of reporting channels and whether the channels were SEA-specific or covered all types of complaints.

245. The effectiveness of reporting channels is highly context specific. A victim-centred approach is crucial to understanding and addressing victims' needs and preferences while removing barriers to access. Having more channels does not necessarily translate to greater effectiveness. Case studies offer useful insights. For example, assessments among the Rohingya refugee population revealed that nearly 70 per cent of survey respondents preferred to report sensitive issues, including those of a sexual nature involving humanitarian workers, to the Camp in Charge (a government official).<sup>129</sup> In Nigeria, the establishment of the inter-agency PSEA toll-free hotline was informed by community consultations. However, in many case study locations, regular engagements with target populations regarding complaints or feedback channels have been limited. **Participating organizations should conduct regular consultations with target populations on their access to complaint channels, also in collaboration with the respective inter-agency PSEA network.**

*Despite the availability and accessibility of channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse, social, economic and cultural barriers continue to hinder reporting.*

246. Extensive efforts have been undertaken to enhance awareness among target populations, especially those vulnerable to SEA, regarding prohibited SEA behaviours and accessible reporting mechanisms. Additionally, steps have been taken to ensure that these channels remain accessible both in terms of physical availability and user confidence in their safety and appropriateness. Customized messaging, training and awareness-raising materials have been developed and regularly provided to community members, particularly in United Nations operational contexts where

<sup>129</sup> Rohingya Refugee Response Bangladesh, "Assessment report: awareness of reporting mechanisms for reporting general and sensitive issues in the Rohingya camps", August 2023.

there is direct engagement with local populations. Case studies highlight a variety of PSEA awareness materials tailored to specific target audiences, with careful consideration of both messaging and language.

247. Despite the widespread availability of reporting channels, barriers to reporting SEA significantly undermine their effectiveness. The underreporting of sexual misconduct, including within United Nations operations, is a well-documented issue. Key obstacles include factors such as shame, fear of retaliation and distrust in the accountability process, along with social and cultural barriers and economic constraints. These barriers directly influence the use of formal complaint channels or even informal ones, as many victims may view them as inaccessible, unsafe or unlikely to lead to meaningful outcomes.

248. In the case study locations, periodic engagements with populations at risk of SEA have been conducted, either through targeted PSEA initiatives or as part of broader studies on gender-based violence and refugee and child protection. Additionally, these efforts have been incorporated into wider initiatives, including through the accountability to affected populations mechanism in humanitarian and emergency settings. Studies in various contexts have revealed similar trends. For instance, a PSEA perception study in Mali<sup>130</sup> identified shame and limited access to SEA response services as primary barriers to formal reporting. Likewise, a community perception study in Ukraine<sup>131</sup> highlighted that gender-based violence remains a taboo topic, often perceived as a shared responsibility between the perpetrator and the victim, leading to stigma and reluctance to report. Moreover, in this context, SEA is largely viewed as a violent act requiring police intervention, yet many participants lack confidence in the ability of law enforcement to handle cases effectively.

249. Sexual exploitation, particularly in exploitative relationships, is often difficult to recognize as misconduct, especially when the perceived economic benefits outweigh the harm or loss. Victims in such relationships may lack the incentive or the perceived legitimacy to report, especially when doing so could jeopardize a critical source of financial stability or survival, particularly in humanitarian and emergency contexts. Interviews with PSEA coordinators and focal points highlighted this as one of the most challenging aspects of communicating PSEA messages to affected populations. In many cases, allegations only surface when economic advantages are lost, such as following a break in the relationship, further illustrating how power imbalances and material dependency inhibit formal disclosure and reinforce underreporting.

250. A survey conducted with 126 PSEA coordinators and focal points in case study locations assessed the likelihood of SEA incidents perpetrated by United Nations personnel being reported by victims or external individuals. The results show that:

- 33 per cent believed that reporting was “extremely likely” or “likely”
- 45 per cent stated that it was “possible”
- 20 per cent considered it “unlikely” or “extremely unlikely”
- 2 per cent put “unsure” or “don’t know”

These findings indicate that significant barriers remain in encouraging formal reporting, despite efforts to improve accessibility and awareness. This underscores the importance of context-specific awareness strategies that not only inform

<sup>130</sup> Child Frontiers, “Community priorities on their needs relating to PSEA in four areas (Koulikoro, Mopti, Sikasso and Bamako) in Mali: a qualitative study”, 2024 (unpublished).

<sup>131</sup> Ground Truth Solutions, International Rescue Committee and World Vision, “‘I can’t even imagine it’: community perceptions of sexual exploitation and abuse in Ukraine”, July 2024.

communities about prohibited conduct but also address the complex realities shaping victims' reporting behaviours.

251. SEA perpetrated by United Nations personnel and their implementing partners primarily occurs in contexts marked by extreme power imbalances. Victims must overcome significant barriers to report such misconduct. The burden of addressing these violations must not rest with them. While accessible and available reporting channels are important, the primary focus of PSEA should be on preventing SEA from occurring in the first place. As discussed in chapters V–VIII, this requires reinforcing preventive measures, strengthening accountability mechanisms and engaging with communities to reduce SEA risks before harm occurs.

## **B. Investigating allegations**

### **1. Capacity to investigate sexual misconduct allegations**

*The overall human resources capacity for investigating allegations of sexual misconduct in Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations has nearly doubled since 2017. However, the number of sexual misconduct allegations involving United Nations personnel has increased nearly fivefold.*

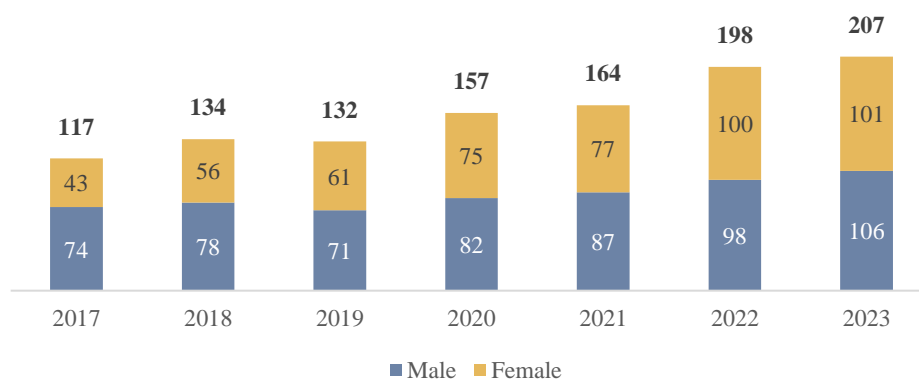
252. Since 2017, the total number of investigators at 19 investigation units covering 28 JIU participating organizations<sup>132</sup> has steadily increased, rising from 117 in 2017 to 207 in 2023, including an improvement in gender parity (see figure VI). In 2023, OIOS in the United Nations Secretariat had the highest number of investigators, with 40, followed by UNHCR with 32, WFP with 29 and UNDP with 26. Between 2017 and 2023, WFP expanded its number of investigators nearly fivefold, rising from 6 to 29, while WHO tripled its investigator counts, increasing from 5 to 16.

253. The proportion of investigators qualified<sup>133</sup> to conduct sexual misconduct investigations increased from 67 per cent in 2017 to 77 per cent in 2023, reflecting significant efforts by organizations to strengthen their capacity in this area (see figure VII). In absolute terms, the number of these investigators increased more than twofold from 78 in 2017 to 160 in 2023, with 52 per cent funded through extrabudgetary sources or employed under consultancy contracts. Additionally, within this group, the proportion of female investigators steadily increased, from 40 per cent in 2017 to 55 per cent in 2023.

<sup>132</sup> OIOS in the United Nations Secretariat also provides investigation services to ICAO, ITC, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNODC, UN Tourism and UN-Women. The WHO Office of Investigations also provides services to UNAIDS.

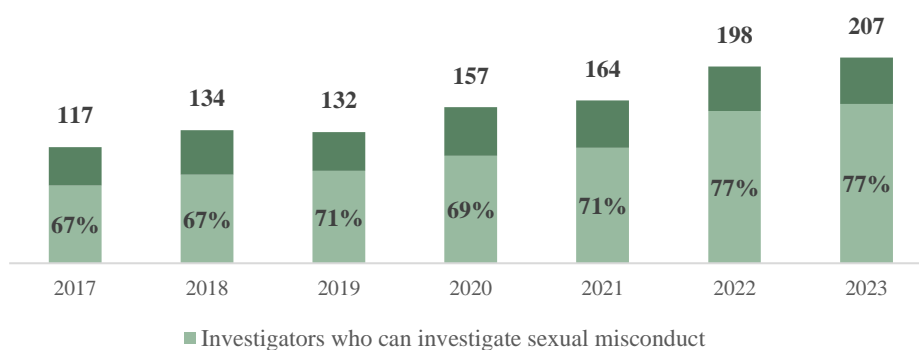
<sup>133</sup> Self-reported by JIU participating organizations.

Figure VI  
**Number and gender distribution of investigators in Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations, 2017–2023**



Source: JIU corporate questionnaire.

Figure VII  
**Number of investigators in Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations and percentage qualified for sexual misconduct investigations, 2017–2023**



Source: JIU corporate questionnaire.

254. The enhanced investigation capacity appears to align, to some extent, with the rising number of allegations over the years, including allegations of SEA and sexual harassment.<sup>134</sup> As noted in chapter I, allegations involving staff and affiliate personnel in 2024 were approximately 4.6 times higher than in 2017. According to the corporate questionnaire, the aggregated number of these allegations advanced to investigation in selected participating organizations also rose from 56 in 2017 to 151 in 2023, a nearly threefold increase.<sup>135</sup> However, several participating organizations reported facing both financial and human resources challenges in investigating sexual misconduct. Three organizations – IMO, UPU and WMO – lack in-house investigation capacity for sexual misconduct and rely solely on external services when needed. Additionally, nine investigation units<sup>136</sup> have leveraged investigators from

<sup>134</sup> Excluding allegations against uniformed personnel in peacekeeping and special political missions.

<sup>135</sup> As reported by FAO, ILO, the United Nations Secretariat, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, WFP and WMO.

<sup>136</sup> At FAO, IAEA, ILO, UNFPA, UNIDO, UNOPS, WFP, WHO and WIPO.

other United Nations entities and/or engaged external specialized firms to bolster their investigative capacity for sexual misconduct.

*Investigation units have implemented various measures to adopt a victim-centred approach in sexual misconduct investigations; however, only a few institutionalize these practices.*

255. Awareness and adoption of a victim-centred approach in SEA investigations has gained significant momentum in recent years, underscored by the IASC investigator's manual on the investigation of SEA complaints with a victim-centred approach. According to the corporate questionnaire, among the 19 investigation units, all except IMO<sup>137</sup> reported implementing various measures to safeguard victims' rights during sexual misconduct investigations, including:

- Allowing victims to have a support person present during investigation interviews (16 units)
- Assigning gender-balanced investigators corresponding to the gender of the victims (13 units)
- Providing periodic updates on the investigation status to victims, their case manager focal point and/or the PSEA focal point (13 units)
- Informing victims about the investigation process, including how their information will be used and the potential risks and benefits, to ensure informed consent (13 units)
- Assigning investigators with knowledge of the victims' cultural, linguistic and regional background (10 units)
- Engaging intermediaries or interpreters familiar with the victims' cultural, linguistic and regional contexts (10 units)
- Assigning specially trained investigators for cases involving child victims (under 18 years old) (10 units).

256. Additional measures reported include placing subjects on administrative leave, changes to remote work arrangements (in the case of sexual harassment), relocating victims, the conduct of protection assessments by security professionals and redacting witness and victim names from investigation reports.

257. While most investigation units reported mainstreaming a victim-centred approach in their practices, fewer than half have established tailored protocols or standard operating procedures to institutionalize these practices within their organizations, ensuring clear roles and responsibilities. Good practices can be found in the investigation units at FAO, the United Nations Secretariat, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNOPS, UNRWA and WFP. As noted in chapter II, however, not a single internal oversight charter across JIU participating organizations mentions a victim-centred approach.

258. Another key aspect of a victim-centred approach is ensuring that victims are kept informed throughout the investigation. However, only a few organizations have formalized this practice. Existing protocols related to SEA or sexual misconduct investigations lack detailed provisions on communication with victims, and the practice is not systematically monitored. According to the corporate questionnaire, only UNFPA, WFP and WHO reported having a specific target, which for UNFPA and WFP is to keep victims of sexual misconduct informed at least four times during an investigation and for WHO at least three times. Based on investigations conducted between 2017 and 2023, UNFPA met this target, informing victims an average of five

<sup>137</sup> The investigation procedures of IMO are under review to incorporate a victim-centred approach.

times per case. Interviews with PSEA coordinators, focal points and senior field leaders suggest that when victims request updates and staff are unable to provide a response, it undermines the victims' trust in the accountability process. **The investigation units that have not yet done so should formulate a protocol or a standard operating procedure to formalize a victim-centred approach in their investigations.**

*Investigations of sexual misconduct, especially sexual exploitation and abuse, have been given priority over other types of misconduct to expedite the process; however, challenges in gathering sufficient evidence remain.*

259. To uphold a victim-centred approach, several investigation units prioritize these cases over other types of misconduct. Six investigation units have set distinct targets, with shorter timelines designated for sexual misconduct cases. For instance, WHO aims to complete sexual misconduct investigations within 120 days, compared to 180 days for other types of investigations. Table 16 provides further details, highlighting that in most organizations, sexual misconduct-specific targets have only been implemented in recent years. FAO, the United Nations Secretariat, UNFPA, UNHCR and UNOPS assign an investigator to the case within one day, if not immediately. From such prioritization, UNOPS, for example, was able to conclude sexual misconduct investigations between 2017 and 2023 in an average of 86 days, compared to 135 days for other types of investigations. It is important to note that investigation timelines may vary depending on the category of personnel involved as well as factors such as differing evidentiary standards and stakeholder engagement requirements.

Table 16

**Planned and actual time frames, from the decision to investigate to the issuance of the report at Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations**

Participating organization	Cases other than sexual misconduct		SEA cases		Sexual harassment cases		Notes
	Target	Actual (2017–2023)	Target	Actual (2017–2023)	Target	Actual (2017–2023)	
United Nations Secretariat	80 per cent of investigations completed within 12 months	11.9 months (375.2 days)	80 per cent of investigations completed within 6 months	9.1 months (273.2 days)	80 per cent of investigations completed within 6 months	8.7 months (262.3 days)	From decision to investigate to issuance of report
UNDP	393 days	424.4 days	180 days	247 days	180 days	220.9 days	308 days for sexual assault investigation
UNFPA	12 months	20 months	6 months	14.5 months	6 months	9.2 months	
UNHCR	6 months	Not available	4 months	Not available	4 months	Not available	
UNICEF	9 months	2022: 40 per cent completed within 9 months 2023: 59 per cent completed within 9 months	All sexual misconduct cases are prioritized above all other matters for assignment, assessment and investigation	2022: 33 per cent completed within 9 months 2023: 67 per cent completed within 9 months	All sexual misconduct cases are prioritized above all other matters for assignment, assessment and investigation	2022: 33 per cent completed within 9 months 2023: 67 per cent completed within 9 months	No separate target data between SEA and sexual harassment cases
WHO	180 days	578 days	120 days	176 days	120 days	342 days	

Source: JIU corporate questionnaire.

260. A major challenge in conducting SEA investigations, as reported by investigation units, is that many times victims do not consent to participate in the investigation.<sup>138</sup> The reasons for this reluctance often mirror the barriers to reporting, including fear of retaliation, distrust in the accountability process and cultural and economic factors. Without the victim's participation, investigators often face difficulty in gathering sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegation, further complicating the already complex nature of SEA investigations.

261. While efforts are made to respect the wishes of the victim, the decision to proceed ultimately rests with the oversight unit, which has a duty of care to the organization, its personnel and the communities they serve. However, when victims choose not to participate, most investigation units reported that they typically do not proceed with the investigation. This applies to ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, the United Nations Secretariat, UNRWA and WIPO. In contrast, UNESCO and WHO reported that they typically continue the investigation even without the victim's involvement.

262. Additional challenges that contribute to the complexity of investigating SEA include limited access to electronic evidence, such as emails, messages, social media data, photos and videos, as well as difficulties in reaching victims due to remote locations, security concerns and challenges in determining the victim's age in certain contexts. Overall resource constraints within investigation units also compound these challenges. In the corporate questionnaire, participating organizations reported that, as at 30 April 2024, there were 297 open investigation cases, against all types of personnel except uniformed personnel, that had been ongoing for more than one year (see figure VIII for additional analysis).

263. In cases of SEA allegations involving uniformed personnel in peacekeeping operations, data from 309 completed investigations between 2017 and 2024 show that the investigation process took an average of 369 days. A breakdown by the investigating entity is provided in table 17.

Table 17

**Average duration of sexual exploitation and abuse investigations by investigating entity (2017–2024)**

<i>Investigating entity</i>	<i>Number of cases</i>	<i>Average number of days</i>
Troop-contributing countries	90	413
Troop-contributing countries together with OIOS	56	274
OIOS or United Nations mission	163	377

Source: "Conduct in UN field missions" database, accessed 13 March 2025.

*Variations in investigation procedures when a subject resigns or separates before an investigation is completed create vulnerabilities in the system, increasing the risk of rehiring individuals who have committed sexual misconduct.*

264. When an employee resigns or separates from the organization (such as when a contract expires) while under investigation for misconduct, organizations may either terminate the investigation, as the individual is no longer an employee, or continue the process to determine whether the allegation is substantiated. For cases of sexual misconduct, most investigation units confirm that they proceed with the investigation until completion to ensure that individuals with substantiated findings are added to the

<sup>138</sup> Participating organizations reported through the corporate questionnaire that 148 SEA allegations between 2017 and 2023 had been closed due to lack of participation from victims.



ClearCheck database, preventing their rehiring (see also chapter VI). This is considered a good practice. In cases where the investigation cannot continue without the subject's cooperation, several investigation units will keep the investigation open and/or log it in their case management system. However, such information is not always available in a subject's personnel file for reference-checking by other organizations.

265. As noted in chapter VI, a small number of JIU participating organizations discontinue investigations when the subject resigns or separates before a conclusion is reached. This loss of opportunity to finalize the investigation and record the individual in ClearCheck creates a vulnerability within the United Nations system. It increases the risk of individuals with a history of sexual misconduct being rehired by a United Nations system organization or implementing partner and may place victims at serious risk, particularly if the perpetrator remains in the same location.

## **2. Investigations of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations against personnel of implementing partners and vendors**

*Lack of capacity to investigate sexual exploitation and abuse allegations is a major challenge among national and community-based implementing partners, but United Nations support has not been comprehensive and systematic.*

266. Most participating organizations include provisions in their cooperative agreement templates obligating implementing partners to prevent and respond to SEA, including by conducting timely investigations of allegations against their personnel and communicating both the process and outcome with the organization (see chapter VII for more information). In addition, most organizations reserve the right to conduct their own investigations into SEA allegations against personnel of implementing partners if they lack the necessary capacity or when a conflict of interest arises. This signifies shared responsibilities between United Nations entities and their implementing partners to conduct SEA investigations and is in line with the 2018 United Nations protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving implementing partners. In the corporate questionnaire, 10 organizations<sup>139</sup> reported that between 2017 and 2023, a total of 143 allegations were investigated by implementing partners, while 46 were investigated by their own investigation units.

267. A significant and well-recognized challenge faced by implementing partners, particularly national and community-based organizations, is their limited capacity to investigate sexual misconduct in general and SEA in particular while maintaining a victim-centred approach. Despite the shared responsibilities mentioned above, only a few participating organizations reported that they provided systematic support at the corporate level to strengthen the SEA investigation capacities of their implementing partners. UNHCR, for example, developed a learning package for implementing partners, which included a resource kit and an e-learning programme.<sup>140</sup> UNICEF regional and country offices led a number of investigation training initiatives for implementing partners, with some support by the investigation unit in reviewing investigation training materials. Additionally, UNICEF has incorporated tools dedicated to investigation in its PSEA toolkit.

268. Country offices and inter-agency PSEA networks have been instrumental in supporting implementing partners on the ground, particularly by helping to address capacity gaps identified through assessments of their PSEA capacities (as discussed in chapter VII). However, as highlighted in chapters V and VII, both the availability of resources and capacities at the field level and the implementation of capacity

<sup>139</sup> FAO, ILO, United Nations Secretariat, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP.

<sup>140</sup> UNHCR, "Investigating allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse: a toolkit for partners", 2021.

assessments are uneven, which affects the consistency of such support. The case studies revealed positive efforts in Bangladesh, the Central African Republic and the Republic of Moldova to develop a pool of qualified sexual misconduct and SEA investigators to assist partners requiring support, but with recognition that this is still not sufficient to meet the demands. **Given that a significant proportion of SEA allegations involves implementing partner personnel, participating organizations should consider providing systematic support to strengthen the investigative capacity of implementing partners, including the incorporation of a victim-centred approach.**

*Participating organizations have limited ability to engage in sexual exploitation and abuse investigations involving personnel of government implementing partners*

269. System-wide data on the proportion of SEA allegations involving personnel of government implementing partners are unavailable. Based on data provided by eight participating organizations<sup>141</sup> through the corporate questionnaire, out of a total of 570 allegations involving implementing partner personnel, 45 relate to government partner personnel.

270. Although most participating organizations<sup>142</sup> employ a standard cooperative agreement template that requires government implementing partners to report and investigate SEA allegations and reserve the right for the organizations to conduct their own investigations, in practice, exercising this right is challenging because United Nations system organizations do not have jurisdiction over government personnel. Other mitigation measures, such as suspending the agreement, which is a viable option when working with non-governmental partners, are also difficult to implement, as government entities are often indispensable to United Nations operations. This challenge is particularly pronounced in humanitarian and life-saving contexts.

*Data on vendors' handling of sexual exploitation and abuse investigations and their protection from sexual exploitation and abuse capacity are notably lacking.*

271. The iReport database does not maintain records of SEA allegations involving vendor personnel, although some participating organizations may categorize such cases under implementing partners. As outlined in chapter VII, most participating organizations include provisions for PSEA and retain the right to investigate in the general conditions of their contractual agreements with vendors. However, with the exception of the UNICEF provision, they do not require vendors to report SEA allegations.

272. When SEA allegations involving vendor personnel are received directly by investigation units, most organizations oversee how the vendor addresses and investigates the allegation, stepping in or assuming responsibility if necessary. However, the United Nations Secretariat reported that all SEA allegations involving vendor personnel were consistently investigated by its own investigation unit.

273. As SEA allegation data related to vendor personnel are not recorded system-wide, and vendors' PSEA capacity is not assessed in the same manner as that of implementing partners, there is limited insight into the extent of SEA allegations involving vendor personnel and gaps in their SEA investigative capacity. This is particularly concerning, as certain types of vendors are contracted to work in high SEA risk contexts and may have direct, including unsupervised, contact with vulnerable populations, such as when serving as third-party monitors or distributing materials. Recommendation 5 in chapter III, section B, is also aimed at addressing this issue.

<sup>141</sup> FAO, ILO, United Nations Secretariat, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP.

<sup>142</sup> At the time of reporting, UNICEF is developing its standard cooperative agreement template with government implementing partners that will include the requirement for government implementing partners to report and investigate SEA.

### 3. Protection against retaliation

*In most organizations, mechanisms to protect external individuals, including sexual exploitation and abuse victims and witnesses, from retaliation have not yet been established.*

274. As previously noted, fear of retaliation is a major barrier to both the reporting of SEA and participation in investigations. Chapter II explores the policy and regulatory frameworks on protection against retaliation within participating organizations and finds that less than one third of protection against retaliation policies extend safeguards to external individuals, such as SEA victims and witnesses. Without such policy coverage, these individuals lack a formal mechanism to proactively seek protection from the organization.

275. In practice, investigation units are typically responsible for assessing safety and security risks faced by victims and witnesses and implementing appropriate protective measures on a case-by-case basis. Several participating organizations identified this as a significant challenge. In addition, existing protection against retaliation mechanisms remain largely reactive, triggered only after a report has been filed, and, in many cases, once retaliation has already occurred. While this is inadequate even for United Nations personnel, the potential harms are even more acute for external individuals, especially SEA victims.

### C. Administrative and disciplinary measures for substantiated allegations

*Only a few participating organizations have an established timeline for disciplinary proceedings related to substantiated sexual misconduct allegations. In general, the process can be lengthy, sometimes lasting more than one year.*

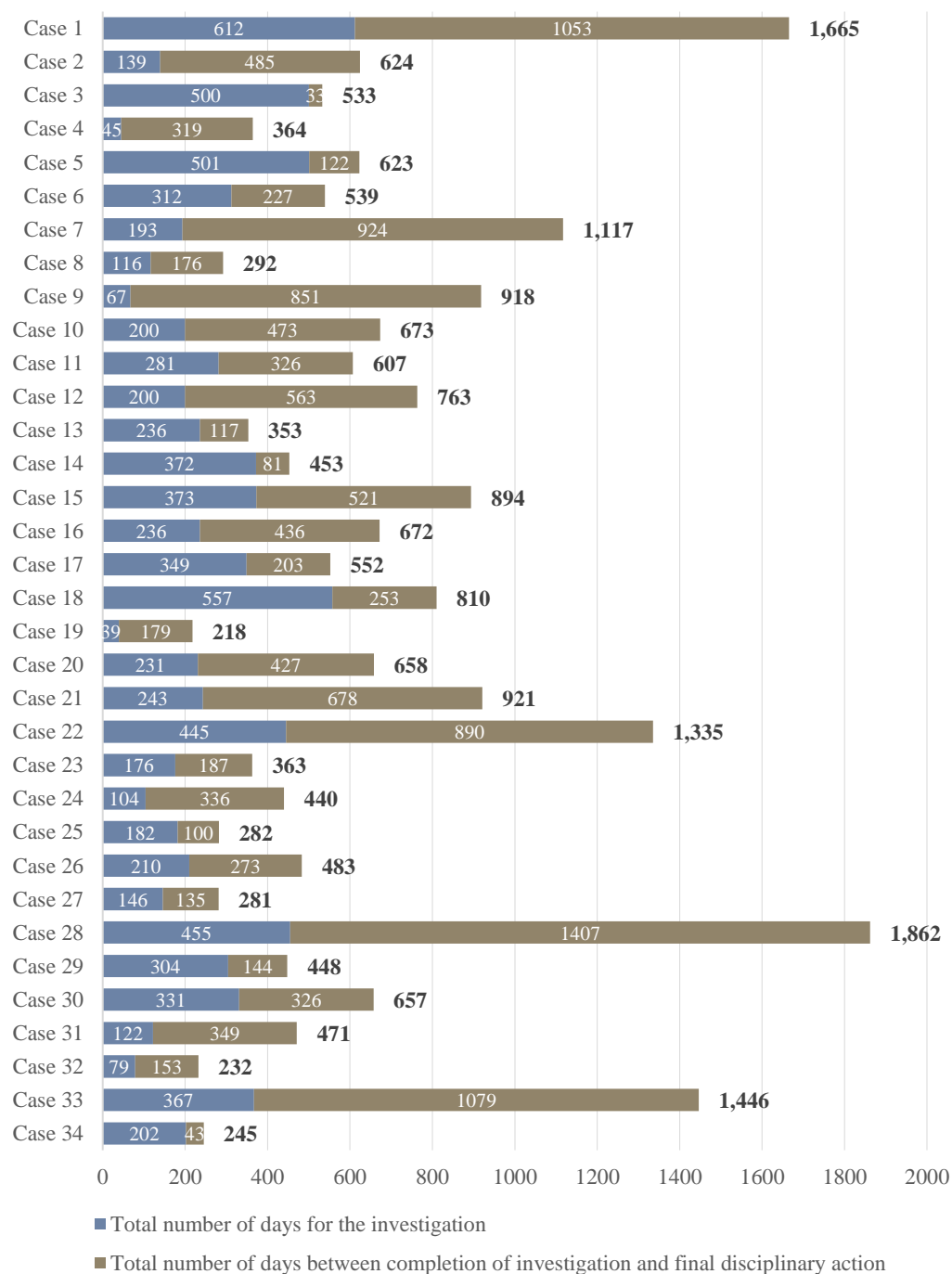
276. As highlighted throughout the present report, United Nations entities have made efforts to strengthen their regulatory and legal frameworks, enhance financial, human and technical resources, and implement various measures to prevent and respond to SEA. Once an investigation is concluded, the administration of the disciplinary process serves as the organization's final step in the accountability process.

277. While recognizing the unique and complex nature of each sexual misconduct case, the Inspectors found that the disciplinary processes are often lengthy. During interviews, key informants not directly involved in investigation or disciplinary functions frequently expressed concerns about the extended duration of investigations. However, many were unaware that the disciplinary process follows the investigation and may take even longer to complete. An analysis of the timelines for investigations and disciplinary proceedings was carried out for 34 sexual misconduct cases involving staff members of JIU participating organizations, as reviewed by the relevant United Nations administrative tribunals<sup>143</sup> in 2023 and 2024. The findings showed that while the median<sup>144</sup> duration of investigations was 234 days, the disciplinary process had a median duration of 323 days. In three cases, the disciplinary process took more than 1,000 days, or nearly three years. Figure VIII presents a detailed breakdown of the timelines. Annex VIII contains more details of these cases.

<sup>143</sup> UNDT, UNAT and ILOAT. The details of the cases that were selected for the study are publicly available.

<sup>144</sup> To handle extreme outliers.

**Figure VIII**  
**Timeline of investigation and disciplinary processes for 34 sexual misconduct cases in 2023 and 2024 involving staff members of Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations**



*Source:* JIU analysis of sexual misconduct cases involving staff members of JIU participating organizations submitted to ILOAT, UNDT and UNAT in 2023 and 2024.

278. From the victims' perspective, the waiting period for perpetrators to be officially held accountable by the organization ranged from 218 days (over seven months) to 1,862 days (over five years), based on this data set. In these cases, the disciplined

staff members sought review by the relevant administrative tribunals. For the 26 cases that reached the final tribunal stage (either UNAT or ILOAT), the median duration from the start of the investigation to the conclusion at the tribunal stage was 1,195 days, or approximately three years and three months. In several instances, the final judgments favoured the disciplined staff members and rescinded the disciplinary measures. It is also important to highlight that many victims did not report sexual misconduct incidents immediately. In these cases, the time between the occurrence of the misconduct and the filing of a complaint with the investigation unit ranged from one month to five years.

279. Data concerning the duration of disciplinary proceedings for affiliate and uniformed personnel are not presently available.

280. Similar to the established timelines for the handling of sexual misconduct allegations by investigation units, only a handful of organizations set specific targets for the duration of the disciplinary process, ranging from 60 to 180 days (see table 18). Several organizations without a defined timeline indicated that sexual misconduct cases were prioritized.

Table 18

**Target timeline from the submission of the investigation report to the determination of the disciplinary action**

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Target (days)</i>
UNAIDS	60
UNFPA	180
UNHCR	90–180
UNICEF	84
WFP	180
WHO	80

*Source:* JIU corporate questionnaire.

281. Several participating organizations identified key challenges that impact the length of the disciplinary process. These challenges include an increasing number of cases reaching disciplinary units, frequent changes in tribunal jurisprudence that affect the organization's ability to prepare cases for disciplinary action, and staff turnover. **The Inspectors urge participating organizations that have not already done so to establish a defined timeline for determining disciplinary measures to be applied in sexual misconduct cases, for the purposes of internal accountability and expediency.**

*Administrative leave, particularly without pay, for staff under investigation for sexual exploitation and abuse has not been consistently applied as a protective measure for victims, witnesses or the organizations.*

282. All participating organizations have established regulatory frameworks that allow for staff members to be placed on administrative leave,<sup>145</sup> with or without pay (also with partial pay for some organizations or circumstances), following allegations of misconduct or while disciplinary procedures are ongoing. Administrative leave is not a disciplinary action but a precautionary measure that the organization may impose to protect the integrity of investigations, safeguard victims and witnesses, uphold the organization's interests and/or maintain workplace order and security.

<sup>145</sup> Or suspension, as termed by several participating organizations, such as IAEA, FAO and WFP.

283. Specific to SEA, administrative instruction [ST/AI/2017/1](#) of the United Nations Secretariat establishes the criteria for placing a staff member on administrative leave without pay. One such criterion is when there are reasonable grounds to believe (probable cause) that the staff member engaged in SEA. Besides the United Nations Secretariat, 14 other participating organizations<sup>146</sup> have this provision in place. Other organizations, such as FAO, ILO, IMO, ITU, UNAIDS and WHO, have a similar provision where administrative leave without pay can be imposed when there is sufficient prima facie evidence to support a charge of serious misconduct, but SEA is not specifically mentioned. Between 2019 and 2023, out of 336 staff members<sup>147</sup> investigated for SEA, 53 were placed on administrative leave with pay and 28 without pay.<sup>148</sup>

284. Having a provision to place individuals with a strong probability of having committed SEA on administrative leave without pay not only enables the organization to implement a protective measure but also reinforces its commitment to combating sexual misconduct and ending impunity. Allowing such staff members to remain on paid administrative leave not only depletes organizational resources but also sends the wrong message to victims, the community and personnel. This issue is further exacerbated by the lengthy investigation and disciplinary process, as discussed above. During interviews, several key informants not only emphasized the prolonged nature of these proceedings but also described how some subjects were perceived as being placed on a “paid vacation”, sometimes lasting more than six months.

285. While acknowledging the rights of staff members under investigation, the presumption of innocence and the potential hardship that administrative leave without pay may impose, **the Inspectors believe that a more rigorous approach could be adopted to impose administrative leave without pay when the established criteria are met.** This will require a leadership commitment and a proactive engagement between the investigation and human resources units. Since disciplinary proceedings can be lengthy, the subject may, at the very least, be placed on administrative leave without pay as soon as the investigation substantiates the allegation.

*Sexual exploitation and abuse victims were not consistently kept informed about the progress of the investigation, the disciplinary proceedings or the outcomes of the disciplinary measures taken.*

286. While several investigation units have incorporated key milestones into their process to ensure that victims or complainants are kept informed, there was limited evidence of similar practices during the disciplinary process. Once the investigation report is handed over, the assigned investigators – who previously may have had contact with the victim – are typically no longer involved in, nor have any visibility into, the disciplinary proceedings. As a result, the prolonged disciplinary process often leaves victims uninformed about the status of their case for extended periods, eroding confidence in the United Nations accountability mechanisms. During interviews, several key informants, including senior leaders in the field, expressed frustration over the lack of status updates throughout the process. Additionally, PSEA coordinators and focal points were unable to provide victims with updates when requested, which goes against “the right to get information” as outlined in the United Nations victims’ rights statement.

287. In addition to “the right to get information”, sexual misconduct victims should also be informed of the outcome of the disciplinary proceedings. The jurisprudence

<sup>146</sup> ITC, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNODC, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women and WMO.

<sup>147</sup> Based on figures reported in the corporate questionnaire.

<sup>148</sup> These subjects may not be unique individuals, as a subject can be placed on both administrative leave with and without pay during the investigation and disciplinary process.

from UNDT has made this clear in its judgment<sup>149</sup> in which a victim of sexual harassment was informed only that the organization had “decided to impose an appropriate disciplinary measure” on a subject.

52. The question before the Tribunal, therefore, is whether informing the victim that the Organization has “decided to impose an appropriate disciplinary measure” complies with the requirement to disclose “the outcome of the investigation and of the action taken.” The Tribunal determines that it does not.

53. In this context, saying that one took disciplinary action is not the same as disclosing “the action taken.” It is a tautology; in other words, it is saying the same thing twice over in different words. In effect, the ASG/HR told the victim here that “the action taken was to take action.”

*Disciplinary measures for substantiated sexual misconduct are not consistent across Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations.*

288. While the review does not cover a detailed analysis of individual sexual misconduct or SEA cases in particular and the disciplinary measures imposed, the data collected suggest potential inconsistencies in the application of disciplinary actions for individuals who have committed SEA and sexual harassment.

289. According to the iReport, among 141 substantiated SEA cases between 2017 and 2024, 12 individuals received “a sanction (other than separation from service)” as a result of SEA, and one of these cases involved rape. From interviews, the Inspectors were also informed of multiple instances where organizations chose not to dismiss staff in substantiated sexual harassment cases due to concerns that the cases could be brought before an administrative tribunal and the organizations lacked the resources to engage in the proceedings. The data provided by CEB on sexual harassment (see annex III) also support this finding, as nearly a quarter of the substantiated cases (2016–2024) appear not to have resulted in any disciplinary measures. Participating organizations seem to have varying levels of risk tolerance and tolerance for sexual misconduct. While some have adopted a firm stance on sexual misconduct cases, seeking to dismiss personnel with substantiated allegations, others have taken a more complacent approach, undermining confidence and trust in accountability mechanisms among personnel, victims and affected communities.

290. As stated above, there is a perception that the delays in sexual misconduct cases are primarily due to the investigations. This is not always the case, however, and administrative and disciplinary actions in sexual misconduct cases are crucial to the accountability framework of an organization. Based on the data provided to JIU on the use of administrative leave for subjects under investigation for SEA, the analysis of tribunal cases for sexual misconduct, data on disciplinary measures for SEA and sexual harassment cases, there is a lack of consistency and an uneven application across participating organizations on the procedures taken following investigations that substantiate sexual misconduct. These gaps and delays in actions discredit and diminish accountability in United Nations system organizations and further the perception of impunity for sexual misconduct.

291. The following recommendation is intended to enhance transparency and accountability in disciplinary measures processes for subjects with substantiated sexual misconduct allegations.

<sup>149</sup> UNDT, *ATR v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, Judgment No. UNDT/2024/100-Amend.1. It is noted that the Secretary-General has filed an appeal with UNAT regarding this decision.

**Recommendation 11**

**By the end of 2026, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should assess: (a) the use of administrative leave without pay; (b) the criteria for imposing disciplinary measures in sexual misconduct cases; (c) the timeline from completion of an investigation to the imposition of disciplinary measures; and (d) the procedures in place for informing victims of measures taken.**

**D. Assistance to victims**

*While inter-agency mechanisms for assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse are largely established at the field level in principle, their implementation remains fragmented and significantly hindered by resource constraints.*

292. The growing awareness and adoption of a victim-centred approach in responding to SEA allegations mean that most participating organizations that have handled SEA cases and engaged with victims have established mechanisms for victim assistance, both at headquarters and in the field. At the organizational level, all entities except ICAO, ILO and IMO reported that they had officially assigned responsibilities for victim assistance (see table 19). The most commonly designated functions for this role at the corporate level are human resources and investigation functions. UNDP, UNOPS and WHO also have full-time specialist positions for victim care that support SEA victims as well as victims of sexual harassment.

293. The United Nations Secretariat, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC have designated the Office of Victims' Rights Advocate (OVRA) as the entity responsible for assisting victims of SEA committed by their personnel. While four Senior Victims Rights' Officers have a secondary reporting line to the Victims' Rights Advocate, their roles are confined to specific locations.<sup>150</sup> Given the system-wide mandate of the Victims' Rights Advocate, intended to provide high-level advocacy for victims' rights and provide technical advice and guidance related to victim assistance for the entire United Nations system, the Victims' Rights Advocate and OVRA cannot be designated as responsible for providing assistance to victims of SEA perpetrated by personnel of these organizations (see chapter III.A and annex IV for more information on this function). An informal recommendation regarding this finding is issued in paragraph 96 above.

Table 19

**Assigned roles and responsibilities for assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level**

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Designated roles and responsibilities in SEA victim assistance</i>
FAO	Collaboration between the relevant decentralized offices, the Office of Emergency and Resilience and the Office of the Inspector General
IAEA	Human resources
ICAO	None
ILO	None
IMO	None

<sup>150</sup> The Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and South Sudan.



<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Designated roles and responsibilities in SEA victim assistance</i>
ITC	Human resources
ITU	Staff counsellor
United Nations Secretariat	Unclear <sup>a</sup>
UNAIDS	Human resources
UNCTAD	Unclear <sup>a</sup>
UNDP	Victim Support Officer
UNEP	Unclear <sup>a</sup>
UNESCO	Internal oversight and ethics
UNFPA	Global PSEAH Coordinator and PSEA Focal Point
UN-Habitat	Unclear <sup>a</sup>
UNHCR	Collaboration between legal, internal oversight, protection and the relevant country office with involvement from the victim care team in some cases
UNICEF	Designated senior child protection adviser
UNIDO	Human resources and ethics
UNODC	Unclear <sup>a</sup>
UNOPS	Victim support and advocacy specialist
UNRWA	Designated PSEA corporate focal point
UN Tourism	Human resources
UN-Women	Human resources
UPU	Human resources
WFP	PSEA focal points at relevant country offices/regional bureaux
WHO	Designated corporate PSEA lead
WIPO	Staff counsellor
WMO	Internal oversight

Source: JIU corporate questionnaire, data as at 31 March 2025.

<sup>a</sup> These organizations indicated and subsequently confirmed that the roles and responsibilities for assistance to victims of SEA for their organizations belong to OVRA.

294. In the field, heads of mission or Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators, as the highest-ranking United Nations officials in a country, are responsible for ensuring that services are available to SEA victims. Typically, existing inter-agency gender-based violence and child protection referral pathways are utilized to facilitate support, although some country offices of participating organizations may establish their own location-specific referral pathways. In most cases, PSEA coordinators or focal points from participating organizations are assigned to oversee assistance for SEA victims impacted by their respective personnel.

295. Case studies indicate that, at least at the inter-agency level, referral pathways are in place and regularly updated, primarily by the gender-based violence and child

protection clusters in collaboration with the inter-agency PSEA network. While the majority of Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators in these countries expressed confidence or partial confidence in the mechanisms implemented within their operations, most raised concerns about limited resources and the availability of basic services, especially safe shelters and medical services in remote areas, where SEA incidents often occur. In United Nations operations within countries where host Governments provide broad coverage of basic services for their citizens, including victims of gender-based violence, these services are often extended to SEA victims as well, as seen in Thailand and the Republic of Moldova.<sup>151</sup> However, in most other situations, particularly in humanitarian and peace operations, basic services are either entirely unavailable or reliant on funding from United Nations entities and their partners, making the provision and sustainability of these services an ongoing challenge.

296. The case studies also reveal that only a few participating organizations have dedicated funding for victim assistance. One example is WHO, where victim assistance funding can be accessed at the headquarters level. More commonly, resources are drawn from existing gender-based violence or child protection programmes; however, not all participating organizations have these types of programmes. Both UNFPA and UNICEF, as cluster leads for gender-based violence and child protection, respectively, reported that they often have to allocate resources to support SEA victims referred by other participating organizations, including peacekeeping operations, despite already facing a scarcity in gender-based violence and child protection funding.<sup>152</sup> In line with the 2019 United Nations protocol on assistance to SEA victims, these two entities are designated as providers of last resort. However, this role is often misinterpreted, resulting in expectations that they assume responsibilities that should rest with, or be shared by, the entities employing the personnel accused of SEA. Otherwise, in the absence of dedicated funding, country offices are generally expected to respond using existing budgets when needs arise.

297. As discussed in chapter IV, the availability of human and financial resources for PSEA at the country level varies significantly. In the absence of an inter-agency PSEA coordinator, inter-agency referral pathways for SEA victims may not be updated in a timely manner. The capacity of PSEA coordinators and focal points is critical; yet, as noted, this differs considerably across contexts. Due to these challenges in both financial and human resources, the quality of assistance provided to SEA victims remains inconsistent.

298. The capacity of the United Nations to provide victim assistance falls short of the principles outlined in the victims' rights statement,<sup>153</sup> which affirms that SEA victims have the right to receive assistance and support tailored to their individual needs. While the statement specifies a range of services to which victims are entitled, a significant gap remains in the ability of the United Nations to fully uphold these rights.

299. The insufficient allocation of resources for victim assistance reflects a prevailing approach among most United Nations entities that treats SEA as an anomaly. However, it is widely acknowledged that certain United Nations operations are inherently exposed to higher SEA risks, with allegations continuing to surface in specific locations each year. Yet this recognition has not translated into the proactive

<sup>151</sup> Accessing national services may subject victims to country-specific requirements and conditions, which may not always align with a victim-centred approach.

<sup>152</sup> For example, OCHA reported that in 2024 the requirements for gender-based violence were only 31 per cent funded and the requirements for child protection were 39 per cent funded (see <https://fts.unocha.org/home/2024/plans>).

<sup>153</sup> United Nations, Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, "Your rights: As a victim of sexual exploitation or abuse committed by United Nations staff or related personnel", 2023.

allocation of resources to adequately anticipate and address victim assistance needs in high-risk contexts.

*There is a lack of understanding of victim assistance, as well as a system-wide approach to such assistance beyond the provision of immediate support.*

300. The 2019 United Nations protocol on the provision of assistance to victims of SEA aims to enhance a coordinated, system-wide approach to victim assistance. It sets out key principles, including ensuring that assistance is victim-centred, rights-based, inclusive and culturally appropriate, while upholding the “do no harm” principle and safeguarding victims’ privacy and confidentiality. To provide necessary support, the protocol prioritizes using existing service providers who are United Nations partners, ensuring that services are tailored to victims’ needs.

301. The protocol primarily focuses on immediate assistance, offering support to victims in the aftermath of SEA incidents. Such support includes safety and protection, medical care, psychosocial support, livelihood assistance, basic material aid and legal services, in alignment with the victims’ rights statement. Additionally, when a child is born as a result of SEA, the United Nations is to collaborate with the relevant Member State to facilitate paternity and child support claims for victims. The current practice in providing immediate victim assistance, as discussed above, is consistent with this protocol.

302. Beyond immediate assistance, however, the extent to which United Nations entities should continue providing support remains unclear, as the protocol does not define time frames or minimum standards for longer-term assistance, leading to varied interpretations. For instance, when SEA committed by United Nations personnel results in long-term medical or psychological effects on victims or impacts their long-term livelihoods due to social stigma, the responsibility for ongoing support is not well-defined. This also extends to assistance to children born as a result of SEA. OVRA offers guidance<sup>154</sup> based on its interpretation of the protocol and the United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel,<sup>155</sup> a precursor to the protocol. However, this guidance does not constitute a formal policy document. Interviews and case studies reveal that senior leaders, PSEA coordinators and focal points and even the Senior Victims’ Rights Officers in the field are often left to navigate these challenges and find solutions on their own, with limited resources, on a case-by-case basis. **The Victims’ Rights Advocate should lead the revision of the 2019 protocol to clarify the United Nations system’s approach to victim assistance, aiming to align it with the United Nations victims’ rights statement.**

303. A system-wide mechanism to provide longer-term support to SEA victims has been the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, set up in 2016 to provide funding to address service gaps in victim assistance and for projects that support income generation activities and sustainable economic empowerment, but not directly to individual victims. To protect the confidentiality of SEA victims and reduce social stigma, these projects also include women from the broader community alongside victims. However, the extent to which these initiatives deliver intermediate and long-term benefits to SEA victims according to their individual needs has yet to be independently evaluated. Currently, the trust fund’s project activities are concentrated in only five countries.<sup>156</sup> At an organizational level, WHO

<sup>154</sup> United Nations, Office of the Victims’ Rights Advocate, “Frequently asked questions: On the scope and duration of assistance for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and non-staff personnel”, 2022.

<sup>155</sup> See General Assembly resolution 62/214.

<sup>156</sup> The Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Liberia and South Sudan.

created the Survivor Assistance Fund in 2021 to support victims of SEA perpetrated during the tenth Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Fund has been used to support 92 victims to fill gaps in services, including legal assistance, and continues to be used to provide support to victims of sexual misconduct involving WHO personnel.<sup>157</sup>

304. Funding for victim assistance has been a contentious topic across the United Nations system, particularly when it comes to direct financial support to victims. Nonetheless, the need is there. As one Resident Coordinator noted: “Funding for victim support is limited, and the cost of providing assistance can vary significantly depending on the complexity and nature of each case. Some cases require extensive resources, such as medical care, psychosocial support, legal aid or relocation services, which can place a heavy financial burden on the system.”

305. While the United Nations victims’ rights statement<sup>158</sup> outlines the right of victims to assistance and support and a remedy, its practicality is questionable. It risks setting unrealistic expectations among victims of SEA perpetrated by United Nations personnel, while failing to ensure the accountability of those responsible, particularly in terms of financial responsibility. In the absence of dedicated funding, some peacekeeping missions and country offices resort to using petty cash to cover victims’ basic needs. Implementing partners are relied on for service provision and, in some cases, PSEA focal points have used personal funds to cover essential expenses such as transportation.

306. While ultimately SEA perpetrators should be held accountable to their victims for the consequences of their actions, in reality, the accountability process remains complex and lengthy. Additionally, there is no mechanism in place for victims to claim reparations from the perpetrators, not even within the scope of the administrative tribunals. The current efforts to address paternity claims are also struggling to gain momentum (see chapter IX for more information). To date, the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse is the only mechanism that has been able to use the funds from withheld payments in substantiated cases of SEA by civilian and uniformed personnel for the benefit of SEA victims.<sup>159</sup> However, this has not been a sustained practice.

307. One funding option to support victims, either collectively, individually or both, is to repurpose savings gained from placing subjects under investigation or undergoing disciplinary proceedings for SEA on administrative leave without pay or from the entitlements of dismissed staff. These savings could include unpaid salaries and forfeited entitlements, such as accrued annual leave and repatriation grants. As funding is a concern across the system, and specific criteria for assistance to victims need to be established, an inter-agency pooled fund, sourced from agency and donor contributions as well as from withheld entitlements, could serve as an effective mechanism to support both the immediate and long-term individual needs of SEA victims. While the idea has been discussed in system-wide forums and endorsed by some executive heads, it would require clear governance, careful planning and consensus on the types, duration and recipients of assistance, and would need to be aligned with a system-wide agreed approach to victim assistance.

308. The following recommendation aims to enhance system-wide coherence and coordination and support the consideration of such a pooled fund to institutionalize assistance to SEA victims.

<sup>157</sup> WHO, Survivor Assistance Fund concept paper.

<sup>158</sup> See United Nations, “Your rights”, right No. 2 (the right to receive assistance and support).

<sup>159</sup> Following approval by the General Assembly in its resolution [70/286](#), the trust fund reported a total amount of \$935,000 from withheld payments.

**Recommendation 12**

**By the end of 2028, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should take collective action, in consultation with the executive heads of other members of the CEB, preferably within the framework of inter-agency mechanisms, to explore the establishment of an inter-agency pooled funding mechanism to assist victims of SEA.**

**E. Conclusion**

309. JIU participating organizations have made efforts to strengthen their SEA response mechanisms, including improving reporting channels, engaging with targeted populations to raise awareness, enhancing investigative capacities, adopting a victim-centred approach and providing victim assistance. These efforts have been made despite severe resource constraints. However, further action is needed, especially if SEA victims are to be placed at the heart of the response process.

310. SEA victims bear the burden and consequences of reporting, yet they are not always kept informed about the progress or outcome of their reports. The accountability process is often lengthy, and the results may not always be in their favour or serve their best interests. Meanwhile, the risks and consequences of coming forward can sometimes work to their detriment and could have a lifelong negative impact. While the United Nations must prioritize preventing SEA, the response process must also be more efficient and centred on the rights and needs of victims.

**IX. Engagement with governing bodies and Member States on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**

311. Governing bodies and Member States play a crucial role in advancing PSEA by holding United Nations system organizations accountable for implementing policies and procedures, and by supporting efforts to ensure accountability for their personnel found responsible for SEA and other forms of sexual misconduct. While previous chapters include recommendations addressed to governing and/or legislative bodies, this chapter highlights key aspects where governing and/or legislative bodies and Member States can collectively contribute to strengthening the prevention of and response to SEA within United Nations system organizations as well as within their partnerships and linkages to them.

**A. Coverage of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse by governing and legislative bodies**

*Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse is widely covered in most governing and legislative body meetings.*

312. Based on responses to the JIU corporate questionnaire, all JIU participating organizations confirmed that they either report on SEA to their governing and/or legislative body or would do so if relevant cases arose. In 12 organizations,<sup>160</sup> PSEA is addressed either as a stand-alone agenda item or combined with sexual harassment under a single agenda topic. For the 20 JIU participating organizations with oversight

<sup>160</sup> Organizations with a stand-alone PSEA agenda item (some combined with sexual harassment): FAO, United Nations Secretariat, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOPS, UN-Women and WHO.

and audit committees, 14 of these committees provide annual reports on PSEA activities to their governing or legislative bodies, while the remaining 6 do not report on PSEA on an annual basis. In addition to dedicated discussions on PSEA under a separate agenda item during the annual sessions of governing and legislative bodies, all participating organizations also include PSEA in other reports submitted by various functions. In approximately half of participating organizations, multiple functions, such as six executive offices, 16 ethics offices, 15 internal oversight functions and two human resources offices, either report or are authorized to report to the governing and legislative bodies on PSEA, depending on the nature of the cases or activities involved.

*Reporting on disciplinary measures has improved but should go further and should come from management.*

313. To promote greater accountability and integrity, in 2011, JIU first recommended that participating organizations report to their governing bodies on the disciplinary measures taken against personnel due to misconduct.<sup>161</sup> Subsequent JIU reports in 2018 and 2023 also included similar recommendations.<sup>162</sup> The origins of these recommendations can be found in a General Assembly resolution from 2005 in which the Assembly called upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to ensure that all personnel were informed of the most common examples of misconduct and/or criminal behaviour and the respective disciplinary consequences, with due regard to the protection of the privacy of the staff members concerned.<sup>163</sup> A report on disciplinary measures offers personnel clear examples of misconduct within the organization, along with the corresponding sanctions and actions taken against those responsible. It serves to demonstrate the organization's commitment to upholding accountability. This is a particularly important message to be conveyed from senior leaders to personnel concerning sexual misconduct: that the organization can and does hold staff accountable. Such a signal from the top level of management can reinforce the concept of "zero tolerance" within each organization and help promote it across the entire system.

314. As pointed out in the 2023 JIU review of accountability frameworks, a report on disciplinary measures should not be issued by or included as part of the annual reports of the internal oversight function,<sup>164</sup> as is currently the case in five JIU participating organizations.<sup>165</sup> Internal oversight offices are responsible for conducting investigations and presenting their findings and conclusions, but it is the role of management to decide on appropriate disciplinary measures for personnel misconduct. A report on disciplinary measures taken by the administration based on substantiated allegations reinforces the tone at the top for accountability and the concept of zero tolerance. At UNHCR, the bulletin on disciplinary measures is the most widely read among all annual bulletins. At WHO, a public dashboard on disciplinary actions for sexual misconduct and abusive conduct is updated in real time. In these organizations, accountability mechanisms are part of larger strategies that support the implementation of their respective sexual misconduct policies and ongoing organizational cultural change initiatives.

<sup>161</sup> JIU/REP/2011/5, entitled "Accountability frameworks in the United Nations system", recommendation 4.

<sup>162</sup> JIU/REP/2018/4, entitled "Review of whistle-blower policies and practices in United Nations system organizations", recommendation 9; and JIU/REP/2023/3, entitled "Review of accountability frameworks in the United Nations system organizations: (follow-up of the 2011 review).

<sup>163</sup> See General Assembly resolution 59/287, para. 17.

<sup>164</sup> JIU/REP/2023/3 reads: "In some cases, the disclosure is carried out only through the reports of the heads of investigations (or the equivalent) and includes only information on cases reported and investigated, and thus, by its nature, does not provide information on the final outcome of the legal proceedings, if any".

<sup>165</sup> Organizations that report on disciplinary measures in annual reports of their internal oversight offices: FAO, ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA and UN-Women. WHO also includes disciplinary measures in its internal audit report but its primary reporting on SEA is through its dashboard.

315. As stated in a JIU report from 2018,<sup>166</sup> 16 JIU participating organizations had accepted and implemented the 2011 recommendation. That number has since grown to 20 organizations, with 17 of them making their reports on disciplinary actions taken against personnel publicly available (see annex IX). However, eight organizations<sup>167</sup> have yet to produce such a report. From interviews, officials of some of these organizations expressed discomfort with producing and publicizing such reports, citing the small number of disciplinary cases each year and the challenge of protecting the privacy of victims and subjects through effective anonymization. In the view of the Inspectors, this is not a compelling argument, as it misses the opportunity for organizations to communicate their administration's final and official decisions on misconduct. Doing so can enhance transparency, inform personnel and help reduce reputational risks associated with speculation or misinformation about cases that may already be widely known within the organization.

316. The Inspectors note that the reports on disciplinary measures submitted to governing and legislative bodies that were reviewed offer examples of good practices, such as indicating whether the name of the subject of substantiated sexual misconduct allegations was added to the ClearCheck database<sup>168</sup> and displaying information, in aggregate, on criminal referrals submitted to national authorities.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, the 2022 UNAIDS report contains information on what kind of support and assistance was provided to victims of sexual misconduct, but this does not appear to be an ongoing practice. Nonetheless, the overall structure and content of the UNAIDS report that omits identifying elements, such as the country office and functions concerned, could serve as a template for smaller organizations of the system concerned with privacy and anonymity issues.<sup>170</sup>

317. The following recommendation is intended to synthesize previous JIU recommendations on the topic and provide governing and/or legislative bodies and personnel of United Nations system organizations with a succinct and comprehensive report from the respective executive heads about disciplinary measures taken against their personnel for substantiated allegations of SEA and other misconduct, which will further accountability in participating organizations.

### **Recommendation 13**

**By the end of 2026, legislative organs and/or governing bodies should request that executive heads of United Nations system organizations produce an annual report on all disciplinary measures taken against their respective personnel for sexual misconduct, including the nature of the misconduct, whether subjects were added to the ClearCheck database of sexual misconduct records, any assistance provided to victims and the number of all relevant criminal referrals made to the competent national authorities.**

<sup>166</sup> JIU/REP/2018/4.

<sup>167</sup> Organizations that do not report on disciplinary measures: IAEA, ILO, IMO, ITU, UNRWA, UN Tourism, UPU and WMO.

<sup>168</sup> Organizations that include whether the subject has been added to ClearCheck: FAO, United Nations Secretariat, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNHCR and WHO.

<sup>169</sup> Organizations that include aggregated data on criminal referrals: United Nations Secretariat, UNHCR and UN-Women.

<sup>170</sup> See UNAIDS, "Corrective administrative actions, including disciplinary measures taken in 2022", conference room paper UNAIDS/PCB (52)/CRP6, available at [https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/PCB52\\_CRP6\\_Corrective\\_administrative\\_actions\\_in\\_2022\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/PCB52_CRP6_Corrective_administrative_actions_in_2022_EN.pdf).



## B. Criminal referrals to national authorities

*Criminal referrals and accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse cases outside the peacekeeping context have been limited.*

318. Several General Assembly resolutions provide guidance to the United Nations Secretariat and United Nations funds and programmes on referring misconduct that may constitute a criminal offence to national authorities. The most comprehensive of these is resolution [62/63](#), adopted in 2007, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to bring credible allegations against United Nations officials and experts on mission to the attention of the respective Member States and urged appropriate action.<sup>171</sup> The Assembly also called for an annual report on criminal referrals by the United Nations, as well as actions taken by Member States, and the report contains both the referrals by the Secretariat as well as a compilation of actions taken independently by Member States on investigations into allegations against United Nations personnel.<sup>172</sup>

319. The 2024 report of actions<sup>173</sup> includes 43 referrals of SEA allegations from 2008 to 2024 from the United Nations Secretariat<sup>174</sup> to national authorities. The United Nations was informed that only one case, since 2008, has resulted in criminal accountability for United Nations system staff.<sup>175</sup> During the 2017–2023 review period, the Secretariat made 32 SEA-related referrals to national authorities, and WHO made 1. This is in contrast to 85 reported substantiated SEA allegations involving civilian personnel, including cases of sexual assault, rape, sexual violence, solicitation of child exploitation and trafficking for SEA.

320. In interviews with officials from the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Inspectors were informed that, in line with a victim-centred approach, cases are not referred to national authorities if the victims do not support the referral or choose not to pursue legal action. This could be for a variety of reasons, including safety and security concerns. As a result, these SEA cases carry no legal consequences for the perpetrators beyond administrative or disciplinary measures by their employing organization, such as dismissal and possible inclusion in the ClearCheck database.

321. Annex II to the most recent report on criminal accountability ([A/79/189](#)) includes cases in which Member States have pursued criminal accountability on their own accord, that is, not referred by the United Nations.<sup>176</sup> That report includes 24 SEA cases reported by national authorities on United Nations personnel, of which 16 are from peacekeeping missions. Of the 24 cases, 2 have resulted in criminal convictions. Most of the cases have resulted in charges being dropped (seven cases) or remain inactive (eight cases). In one notable exception, the subject was convicted and served prison

<sup>171</sup> See General Assembly resolution [62/63](#), para. 2.

<sup>172</sup> See, for example, annex I to the report of the Secretary-General on criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission ([A/79/189](#)), on additional information on the nature of the allegations and information received from States on all referrals since 1 July 2007.

<sup>173</sup> [A/79/185](#).

<sup>174</sup> The United Nations Secretariat receives cases from the funds and programmes for consideration to refer them to national authorities for criminal accountability.

<sup>175</sup> A UNDP case in 2017 resulted in the subject pleading guilty to lesser charges. The subject is serving a 15-year prison term in the United States of America (see [www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/former-undp-nations-employee-sentenced-15-years-prison-drugging-and-sexually](https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/former-undp-nations-employee-sentenced-15-years-prison-drugging-and-sexually)). The Inspectors found one additional case from before 2008 that resulted in the subject serving prison time in France.

<sup>176</sup> See annex II to the report of the Secretary-General on criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission ([A/79/189](#)), on notifications received from States with respect to investigations or prosecutions of crimes allegedly committed by United Nations officials or experts on mission since 1 July 2016.



time for rape.<sup>177</sup> Nearly a third of the cases referred to national authorities involve child victims (under 18 years old), and national authorities reported on 14 cases involving minors, with half of the cases indicating that no information was available for the cases or they were still under investigation (in some cases for several years). In both annexes, it is stated that Member States were requested to provide updates on cases that have either been referred to them or they have undertaken to consider for prosecution. An examination of these annexes indicates that, overall, very little information or updates are provided, especially in cases involving minors as victims. This contradicts the letter and spirit of the many relevant resolutions of the General Assembly that have been jointly drafted by the Member States, over the years, calling for accountability and transparency from the United Nations system organizations in relation to SEA cases. **The Inspectors respectfully request Member States to provide timely and detailed updates on the criminal cases that have been referred to them, in order to enhance transparency and accountability within the United Nations system with regard to its personnel with substantiated SEA allegations.**

*There tends to be more criminal accountability in sexual exploitation and abuse cases involving uniformed personnel compared to other categories of personnel.*

322. United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions track criminal accountability concerning SEA separately and publicly post their data in real time.<sup>178</sup> Greater accountability has been observed in cases involving uniformed personnel within peacekeeping missions compared to civilian personnel outside peacekeeping. As noted in chapter I, between 2017 and 2024, of the 274 uniformed personnel with substantiated SEA allegations, 236 were repatriated by the United Nations and 84 received jail sentences imposed by their respective Government, which represents 31 per cent of the total number of uniformed individuals with substantiated SEA allegations.

323. For civilians serving in peace operations, 62 were found with substantiated SEA allegations between 2017 and 2023 (see also chapter I). For this period, 38 of the subjects have lost their employment with the United Nations Secretariat as a result of substantiated cases of SEA.<sup>179</sup> In two cases, national Governments took action against the staff.

Table 20

**Criminal accountability for substantiated sexual exploitation and abuse allegations by personnel type, 2017–2024**

<i>Type of personnel</i>	<i>Number of individuals with substantiated SEA allegations</i>	<i>Number of individuals dismissed/separated/terminated</i>	<i>Criminal accountability</i>
Staff and affiliate personnel outside peace operations	107	74	33 referrals; <sup>a</sup> 1 imprisoned
Civilian personnel serving in peace operations	62	38	2 referrals; 1 imprisoned
Uniformed personnel in peace operations	274	25 (and 10 suspensions from service and 2 forced retirements)	84 jailed

Source: A/79/189; and Conduct and Discipline Unit data on peacekeeping missions, accessed on 13 March 2025.

<sup>a</sup> Also includes WHO referral; all other referrals are from the United Nations Secretariat and United Nations funds and programmes.

<sup>177</sup> In the UNFCCC case from 2017, the subject was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison in Germany, but his name has not been recorded in ClearCheck.

<sup>178</sup> See the “Conduct in UN Field Missions” web page dedicated to SEA data, available at <https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-data-introduction>.

<sup>179</sup> Several cases were still pending the conclusion of the disciplinary process.

*Referrals of substantiated SEA allegations to national authorities remain rare among specialized agencies, reflecting a significant gap in criminal accountability that undermines system-wide coherence.*

324. It is stated in the report of the Secretary-General on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (A/70/729) that “Failure to pursue criminal accountability for sex crimes is tantamount to impunity.” As table 20 outlines, there are more examples of criminal accountability in peacekeeping missions, particularly with uniformed personnel, than with civilian personnel. The table also notes that WHO is the only specialized agency to have referred individuals to national authorities for substantiated SEA allegations.<sup>180</sup> No other specialized agency has made such referrals and, according to legal officers interviewed, it is uncommon for any type of misconduct to be referred to national authorities.

325. Referrals to national authorities are based on the article VI of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 13 February 1946, adopted by United Nations specialized agencies in their legal frameworks.<sup>181</sup> The Inspectors were struck by how rarely referrals are made to national authorities in specialized agencies and how little experience with the process and procedures for referrals many of their legal officers have. In a recent ILOAT case involving the sexual assault of a WFP staff member by a WFP colleague, the victim argued before the tribunal that sexual offences such as sexual assault or rape require swift action and a strict protocol. This includes the timely collection of evidence by experts from multiple fields (e.g. medical and police examination, documentation and psychological support). The victim contended that such cases should be immediately referred to national authorities for criminal investigation rather than being handled by internal oversight offices, which are primarily designed to conduct administrative investigations. The complaint by the victim to change the FAO/WFP policy on referral to national authorities was ultimately dismissed, as the judges stated that they do not have the authority to issue recommendations on an organization’s policies.<sup>182</sup>

326. As outlined above, the United Nations Secretariat and United Nations funds and programmes are guided by General Assembly resolution 62/63 and are obliged to refer substantiated criminal allegations, including sexual misconduct, to national authorities. Paragraph 9 of the resolution outlines the intent to request from Member States “an indication of the status of their efforts to investigate and, as appropriate, prosecute crimes of a serious nature”. While there may not be many SEA cases among the majority of specialized agencies, alignment with paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 62/63 would provide system-wide coherence in holding subjects with substantiated SEA allegations accountable. **The Inspectors encourage governing bodies of specialized agencies that do not have in place proper policies and procedures that are based on their legal frameworks and aligned with principles, such as taking a victim-centred approach, to request that their executive heads establish policies and/or procedures for making criminal referrals concerning SEA allegations to national authorities.**

<sup>180</sup> WHO referred subjects to national authorities as a result of the SEA cases in the period 2018–2020 surrounding the Ebola response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

<sup>181</sup> For example, WHO adopted the Convention at the first World Health Assembly on 17 July 1948. Article VI, section 23, to the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies states: “Each specialized agency shall cooperate at all times with the appropriate authorities of Member States to facilitate the proper administration of justice, secure the observance of police regulations and prevent the occurrence of any abuses in connection with the privileges, immunities and facilities mentioned in this article.”

<sup>182</sup> ILOAT, *S.S. v. FAO*, Judgment No. 4944 (2024).

## C. Member States: United Nations peacekeeping and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

*The protection from sexual exploitation and abuse policies of the United Nations do not cover non-United Nations forces operating under a United Nations mandate.*

327. The trend towards deploying troops under the auspices of the Security Council, known as non-United Nations forces operating under a United Nations mandate,<sup>183</sup> and away from traditional peacekeeping models does not provide a sustainable role for the United Nations in terms of PSEA. In the strategy proposed in 2017, the Secretary-General noted his concerns about non-United Nations forces and called upon Member States who deploy these forces to “take preventative measures” and “ensure both accountability of perpetrators and remedies for victims”. Implicit of his lack of authority over these types of troops, he implored Member States to require similar training, policies and standards of conduct that the United Nations has in place.<sup>184</sup>

328. The resolution adopted by the Security Council in 2023 for deploying the Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti includes protection and prevention of gender-based violence and SEA, as well as similar requirements found in the policy for United Nations field missions.<sup>185</sup> While this latest Security Council resolution calls for gender-based violence and PSEA training to be delivered by the countries providing personnel, it does not call for coordination, technical assistance or alignment with United Nations policies and procedures.

329. Based on interviews with United Nations officials, OHCHR did engage with the Government of Kenya to provide expertise and advice on PSEA for its deployment of police to Haiti, but this was not called for in the resolution; it only occurred based on established relationships and coordination efforts by OHCHR and the Government of Kenya. This type of mechanism for deploying troops has been problematic in the past and has led to reputational damage for the United Nations system, as it was linked to the 2015 SEA allegations in the Central African Republic by French troops under a similar Security Council resolution.<sup>186</sup> That resolution did not include any provision on the conduct of the troops. One of the main issues related to the SEA allegations against non-United Nations forces operating under a United Nations mandate in the Central African Republic was the accountability of the perpetrators, as despite the fact that they did not fall under United Nations policies or procedures, being erroneously perceived to be related to the Organization, their actions did cause reputational and moral damages for the United Nations.<sup>187</sup> The lesson was learned, to some extent, as the language used in Security Council resolution [2272 \(2016\)](#) as well as the inclusion of PSEA language in Council resolution [2699 \(2023\)](#) demonstrates, but a more coherent and consistent approach would be ideal, as different countries and types of personnel undertake similar missions and are not under the accountability framework of the United Nations, but can create a reputational risk for the United Nations system.

330. The Inspectors understand that these types of Security Council mechanisms may become more common as traditional United Nations peacekeeping missions decrease. Without clear and consistent policies and procedures for this type of deployment, the reputational risks to the United Nations as well as the risks to the communities in

<sup>183</sup> These may include multinational security support arrangements, regional bodies such as the African Union, the European Union or NATO, or the armed forces of a specific Member State operating pursuant to a Security Council authorization.

<sup>184</sup> [A/71/818](#) and [A/71/818/Corr.1](#).

<sup>185</sup> See Security Council resolution [2699 \(2023\)](#), paras. 7, 11 and 18.

<sup>186</sup> See Security Council resolution [2127 \(2013\)](#).

<sup>187</sup> [A/71/99](#), part III, para. 60.

which the troops serve are heightened, and the rights of victims may not be held to the standards agreed upon in previous Security Council resolutions.<sup>188</sup> This may require a revision to the 2013 human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces,<sup>189</sup> which governs the support the United Nations provides to non-United Nations forces, and an explicit alignment of the human rights due diligence policy with the Organization's policies and procedures on PSEA and a victim-centred approach. **Member States should proactively engage with the United Nations Secretariat to address the gaps in policies and procedures inherent in the deployment of troops under the auspices of the Security Council and develop policies and training with regard to PSEA that will apply to all non-United Nations forces operating under a United Nations mandate.**

*Paternity cases related to sexual exploitation and abuse are not being resolved, and roles, responsibilities and expectations are not clearly defined.*

331. In 2024, the United Nations Secretariat launched a website<sup>190</sup> to track recognition of paternity and support claims related to children born of SEA, categorized by personnel type (uniformed personnel or United Nations staff members serving in peace operations), nationality of subject/father and the United Nations peace operation concerned. As at March 2025, the database listed 759 paternity claims, with only 29 of them having established paternity and indicating that support for the children may be provided. An astounding 519 claims were pending a resolution with regard to the recognition of paternity, while in 211 cases, either paternity had not been established or the mother/guardian of the child born of SEA had withdrawn the claim.<sup>191</sup>

332. The overwhelming majority of these cases are attached to uniformed personnel. The legal means for determining paternity, let alone resolving child support claims, is precarious and relies on DNA testing, which may not be available or legally permitted in some countries. While the Victims' Rights Advocate and the Special Coordinator have made various efforts to support these processes, including public appeals from the Secretary-General and Under-Secretaries-General urging Member States to accelerate action, the data continue to reflect limited progress.

333. Success can be defined in paternity cases in terms of retribution and support for the children. United Nations Secretariat officials interviewed are frustrated with the results, and there appears to be a lack of clarity in terms of the roles and responsibilities of the Secretariat for paternity cases, those of Member States and those of the subject. In his 2017 strategy, the Secretary-General urged Member States to support the Secretariat in resolving paternity cases and requested them to designate a focal point in their respective capitals. This focal point would act as a direct liaison for victims filing paternity claims and assist in facilitating DNA testing related to such claims.

334. Following the issuance of the strategy, a short-lived "circle of leadership" was established to symbolize Member States' commitment to ending impunity. Comprising global leaders from 66 countries, the group met approximately eight times; however,

<sup>188</sup> In paragraph 4, of resolution 2272 (2016), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General "to strengthen the accessibility, coordination and independence of processes for complaint receipt and management and to assist victims, including by maintaining confidentiality, helping to minimize trauma and facilitating access, as appropriate, to immediate care, medical and psychological support".

<sup>189</sup> See document A/67/775-S/2013/110, which contains the human rights due diligence policy and served to transmit it to both the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council.

<sup>190</sup> <https://conduct.unmissions.org/paternity-data>.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., data as at 27 February 2025.

little progress has been made regarding paternity cases.<sup>192</sup> A task force of United Nations Secretariat staff was established in 2023 with the stated objective, based on the terms of reference provided to the Inspectors, to develop a strategy to strengthen engagement and cooperation with Member States for the resolution of child support claims involving uniformed and civilian personnel in United Nations peace operations. The compact with Member States, as proposed in section IV.D of the 2017 strategy, has not served to resolve the 519 paternity cases, nor has the circle of leadership or the Secretariat's task force.

335. The Inspectors acknowledge that paternity is a complex issue that involves several processes and parties, and the solution can only be found with the cooperation and collaboration of Member States.

336. The following recommendation is intended to promote high-level engagement from Member States and the United Nations Secretariat to develop a new approach to paternity claims in peace operations that ensures greater accountability and effective resolution of cases.

#### **Recommendation 14**

**At its eighty-first session, the General Assembly should establish a mechanism to address the processes and procedures for adjudicating paternity and related support claims as a result of SEA involving personnel in peace operations, including the roles and responsibilities of the United Nations Secretariat, Member States and relevant parties when claims are made.**

*A new approach to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse for the United Nations system requires Member States' cooperation and collaboration.*

337. Much of the present review has reflected on the Secretary-General's 2017 multi-pronged strategy for PSEA, pointing out what has worked and what has fallen short.<sup>193</sup> The one aspect that has worked well is the human capacity across the system that has been built and the expertise available in many participating organizations, field locations and inter-agency networks. However, the policies, prevention strategies, disciplinary procedures and response mechanisms and the application of a victim-centred approach have fallen short. The expertise across the United Nations system, including leadership from the Special Coordinator and Victims' Rights Advocate, should be mobilized to develop a new approach and strategy for addressing PSEA that can be implemented in all organizational contexts across the system, addresses the root causes inherent in both SEA and sexual harassment and recognizes the reputational risks associated with sexual misconduct to the entire United Nations system. As recommended in chapter III, inter-agency mechanisms should be mobilized to address SEA and sexual harassment in a new and more holistic way, and further develop an updated strategy that has the support and endorsement of Member States. It should capitalize on the resources currently available and develop new ways to strengthen inter-agency prevention and response mechanisms. This new approach and strategy would ideally be informed and endorsed by Member States, whose role is essential in ensuring action on several aspects, including greater transparency on and accountability for PSEA across United Nations system organizations.

<sup>192</sup> See <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/circle-leadership>.

<sup>193</sup> See A/71/818 and A/71/818/Corr.1.

338. The following recommendation, which complements recommendation 4, is intended to enhance system-wide coordination to address sexual misconduct.

**Recommendation 15**

**At its eighty-second session, the General Assembly should consider endorsement of a new system-wide approach and strategy for addressing sexual misconduct that ensures a victim-centred approach, mobilizes inter-agency capabilities and capitalizes on available resources.**

## **D. Conclusion**

339. Member States play a vital role in advancing PSEA efforts across the United Nations system. While they have contributed through their functions within governing bodies, more can still be done for criminal accountability, particularly outside peacekeeping contexts and within specialized agencies. Referrals to national authorities remain limited, and many organizations still lack clear procedures for such action. The continued backlog of unresolved paternity cases also reflects the need for greater coordination and defined responsibilities between Member States and the United Nations. A renewed, system-wide strategy that is victim-centred and supported by Member States is essential to address the full scope of sexual misconduct, strengthen inter-agency coordination and uphold the integrity of the United Nations system.

## Annex I

### Key documents and their origins in the development of policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations

#### I. Introduction

1. The following documents, as indicated in chapter I, are among the most referenced in the development of PSEA policies in JIU participating organizations. Among the United Nations system documents, both the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse ([ST/SGB/2003/13](#)) and the ICSC standards of conduct for the international civil service (2013) are slated to be updated in 2025, and MOPAN is also undergoing an update.

#### II. United Nations system documents and standards

##### Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (2003)

2. The Secretary-General's bulletin, issued in October 2003, serves as the main policy governing PSEA in the United Nations Secretariat, funds and programmes. Modelled after the 2002 version of the Six Core Principles adopted by IASC relating to SEA,<sup>1</sup> it is applicable to all categories of United Nations system personnel, including civilian and uniformed personnel. The General Assembly endorsed the application of the bulletin and incorporated it into legal instruments applicable to all types of personnel.<sup>2</sup> It is planned that this document will be updated in 2025.

##### Six Core Principles relating to sexual exploitation and abuse (2002 and 2019)

3. The Six Core Principles were put forth in 2002 by IASC to prioritize efforts to prevent and respond to SEA at the agency and field levels, and in particular in humanitarian and emergency contexts. These Principles were incorporated into the 2003 bulletin, although with marked differences in terms of the language used, in particular regarding disciplinary measures, sexual relations with beneficiaries, underage marriage, reporting of SEA and links to a code of conduct. The Six Core Principles, as agreed to by IASC members, are foundational for the PSEA policies of its member organizations.

4. The Six Core Principles were updated in 2019 to strengthen Core Principle 4, changing the language from "strongly discouraged" to "prohibited" regarding sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries. The revision introduced a nuanced clarification that the prohibition applies when the relationship "involves improper use of rank or position". This change created a misalignment with the 2003 bulletin while fostering greater alignment among the PSEA policies of IASC members and other international organizations (see table below for a comparison between the two documents).

<sup>1</sup> See [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2019-01/iasc\\_six\\_core\\_principles\\_relating\\_to\\_sexual\\_exploitation\\_and\\_abuse\\_2002.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2019-01/iasc_six_core_principles_relating_to_sexual_exploitation_and_abuse_2002.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> See General Assembly resolution 59/300.



## Comparison of language in the Six Core Principles relating to sexual exploitation and abuse and the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin

*IASC Six Core Principles (2019)*

*ST/SGB/2003/13*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of <b>gross</b> misconduct and are therefore grounds <b>for termination of employment</b></p>   | <p>3.2 (a) Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse constitute acts of <b>serious</b> misconduct and are therefore grounds for <b>disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal</b></p>  |
| <p>2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence</p>  | <p>3.2 (b) Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence</p> <p>4.4 The Head of Department, Office or Mission <b>shall not apply the standard prescribed in section 3.2 (b), where a staff member is legally married to someone under the age of 18 but over the age of majority or consent in their country of citizenship</b></p> |
| <p>3. Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries</p>   | <p>3.2 (c) Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, is prohibited. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance</p>  |
| <p>4. Any <b>sexual relationship</b> between those providing humanitarian assistance and protection and a person benefiting from such humanitarian assistance and protection <b>that involves improper use of rank or position is prohibited</b>. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work</p> | <p>3.2 (d) Sexual relationships between United Nations staff and beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of the United Nations and are <b>strongly discouraged</b></p>  |
| <p>5. Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms</p>   | <p>3.2 (e) Where a United Nations staff member develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual exploitation or sexual abuse by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not <b>and whether or not within the United Nations system</b>, he or she must report such concerns via established reporting mechanisms</p>   |
| <p>6. Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents SEA <b>and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct</b>. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and development systems which maintain this environment</p>   | <p>3.2 (f) United Nations staff are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Managers at all levels have a particular responsibility to support and develop systems that maintain this environment</p>   |



### **Inter-Agency Standing Committee minimum operating standards on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse by own personnel (2024)**

5. Modelled after the IASC minimum operating security standards for staff safety, the minimum operating standards on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse by own personnel provide IASC members with minimum operating standards under eight categories: policy, leadership, a victim-centred approach, vetting, prevention, cooperative agreements, community engagement and investigations. The standards reinforce and reference the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin and provide key indicators for members to adhere to, establishing policies and procedures for the prevention of and protection from SEA. Most of the 10 JIU participating organizations that are IASC members<sup>3</sup> have referred to the standards in reports and assessments but, more often and more recently, they refer to the Six Core Principles.

### **International Civil Service Commission standards of conduct for the international civil service (2013)**

6. Originally promulgated in 1954 and most recently updated in 2013, the ICSC standards for the international civil service are intended to be “a behavioural and ethical guide ... They reflect the philosophical underpinnings of the international civil service and inform its conscience”. All JIU participating organizations either use the ICSC standards of conduct or have developed their own based on its principles.

7. The ICSC standards do not include a reference to SEA. However, they do include a section on personal conduct (paras. 42–44), which has served as a pillar in some SEA cases with regard to the private life of international civil servants<sup>4</sup> and are used in particular to support sexual misconduct cases in the United Nations administrative tribunals.<sup>5</sup> The standards are scheduled for an update in 2025.

## **III. Donor-led initiatives for policies on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**

8. The recommendation of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development Assistance Committee on ending sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance: key pillars of prevention and response of 2019 provides a comprehensive framework for donors to PSEAH initiatives. The document is formulated as an international standard and provides a list of recommendations for policy promulgation, a victim-centred response to SEA allegations, prevention and complaint mechanisms, training, international coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

9. MOPAN conducts comprehensive assessments using a set of indicators drawn from the IASC Six Core Principles, the Development Assistance Committee recommendation pillars and other international PSEAH frameworks. MOPAN PSEA benchmarks (under micro-indicator 4.7) focus on the presence of PSEA policies and their application in organizations. To date, MOPAN has conducted assessments that

<sup>3</sup> FAO, Secretariat of the United Nations (OCHA and OHCHR), UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS (as of 2025), UN-Women WFP and WHO.

<sup>4</sup> Paragraph 42 of the ICSC standards of conduct for international civil servants, 2013: “The private life of international civil servants is their own concern and organizations should not intrude upon it. There may be situations, however, in which the behaviour of an international civil servant may reflect on the organization. International civil servants must therefore bear in mind that their conduct and activities outside the workplace, even if unrelated to official duties, can compromise the image and the interests of the organizations.”

<sup>5</sup> Such as *Makeen v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, 2024-UNAT-1461; and *Kavosh v. Secretary-General of the United Nations*, UNDT/2024/020.

include some or all of these indicators relating to 14 JIU participating organizations.<sup>6</sup> The following nine indicators are associated with PSEA: policy statements; mechanisms to track implementation; dedicated resources and structures; awareness-raising and training; implementing partner standards; inter-agency efforts; action and transparency to report allegations; a victim-centred approach and support; and intervention design and analysis of SEA risks (under element 5.4.5).<sup>7</sup>

10. The common approach to CAPSEAH was developed by a multi-stakeholder steering committee that included United Nations officials, IASC members, the Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, as well as several institutes, academic experts and government representatives.<sup>8</sup> Released in 2024, it is a guide for organizations working in humanitarian, development and peace contexts that brings together existing policies, practices and standards for a collective response to address SEAH.

---

<sup>6</sup> JIU participating organizations with MOPAN assessments: FAO, ILO, OCHA, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNHCR, UNRWA, WFP and WHO.

<sup>7</sup> MOPAN, *Lessons in Multilateral Effectiveness: Progress on PSEAH? From Words to Deeds*, March 2023 (reissued), available at [www.mopan.org/content/dam/mopan/en/publications/our-work/insights/pseah/mopan-seah-report-2023.pdf](http://www.mopan.org/content/dam/mopan/en/publications/our-work/insights/pseah/mopan-seah-report-2023.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> See <https://capseah.safeguardingsupporthub.org>.

## Annex II

### Policy documents establishing the legal basis for administrative and disciplinary actions against United Nations personnel involved in sexual exploitation and abuse

*With policy provisions related to underage marriage (with or without exceptions), sexual relations with beneficiaries (strongly discouraged versus prohibited) and references to solicitation of commercial sex (emphasis added by inspectors)*

<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Staff regulations and rules (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly included (with differences noted)</i>	<i>Policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse (with differences and definitions noted)</i>	<i>Standards of conduct document (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly outlined in conduct document</i>	<i>Other related policy documents</i>
<b>United Nations Secretariat, its funds and programmes and other bodies or entities</b>							
United Nations Secretariat	ST/SGB/2023/1/Rev.1: Staff Regulations and Staff Rules, including provisional Staff Rules, of the United Nations (2023)	<b>Yes</b> Underage marriage: “Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or the age of consent locally.” [No exceptions included for age of majority or consent in country of citizenship]	ST/SGB/2003/13: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (2003)	<b>Exceptions to underage marriage:</b> “Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence. <u>The Head of Department, Office or Mission shall not apply the standard prescribed in section 3.2 (b), where a staff member is legally married to someone under the age of 18 but over the age of majority or consent in their country of citizenship.</u> ” Sexual relations with beneficiaries <u>strongly discouraged</u> : “Sexual relationships between United Nations staff and beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of the United Nations and are strongly discouraged.”	ICSC standards of conduct for the international civil service (2013)	<b>No</b>	

<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Staff regulations and rules (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly included (with differences noted)</i>	<i>Policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse (with differences and definitions noted)</i>	<i>Standards of conduct document (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly outlined in conduct document</i>	<i>Other related policy documents</i>
UNCTAD	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<b>No</b>	
UNEP	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<b>No</b>	
UN-Habitat	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<b>No</b>	
UNODC	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<b>No</b>	
UNDP	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	UNDP Code of Ethics (2017) and <i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<b>Yes</b> <b>Underage marriage:</b> “Sexual activity with persons under the age of 18 is also prohibited regardless of the local age of majority or of consent.” (UNDP Code of Ethics, 2017)	UNDP Legal Framework for Addressing Non-Compliance with United Nations Standards of Conduct (2022) <a href="#">ST/SGB/2016/9</a> : Status, basic rights and duties of United Nations staff members (2016)
UNFPA	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<b>No</b>	
UNHCR	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	UNHCR/HCP/2024/02: Policy on addressing sexual misconduct (2024) and <i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<b>Underage marriage:</b> “Any sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18 years) constitutes sexual abuse.” <b>Solicitation of commercial sex:</b> “This includes transactional sex regardless of the legal status of sex work in the country. It also includes any situation where sex is coerced or demanded by withholding or threatening to withhold goods or services or by blackmailing.”	Code of Conduct and Explanatory Notes (2004)	<b>Yes</b>	Policy on a victim-centred approach in response to sexual misconduct (2020)

<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Staff regulations and rules (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly included (with differences noted)</i>	<i>Policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse (with differences and definitions noted)</i>	<i>Standards of conduct document (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly outlined in conduct document</i>	<i>Other related policy documents</i>
UNICEF	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	POLICY/DAPM/2024/001: UNICEF policy on safeguarding (2024) and <i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<b>Sexual relations with beneficiaries:</b> “Any sexual relationship between those providing assistance and protection and a person benefiting from such assistance and protection.”  <b>Underage marriage:</b> “Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18). This is prohibited regardless of whether it is legal locally and regardless of marital status.... Entering into marriage or a similar union with a child.”	Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct ( <i>undated</i> ) and <i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<b>Yes</b>	
UNOPS	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<b>No</b>	
UNRWA	International Staff Regulations (2018) International Staff Rules (2017) Area Staff Regulations (2015) Area Staff Rules (2018)	<b>Yes</b> International Staff Rules (2017) only: <b>Exceptions to underage marriage:</b> “Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or the age of consent locally, except where a staff member is legally married to a person who is under the age of 18 but over the age of majority or consent in his or her country of citizenship. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.”	General staff circular No. 01/2024: Protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (2024)	<b>Underage marriage:</b> “Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18), regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally.”  <b>Sexual relations with beneficiaries:</b> “Any sexual relationship between UNRWA personnel and a person benefitting from UNRWA’s assistance or services that involves improper use of grade or position to procure the sexual relationship is prohibited.”	UNRWA Code of Ethics (2023)	<b>Yes</b>  <b>Sexual relations with beneficiaries:</b> “We never exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, sexual favours, or other forms of humiliating, degrading treatment, or exploitative behaviour. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.”  <b>Solicitation of commercial sex:</b> “We never engage the services of sex workers.”	
UN-Women	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<b>No</b>	UN-Women investigation and disciplinary process policy (2024)

<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Staff regulations and rules (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly included (with differences noted)</i>	<i>Policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse (with differences and definitions noted)</i>	<i>Standards of conduct document (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly outlined in conduct document</i>	<i>Other related policy documents</i>
WFP	Human Resources Manual	<b>Yes</b> Refers to Executive Director's circular on protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (2023)	OED2023/011: Executive Director's circular on the protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse policy (2023)	<b>Underage marriage:</b> "Sexual activity with children is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence."  <b>Sexual relations with beneficiaries:</b> "Any sexual relationship between WFP employees and beneficiaries that involves improper use of rank or position."  <b>Solicitation of commercial sex:</b> "Engaging prostitution services is a form of SEA and constitutes serious misconduct.... WFP employees are prohibited from engaging such services, regardless of whether it is legal under the national law of any country where the conduct occurs, and even when WFP Employees are off duty or on leave."	WFP Code of Conduct (2022)	<b>Yes</b>	Ethics guidance note about the prohibition on engaging prostitution services (2017)
ITC	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	ITC/EDB/2012/06: Executive Director's bulletin: special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (2012)	<b>Exceptions to underage marriage:</b> "Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence. The Executive Director shall not apply the standard prescribed in section 3.2 (b), where a staff member is legally married to someone under the age of 18 but	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<b>No</b>	

Joint Inspection Unit participating organization	Staff regulations and rules (year)	Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly included (with differences noted)	Policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (year)	Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse (with differences and definitions noted)	Standards of conduct document (year)	Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly outlined in conduct document	Other related policy documents
				over the age of majority or consent in their country of citizenship.” <b>Sexual relations with beneficiaries:</b> Sexual relationships between United Nations staff and beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of the United Nations and strongly discouraged. “The Executive Director may use his or her discretion in applying the standards prescribed in section 3.2 (d), where beneficiaries of assistance are over the age of 18 and the circumstances of the case justify an exception.			
UNAIDS	Same as WHO	No	Same as WHO	Same as WHO	Same as WHO	Yes	
<b>Specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency</b>							
FAO	Staff Regulations and Staff Rules (both 2018)	No	Director-General’s Bulletin No. 224/10: Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) (2024)  Administrative circular 2024/09: Protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (PSEA) (2024)	<b>Underage marriage:</b> “Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.”  <b>Solicitation of commercial sex:</b> “Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading,	FAO Code of Ethical Conduct (2024)	<b>Yes</b> <b>Underage marriage:</b> “sexual relations with a child, defined as a person under the age of 18 regardless of the local age of consent.”	Referral of alleged criminal conduct to national authorities for investigation and possible prosecution (2024)

<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Staff regulations and rules (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly included (with differences noted)</i>	<i>Policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse (with differences and definitions noted)</i>	<i>Standards of conduct document (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly outlined in conduct document</i>	<i>Other related policy documents</i>
				<p>or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes the exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries. (This also means that exchange of money for sex is prohibited, including hiring prostitutes.)”</p> <p><b>Sexual relations with beneficiaries:</b> “Any sexual relationship between those providing humanitarian assistance and protection and a person benefiting from such humanitarian assistance and protection that involves improper use of rank or position is prohibited. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.”</p>			
IAEA	Staff Regulations and Staff Rules (2023)	No	Guidance note on prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse (2021)	<p><b>Exceptions to underage marriage:</b> Agency personnel are expected not to engage in sexual activity with persons under the age of 18 (unless within the context of a legal marriage to an individual who is above the age of consent both in the personnel’s country of citizenship and that of their spouse).</p> <p><b>Sexual relations with beneficiaries:</b> “Sexual relationships between Agency personnel and beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics,</p>	ICSC standards of conduct for the international civil service (2013)	No	Leaflet on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (2024)



<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Staff regulations and rules (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly included (with differences noted)</i>	<i>Policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse (with differences and definitions noted)</i>	<i>Standards of conduct document (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly outlined in conduct document</i>	<i>Other related policy documents</i>
				undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of the Agency and are strongly discouraged.”  <b>Solicitation of commercial sex:</b> Consistent with the standards applied by the United Nations, whether on duty or on leave, Agency personnel are expected not to engage prostitution services. This applies regardless of whether the personnel are in a country where prostitution is legal.			
ICAO	Staff Rules (2011, updated 2023)	Yes	Personnel instruction PI/1.3.1 (2011, updated 2023)  The ICAO Service Code, including annex I (Framework on Ethics) (2011, updated 2023)	<b>Underage marriage:</b> “Sexual contact or activity with persons under the age of 18 is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a person is not a defence.”  <b>Sexual relations with beneficiaries:</b> “Sexual relationships between ICAO personnel and potential or actual beneficiaries of assistance are strongly discouraged, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics and undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of ICAO.”	ICSC standards of conduct for the international civil service (2013)  The ICAO Service Code, including annex I (Framework on Ethics) (2011, updated 2023)	No	

<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Staff regulations and rules (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly included (with differences noted)</i>	<i>Policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse (with differences and definitions noted)</i>	<i>Standards of conduct document (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly outlined in conduct document</i>	<i>Other related policy documents</i>
ILO	Staff Regulations (2024)	No	Office directive,, Internal Governance Document No. 568 (version 1): Prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse (2020)	<b>Underage marriage:</b> “Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) regardless of age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not an excuse.”	Principles of Conduct for Staff of the International Labour Office (2019)	<b>Yes</b> (for broader acts of exploitation and abuse)	Code of conduct for prevention of all forms of violence and harassment at ILO events (undated)
IMO	Staff Regulations and Staff Rules of the International Maritime Organization (2025)	No	None	n/a	Code of Ethics for IMO Personnel (2016) and ICSC standards of conduct for the international civil service (2013)	No	
ITU	Staff Regulations and Staff Rules (2024)	No	None	n/a	Code of Ethics for ITU Personnel (2011)	No	
UNESCO	Staff Regulations and Staff Rules (2025)	No	Policy on the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (2020)	<b>Exceptions to underage marriage:</b> “Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.”  “The standard prescribed in paragraph 7 (b) shall not apply where a staff member is legally married to someone under the age of 18 but over the age of majority or consent in their country of citizenship. Discretion may be used in applying the standard prescribed in paragraph 7 (d), where beneficiaries of assistance are over the age of 18 and where the	UNESCO’s Handbook for Ethical Conduct (2023) and ICSC standards of conduct for the international civil service (2013)	Yes	

<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Staff regulations and rules (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly included (with differences noted)</i>	<i>Policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse (with differences and definitions noted)</i>	<i>Standards of conduct document (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly outlined in conduct document</i>	<i>Other related policy documents</i>
				<p>circumstances of the case justify an exception.”</p> <p><b>Sexual relations with beneficiaries:</b> “Sexual relationships between UNESCO personnel and beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of UNESCO and are prohibited.”</p>			
UNIDO	Staff Regulations and Rules (2023) and Framework for Individual Service Agreements (2023)	<b>No</b> (Included in individual service agreements:: individual service agreement holders shall “abide by the special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse in line with United Nations Secretary General’s initiatives outlined in <a href="#">ST/SGB/2003/13</a> dated 9 October 2003” (para. 5.c of the individual service agreement)	Director-General’s bulletin: protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) (2023)	<p><b>Underage marriage:</b> “Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or the age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.”</p> <p><b>Solicitation of commercial sex:</b> “Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, is prohibited regardless on the legal status of sex work. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance.”</p> <p><b>Sexual relations with beneficiaries:</b> Sexual relationships between UNIDO personnel and beneficiaries of assistance, since they are</p>	Director-General’s bulletin: Code of Ethical Conduct (2010)	<b>Yes</b>	

<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Staff regulations and rules (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly included (with differences noted)</i>	<i>Policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse (with differences and definitions noted)</i>	<i>Standards of conduct document (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly outlined in conduct document</i>	<i>Other related policy documents</i>
				based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of UNIDO and are prohibited.”			
UN Tourism	Staff Regulations and Staff Rules (2021)	No	None	n/a	ICSC standards of conduct for the international civil service (2013)	No	
UPU	Staff Regulations (2024) and Staff Rules (2024)	No	None	n/a	Code of Conduct (“An employee’s guide to proper professional conduct”) (2007)	No	
WHO	Staff Regulations and Staff Rules (2025)	No	WHO policy on preventing and addressing sexual misconduct (2023)	<p><b>Underage marriage:</b> “Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.”</p> <p><b>Sexual relations with beneficiaries:</b> “Any sexual relationship between WHO staff or collaborators and members of the local population who benefit from WHO’s presence or services that involves improper use of grade or position is prohibited. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of WHO and the United Nations.”</p> <p><b>Solicitation of commercial sex:</b> “Exchange of money, employment, good or services for sex,</p>	WHO Code of Ethics (2023)	Yes Reference to WHO policy on preventing and addressing sexual misconduct (2023)	Code of Conduct to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment, at WHO events (2021)  WHO policy on preventing and addressing abusive conduct (2023)

<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Staff regulations and rules (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly included (with differences noted)</i>	<i>Policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse (with differences and definitions noted)</i>	<i>Standards of conduct document (year)</i>	<i>Prohibited conduct related to sexual exploitation and abuse explicitly outlined in conduct document</i>	<i>Other related policy documents</i>
				including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitive behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchanges for assistance to beneficiaries of WHO programs or operations and members of the public in locations where WHO staff and/or collaborators operate.”			
WIPO	Staff Regulations and Rules (2024)	<b>No</b>	Office Instruction No. 25/2019: WIPO policy on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (2019)	<b>Exceptions to underage marriage:</b> “prohibition of sexual activity with children shall not apply where a member of personnel is legally married to someone under the age of 18 but over the age of majority or consent in their country of citizenship.”	WIPO Code of Ethics (2012)	<b>No</b>	
WMO	Staff Regulations and Rules (2021)	<b>Yes</b> <b>Exceptions to underage marriage:</b> Sexual exploitation and abuse is prohibited. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or the age of consent locally, except where a staff member is legally married to a person who is under the age of 18 but over the age of majority or consent in his or her country of citizenship. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.	<b>None</b>	n/a	WMO Code of Ethics (2007)	<b>No</b>	

## Annex III

## Aggregated data on sexual harassment allegations from the annual sexual harassment surveys of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

(Years 2020 to 2023 represent the most complete data sets and are highlighted in grey along with their totals)

Sexual harassment data sets	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Totals
Organizations completing the survey	25 entities <sup>a</sup>	25 entities <sup>b</sup>	25 entities <sup>c</sup>	27 entities <sup>d</sup>	27 entities <sup>e</sup>	28 entities	29 entities <sup>f</sup>	27 entities <sup>g</sup>	
Number of formal reports <sup>h</sup> for sexual harassment allegations (percentage refers to the percentage of total eligible employees)	66 (0.0282 per cent)	99 (0.0417 per cent)	281 (0.1190 per cent)	288 (0.1065 per cent)	256 (0.0978 per cent)	288 (0.1117 per cent)	329 (0.1097 per cent)	427 (0.139 per cent)	2 034 1 300
Number of informal reports <sup>i</sup> for sexual harassment allegations	27	39	97	80	118	168	210	207	946 703
Total number of sexual harassment allegations (reported)	137	167	204	Data not available	Data not available	456	539	634	2 137
Number of sexual harassment cases (investigated)	28	42	117	177	118	123	178	212	995 631
Number of cases of sexual assault (of United Nations personnel by United Nations personnel)	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	35 per cent of entities reported having cases of this type	54 per cent of entities reported having cases of this type	54 per cent of entities reported having cases of this type	At least 14 organizations have reported sexual assault cases
Number of cases of attempted or actual rape (of United Nations personnel by United Nations personnel)	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	13 per cent of entities reported having cases of this type	0 per cent of entities reported having cases of this type	12 per cent of entities reported having cases of this type	4 per cent of entities reported having cases of this type	At least 3 organizations have reported rape cases
Number of substantiated sexual harassment cases	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	96	51	69	107	323
Number of retaliation allegations in sexual harassment cases	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	7	12	18	16	53
Number of retaliation cases (prima facie established) in sexual harassment cases	1	1	4	5	1	1	10	6	29 18

<i>Sexual harassment data sets</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Disciplinary measures – separation/dismissal – for substantiated sexual harassment cases	3	7	10	29	27	21	20	30	147 98
Disciplinary measures – other than separation/dismissal – for substantiated sexual harassment cases	3	5	4	18	6	21	16	18	91 61
Total number of disciplinary measures for substantiated sexual harassment cases	6	12	14	47	33	42	36	48	238 159
Total number of disciplinary matters completed in year	9	10	26	35	58	52	44	59	293 213
Referrals to local authorities for sexual harassment cases	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	3	2	6	7	18

*Source:* JIU analysis based on the annual sexual harassment surveys of CEB (2016-2023) with verification by the CEB secretariat.

*Note:* Based on annual reports of the High-level Committee on Management of CEB.

<sup>a</sup> FAO, IAEA, ICAO, ILO, IMO, IOM, ITU, United Nations Secretariat, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UPU, World Bank Group, WFP, WHO, WIPO and WTO.

<sup>b</sup> FAO, IAEA, ICAO, ILO, IMO, IOM, ITU, United Nations Secretariat, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UPU, World Bank Group, WFP, WHO, WIPO and WTO.

<sup>c</sup> FAO, IAEA, ICAO, ILO, IMO, IOM, ITU, United Nations Secretariat, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UPU, World Bank Group, WFP, WHO, WIPO and WTO.

<sup>d</sup> FAO, IAEA, ICAO, IMO, IOM, ITU, United Nations Secretariat, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UN Tourism, UPU, WFP, WHO, WIPO, World Bank and WTO.

<sup>e</sup> FAO, IAEA, ICAO, ILO, IMO, IOM, ITU, United Nations Secretariat, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN Tourism, UN-Women, UPU, WFP, WHO, WIPO and World Bank.

<sup>f</sup> FAO, IAEA, ICAO, IFAD, ILO, IMO, IOM, ITU, United Nations Secretariat, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UN Tourism, UPU, WFP, WHO, WIPO, World Bank and WTO.

<sup>g</sup> FAO, IAEA, ICAO, IFAD, IMO, IOM, ITU, United Nations Secretariat, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UN Tourism, UPU, WFP, WHO, WIPO and World Bank.

<sup>h</sup> These reports can trigger an investigation and, where allegations are substantiated, result in sanctions against the subject.

<sup>i</sup> Those which do not trigger an investigation but are addressed by internal functions such as management and human resources.

## Annex IV

## Main functional roles in coordinating inter-agency work related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse globally across the United Nations system

<i>Inter-agency global coordination mechanism on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse</i>	<i>Location of the function in charge of inter-agency global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and the reporting line</i>	<i>Official who leads inter-agency global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and personnel assigned in that regard</i>	<i>Leadership on the inter-agency global coordination mechanism on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and frequency of meetings</i>	<i>Notes on the inter-agency global coordination mechanism on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (data as at 30 June 2025)</i>
Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse	United Nations Secretariat Reports to: Secretary-General	<p><b>Special Coordinator</b>, USG (RB), full-time</p> <p><b>Senior Political Affairs Officer</b>, P-5 (RB), full-time</p> <p><b>Political Affairs Officer/Special Assistant</b>, P-4 (RB), full-time</p> <p><b>Administrative Assistant</b>, G-6 (RB), full-time</p> <p><b>PSEA/Safeguarding Specialist</b>, P-4 (XB), full-time</p> <p><b>Data Analyst</b>, P-3 (XB), full-time</p>	<p><b>The High-Level Steering Group</b>, comprising heads of offices, departments, funds and programmes across the United Nations system under the leadership of the Chef de Cabinet, to oversee the system's response to SEA.<sup>a</sup> The Office serves as the secretariat to the Steering Group.</p> <p><b>The SEA Working Group</b>, established in 2017 to ensure a coordinated, system-wide approach to combating SEA across United Nations system operations, involving various United Nations Secretariat departments, agencies, funds and programmes.<sup>b</sup></p> <p><b>The Transitions Working Group, co-chaired by the Office, the Victims' Rights Advocate and UNICEF</b>, established under the auspices of the Steering Group to develop a strategy and guidance to ensure sustainable and properly resourced capacities for managing the risks of SEA and the provision of appropriate victim assistance during mission transitions and drawdowns, and in the post-mission environment.</p> <p><b>The ad hoc working group on ST/SGB/2003/13</b>, supporting the update of the that bulletin, with consultations involving non-governmental organizations, academics and Member States.</p> <p><b>Working group on PSEAH training</b>, chaired by WHO and World Vision</p>	The Special Coordinator drives and oversees the United Nations protection and response to SEA-related efforts across the United Nations system. Since 2017, the Special Coordinator has been tasked with leading the implementation of the Secretary-General's strategy aligning PSEA approaches and enhancing coordination, cooperation and system-wide coherence in line with the Secretary-General's strategy to improve the Organization's system wide approach to preventing and responding to SEA, reducing duplication and fostering a "One United Nations" approach to strengthening the collective response to PSEA. The mandate includes identifying and bridging policy and operational gaps in handling by the United Nations of SEA, providing strategic guidance and support to leadership and operations on PSEA efforts, enhancing United Nations public reporting mechanisms on SEA allegations to strengthen transparency and accountability across the organization, leading system-wide communications efforts to ensure clear and consistent messaging on PSEA and strengthening collaboration with Member States, civil society, regional and international organizations, independent human rights experts, and academic institutions to promote best practices and collective action against SEA.	The extrabudgetary funding for the position of Data Analyst, P-3 (XB) ends on 30 June 2025.



<i>Inter-agency global coordination mechanism on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse</i>	<i>Location of the function in charge of inter-agency global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and the reporting line</i>	<i>Official who leads inter-agency global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and personnel assigned in that regard</i>	<i>Leadership on the inter-agency global coordination mechanism on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and frequency of meetings</i>	<i>Notes on the inter-agency global coordination mechanism on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (data as at 30 June 2025)</i>
			<p><b>Working Group on PSEAH and the private sector:</b> chaired by UNOPS and UNDP</p> <p><b>PSEA brown bag meetings</b> for PSEA practitioners from both the field and headquarters, which serve as a platform to exchange good practices, discuss policies and share guidance</p>		
Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate	United Nations Secretariat Reports to: Secretary-General	<p><b>Victims' Rights Advocate,</b> Assistant Secretary-General (RB), full-time</p> <p><b>Human Rights Officer,</b> P-4 (RB), full-time</p> <p><b>Political Affairs Officer,</b> P-3 (RB), full-time</p> <p><b>Staff Assistant,</b> G-6 (RB), full-time</p> <p>The following positions have dual reporting lines, one of which is to the Victims' Rights Advocate:</p> <p><b>Four Senior Victims' Rights Officers,</b> P-5, full-time (3 funded by the United Nations peacekeeping operations budget – MINUSCA, MONUSCO and UNMISS - and 1 by the regular budget of a special political mission (BINUH))</p>	<p>The Victims' Rights Advocate convenes an informal working group of interested entities, departments and offices to explore the issue of victim/survivor rights and the provision of assistance.</p> <p>The Victims' Rights Advocate co-chairs with the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and UNICEF an informal working group tasked with developing strategy and guidance to ensure appropriate victim assistance during mission transitions and drawdowns, and in a post-mission environment.</p> <p>The Victims' Rights Advocate co-chairs with UNFPA the practitioner's working group established to address challenges in the provision of support and assistance with a victim/survivor-centred approach under the IASC PSEA Technical Advisory Group annual workplan for 2024.</p>	<p>The Victims' Rights Advocate has a system-wide mandate to prioritize the rights and dignity of victims/survivors of SEA by United Nations and related personnel, which derives from the report of the Secretary-General on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: a new approach (<a href="#">A/71/818</a> and <a href="#">A/71/818/Corr.1</a>). She advocates to ensure that victims/survivors have a voice, assistance and justice. The Advocate works with United Nations entities, government institutions, civil society and national legal and human rights organizations to ensure that reliable, gender-sensitive pathways exist for victims to file complaints and that assistance is rapidly and sensitively delivered, victims' rights are protected through access to appropriate and timely judicial processes, and victims receive appropriate personal care, follow-up attention and information on the progress of their case, to build networks of support and to assist in ensuring justice, including remedies for victims.</p>	<p>Extrabudgetary funding received as from April 2025 for the following positions:</p> <p><b>Senior Human Rights Officer,</b> P-5 (XB), full-time (1 year)</p> <p><b>Human Rights Officer,</b> P-3 (XB), full-time (2 years)</p> <p><b>Programme Management Officer,</b> P-3 (XB), full-time (2 years)</p>

<i>Inter-agency global coordination mechanism on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse</i>	<i>Location of the function in charge of inter-agency global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and the reporting line</i>	<i>Official who leads inter-agency global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and personnel assigned in that regard</i>	<i>Leadership on the inter-agency global coordination mechanism on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and frequency of meetings</i>	<i>Notes on the inter-agency global coordination mechanism on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (data as at 30 June 2025)</i>
Inter-Agency Standing Committee	<p>The IASC secretariat is hosted by OCHA</p> <p>Reporting line: Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, who facilitates the leadership role of the Secretary-General</p>	<p><b>OCHA/IASC Senior Coordinator for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment</b>, P-5 extrabudgetary, 50 per cent</p> <p><b>Humanitarian Affairs Officer/PSEA Adviser</b>, P-4, 50 per cent</p> <p><b>P-5</b> equivalent, full-time, WFP secondment (due to end as at 31 December 2024)<sup>c</sup></p> <p><b>Junior Professional Officer</b>, P-2, (XB), full-time<sup>d</sup></p> <p><b>Consultant</b> (XB), full-time<sup>e</sup></p>	<p><b>IASC principals</b> (biannual and special meetings of executive heads of agencies and the Under-Secretary-General)<sup>f</sup></p> <p><b>IASC deputies</b> (biannual and special meetings of deputy executive heads of agencies and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator)<sup>f</sup></p> <p><b>IASC PSEA Technical Advisory Group</b> (monthly meetings of the global PSEAH focal points of IASC members and observers)</p> <p><b>IASC Network of PSEA coordinators (PSEA coordinators global community practice)</b>. The PSEA coordinators global community of practice is attended by inter-agency PSEA coordinators and acting PSEA coordinators working in countries with a humanitarian response plan/refugee response plan or equivalent.</p> <p><b>Advisory Group and IASC expert panel</b> on standards for SEA and sexual harassment investigations to achieve a victim-centred approach.</p>	<p>IASC is the primary coordination mechanism to facilitate coherent and timely international response to emergencies and to formulate policy for strengthened humanitarian action.</p> <p>Established by General Assembly resolution <a href="#">46/182</a> in 1991, IASC is the longest-standing and highest-level humanitarian coordination forum of the United Nations system, with members from within and outside the system, as it brings together the executive heads of 19 organizations and consortia.</p> <p>The 12 full members of IASC are FAO, IOM, OCHA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN-Women, WFP and WHO.</p> <p>Incoming thirteenth full member: UNOPS as of 2025.</p> <p>The seven standing members of ICSC are the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, InterAction, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, HRSP and the World Bank Group.</p>	Impact not yet known at the time of reporting

(Footnotes on following page)

(Footnotes to annex IV table)

<sup>a</sup> Members of the High-Level Steering Group include the Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support; the Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance; the Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications; the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations; the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel; the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children; the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; the Administrator of UNDP; the Executive Director of UNICEF; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; the Executive Director of UNFPA; the Executive Director of UN-Women; and the Victim's Rights Advocate. The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services participates as an observer. The Office of the Special Coordinator serves as the secretariat to the Steering Group.

<sup>b</sup> The members of the SEA working group include the following Secretariat entities: Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate; Development Coordination Office; Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; Department of Global Communications; Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance CDS; Office of Human Resources and Administrative Law Division; Office of Information and Communications Technology; Department of Operational Support; Department of Peace Operations Office of Military Affairs; PAS; Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Department of Safety and Security; Economic Commission for Europe; Executive Office of the Secretary-General; International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals; OCHA; Office of Counter-Terrorism; Office for Disarmament Affairs; OHCHR; OIOS; Office of Legal Affairs; Office of Mission Support; Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children; United Nations Office at Geneva; and United Nations Office at Nairobi. They also include the following entities: FAO, IAEA, IASC, ICAO, IFAD, ILO, IOM, ITU, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, United Nations System Staff College, United Nations University, United Nations Volunteers Programme, UN-Women, UN Tourism, WFP, WHO and WIPO.

<sup>c</sup> Offered by WFP in its capacity as the IASC Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment for 2024 and 2025 to drive momentum for collective efforts at higher levels.

<sup>d</sup> The Junior Professional Officer contract is due to end in July 2025.

<sup>e</sup> The consultant contract ended at the end of 2024.

<sup>f</sup> Not focused exclusively on PSEA.

## Main functional roles in coordinating the work related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level within Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations<sup>9</sup>

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Location and reporting line of the official and the function in charge of global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level</i>	<i>Official who leads global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level, and personnel assigned to the function</i>	<i>Focal points and other mechanisms on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the regional and/or country levels</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (information as at 30 June 2025)</i>
<b>United Nations Secretariat, its funds and programmes and other bodies or entities</b>					
United Nations Secretariat	Administrative Law Division, Office of Human Resources and Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance  Reports to: Under Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance	<b>Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources</b> , Office of Human Resources, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, part-time  <b>Conduct and Discipline Service</b> , Administrative Law Division, Office of Human Resources, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, part-time  <b>Senior Coordinator for PSEA</b> , P-5, part-time (50 per cent)  <b>Humanitarian Affairs Officer/PSEA Advisor</b> , P-4, part-time (50 per cent), OCHA	<b>PSEA focal points in OHCHR</b> (14 part-time and 1 full-time) as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OHCHR field presences: 12 PSEA focal points, part-time</li><li>OHCHR headquarters: 2 PSEA focal points, D-2 and P-5, part-time; and 1 P-4, full-time.</li></ul> <b>PSEA focal points in OCHA:</b> 28 heads of office assigned as PSEA focal points, part-time, supported by a network of 35 non-dedicated technical focal points. Two Humanitarian Affairs Officers/PSEA Advisers (National Professional Officer, level C) at two different regional offices. One Oversight and Compliance Officer for implementing partners for pooled funds, P-3  <b>10 field-based conduct and discipline team members</b> , under the authority of the respective Special Representatives of the Secretary-General who lead United Nations field missions in 10 locations across the globe, part-time.  <b>1 global/lead PSEA focal point in the resident coordinator system</b> , based in New York, P-4, part-time.	The Conduct and Discipline Service provides overall direction for conduct and discipline issues, including on combating sexual exploitation and abuse.  Located at Headquarters, the Service provides advisory support to all field-based conduct and discipline teams in terms of policy advice and related operational guidance across prevention, accountability and support for victims. The 10 field-based teams provide more granular information on this topic in the respective locations.	For OCHA, reductions and realignment expected. Field capacities to be reduced.  For the Office of Human Resources, the Administrative Law Division, the Conduct and Discipline Service and conduct and discipline teams, no known impact (as at 15 May 2025).

<sup>9</sup> As of 31 December 2024.

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Location and reporting line of the official and the function in charge of global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level</i>	<i>Official who leads global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level, and personnel assigned to the function</i>	<i>Focal points and other mechanisms on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the regional and/or country levels</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (information as at 30 June 2025)</i>
			<b>4 regional PSEA focal points located in the Development Coordination Office regional offices</b> in Panama, P-5; Addis Ababa, P-4; Istanbul, P-4; and Amman, P-5, all part-time.  <b>1 regional inter-agency PSEA coordinator</b> hosted by the Development Coordination Office regional office in Bangkok, full-time.		
UNCTAD	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>		Not reported.
UNEP	Legal Unit, Corporate Services Division Reports to: Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director	<b>Head of Legal Unit</b> , Senior Legal Officer, P-5 (EF), part-time (10 per cent)  <b>Legal Officer</b> , P-3, part-time (10 per cent)  <b>Chief, Human Resources Unit</b> , P-5, part-time (5 per cent)	None	UNEP has no PSEA focal points assigned in any of its six regional offices. Due to the limited country presence of UNEP, no resources are allocated at the country level.  The Head of the Legal Unit covers PSEA matters globally.	Not reported.
UN-Habitat	Legal Office, Office of the Executive Director Reports to: Office of the Executive Director	<b>PSEA Focal Point/Conduct and Discipline Focal Point, Legal Officer</b> , Legal Office, Office of the Executive Director, P-3 (budget/funding), part-time (30 per cent)  <b>PSEA Focal Point, Officer in Charge of Human Resources</b> , Human Resources Officer, Human Resources and Training Unit, part-time (10 per cent)  <b>Human Resources Focal Point for Regional Offices</b> , P-3, part-time (90 per cent)  <b>Conduct and Discipline Team Member, Legal Officer</b> , Legal Office, Office of the Executive Director, P-3, part-time (20 per cent)  <b>Programme Management Officer, Management Advisory and Compliance Service</b> , P-3, part-time (20 per cent).	<b>4 PSEA focal points at the country-office level</b> in Afghanistan, Ghana, India and Mozambique, part-time	UN-Habitat has a total of five focal points dedicated to global PSEA coordination, all of whom are based at its headquarters in Nairobi. These include three PSEA focal points and two conduct and discipline focal points.	Not reported.

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Location and reporting line of the official and the function in charge of global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level</i>	<i>Official who leads global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level, and personnel assigned to the function</i>	<i>Focal points and other mechanisms on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the regional and/or country levels</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (information as at 30 June 2025)</i>
UNODC	<p><i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i></p> <p>Also, as institutional focal point: Division for Operations</p> <p>Reports to: Director of the Division for Operations (who reports directly to the Executive Director of UNODC)</p>	<p><b>Programme Management Officer</b>, Division for Operations, P-4, part-time</p>	<p><b>20 PSEA focal points at the country level</b>, members of the network of focal points in field offices located in four regions, who might in some cases cover more than one country in the same region: Africa and the Middle East; Europe and West and Central Asia; Latin America and the Caribbean; and South-East Asia and the Pacific.</p>	<p>The UNODC institutional focal point on PSEA oversees the UNODC field office network.</p> <p>For response to SEA, conduct and discipline focal points and alternates are assigned at headquarters for receiving reports of SEA allegations globally:</p> <p>Chief, Human Resources Management Service, Division for Management, United Nations Office at Vienna/UNODC, D-1</p> <p>Chief, Staffing, Diversity and Outreach Section, Human Resources Management Service, Division for Management, United Nations Office at Vienna/UNODC, P-5</p> <p>Chief, Operational and Advisory Support Unit, Human Resources Management Service, Division for Management, United Nations Office at Vienna/UNODC, P-4</p> <p>Human Resources Policy Officer, P-3</p> <p>Legal Assistant, G-6</p>	Not reported.
UNDP	<p>Executive Office of the Administrator</p> <p>Reports to: Chief of Staff, Director, Executive Office of the Administrator</p>	<p><b>Special Adviser on Corporate Initiatives, Executive Office of the Administrator and Chair of PSEAH Taskforce</b>, D-1, part-time (50 per cent)</p> <p><b>PSEAH Global Focal Point</b>, P-4, full-time</p> <p><b>PSEAH Officer</b>, consultant, part-time (20 per cent)</p>	<p><b>124 PSEAH focal points</b> with direct access to senior management in 124 out of a total of 126 UNDP country offices</p> <p><b>5 regional bureau PSEAH focal points, including 1 senior official at headquarters</b> (RB from regional bureaux), as follows: one D-1, part-time (15 per cent); two P-5, part-time (15 per cent); one P-3, part-time (15 per cent); and one P-4, part-time (15 per cent)</p>		<p>Increased resources with the addition of a new P-4 Victim Support Officer, full-time, and additional training capacity since January 2025. This will reinforce the team of UNDP personnel dedicated to global PSEA coordination at the organizational level.</p>

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Location and reporting line of the official and the function in charge of global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level</i>	<i>Official who leads global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level, and personnel assigned to the function</i>	<i>Focal points and other mechanisms on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the regional and/or country levels</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (information as at 30 June 2025)</i>
UNFPA	Office of the Executive Director Reports to: Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director Management in charge of the PSEA portfolio.	<b>PSEAH Global Coordinator</b> , P-5, full-time <b>PSEAH Specialist</b> , P-4, full-time <b>Two PSEAH Specialists</b> , equivalent to P-3, full-time <b>Two dedicated PSEA consultants</b> , P-3 equivalent, full-time	<b>10 dedicated PSEA staff or personnel across country offices</b> 270 PSEA focal points as follows: <b>118 main PSEA focal points at the country level</b> , plus <b>118</b> alternates, as country offices have 2 focal points each: one main and one alternate <b>6 main PSEA focal points at the regional level</b> , plus <b>6</b> alternates, as each of the six regional offices has 2 focal points: one main and one alternate <b>8 focal points across liaison and representational offices</b> <b>14 PSEA focal points across headquarters</b> , in all offices/branches		No immediate impact foreseen.
UNHCR	Executive Office Reports to: Deputy High Commissioner	<b>Principal Adviser on PSEA and Sexual Harassment</b> , D-1, full-time <b>Senior Policy Adviser on PSEA and Sexual Harassment</b> , P-5, full-time <b>Senior Policy Officer on PSEA and Sexual Harassment</b> , P-4, full-time <b>External Relations Officer on PSEA and Sexual Harassment</b> , P-3, full-time <b>Senior Resource Management Associate on PSEA and Sexual Harassment</b> , GS-7, full-time <b>Learning Officer</b> , P-3, full-time <b>Senior Victim Care Adviser</b> , P-5, part-time	<b>7 Regional PSEA focal points</b> , P-3 to P-4, i.e. one per regional bureau; back-up colleague in the bureau, for each Regional focal point, coordinated through the Office of the Principal Adviser on PSEA and Sexual Harassment, part-time. <b>Approximately 400 PSEA focal points in the field</b> , meaning at least one PSEA focal point per country operation, coordinated through the respective regional bureau focal point, part-time.	The appointment of PSEA focal points in the field is a requirement of the UNHCR policy on addressing sexual misconduct, depending on operational needs and context.  While the function of the Senior Victim Care Adviser is primarily a function dedicated to addressing sexual harassment, some of the capacity is also dedicated to providing advice and feedback on the implementation of the victim-centred approach in the context of SEA.	In October 2025, the PSEA-dedicated function will be moved as a service under the Division of Human Resources (which will be known as the Division of People Management).
UNICEF	Risk Management in Programming and Safeguarding Unit, Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring Reports to: Deputy Director, Programme Effectiveness, Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring	Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring: <b>Chief, Risk Management in Partnership Implementation and Safeguarding Unit</b> , P-5 (BMD), part-time (25 per cent) <b>Safeguarding Manager</b> , P-4 (BMD), part-time	<b>7 regional PSEA posts</b> , P-4: • 5 full-time • 2 part-time (50 per cent) (shared with Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies for one post and with Safeguarding, PSEA and Accountability to Affected People)	PSEA falls under the safeguarding portfolio and is part of the integrated approach of UNICEF to risk management in programming and safeguarding.  The UNICEF 2022–2025 strategic plan foresaw that all UNICEF country offices	The structure shared in the previous columns reflects UNICEF structure until 31 December 2025. In the light of the current funding situation, and UNICEF Future Focus Initiative, staffing and resources are expected to be streamlined. Discussions about the

Participating organization	Location and reporting line of the official and the function in charge of global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level	Official who leads global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level, and personnel assigned to the function	Focal points and other mechanisms on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the regional and/or country levels	Notes	Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (information as at 30 June 2025)
	<p><b>PSEA and Implementing Partnerships Specialist</b>, P-3 (BMD), full-time</p> <p>Programme Group:</p> <p><b>Senior Child Protection Adviser, Programme Group</b>, P-5 (regular resources-non-grant (GC), part-time (20 per cent)</p> <p><b>Global PSEA programme lead</b>, P-4 (other resources-emergency), full-time</p> <p><b>PSEA Emergency Response Team</b>, P-4 (BMD), full-time</p> <p>Note: Within UNICEF, accountabilities for PSEA are shared across several divisions, with the primary responsibilities falling on the Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring (regulatory framework development and roll out, and partnership implementation) and the Programme Group (country office support). The global Programme Group lead for PSEA serves as the designated technical lead for PSEA in programmes.</p>	<p><b>7 regional partnership advisers</b> focusing on issues related to PSEA in partnerships, full-time.</p> <p><b>28 country-office dedicated PSEA posts</b> across high-risk regions engaged in humanitarian responses, mostly P-4, full-time.</p>	<p>should establish a PSEA focal point system.</p> <p>By the end of 2023, 96 per cent of all country offices had appointed PSEA focal points, including at the field office level.</p> <p>Each country office with an activated level 2 or level 3 emergency is immediately funded for dedicated capacity and activities to prevent and respond to SEA. As a result of the 2023/2024 midterm review of the strategic plan and coinciding with the move towards a new risk management approach for UNICEF, safeguarding became part of the new Risk Management in Programming and Safeguarding Unit under the Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring.</p> <p>This new Unit leads the corporate safeguarding portfolio and is responsible for UNICEF cross-divisional coordination functions of safeguarding (including PSEA) in programmes and operations, responsibilities previously held by the former Safeguarding Office in the Office of the Executive Director.</p> <p>The Unit also leads on PSEA risk management in the partnerships portfolio. Furthermore, the Risk Management in Programming and Safeguarding Unit is responsible for complaints and feedback management and for programme implementation risk management</p>	<p>proposed restructuring were ongoing at the time of reporting.</p>	



<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Location and reporting line of the official and the function in charge of global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level</i>	<i>Official who leads global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level, and personnel assigned to the function</i>	<i>Focal points and other mechanisms on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the regional and/or country levels</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (information as at 30 June 2025)</i>
UNOPS	People and Culture Group Reports to: Deputy Executive Director, Management and Policy	<b>PSEAH Corporate Coordinator</b> , IICA-3 (investment fund to start, later RB), full-time <b>Grant Support Adviser</b> , IICA-3 (investment fund to start, later RB), part-time (20 per cent)	<b>134 PSEA focal points</b> as of November 2024 (depending on the number of engagements/projects), part-time (10 per cent corporate obligation) <b>3 focal points at the country level</b> in Yemen: national staff (National Professional Officer, level A/LICA-8), part-time (50 per cent) <b>1 focal point at the country level</b> in Iraq: senior national staff (National Professional Officer, level B/LICA-9), part-time (50 per cent) <b>2 multiple-country-office PSEAH specialists</b> in Amman, who support Djibouti, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen: one locally recruited National Professional Officer, level B/LICA-B and one internationally recruited P-3/IICA-2, full-time <b>2 country-office PSEAH specialists</b> in Myanmar, national staff: one Capacity-Building Senior Officer (National Professional Officer, level B/LICA-9), full-time; and one Programme Analyst (National Professional Officer, level A/LICA-8), full-time <b>1 country office PSEAH specialist</b> in Ukraine, national staff (National Professional Officer, level B/LICA-9), full-time, operational as of 2025	Each country and regional office must appoint a PSEAH focal point.  The appointment of PSEAH specialists in country offices is based on identified risk areas.	Not reported.
UNRWA	Ethics Office Reports to: Chief of Staff, Director	<b>Sexual Misconduct Coordinator</b> , P-4 (RB), full-time. <b>Chief of Ethics Office</b> , P-5 (RB) part-time (30 per cent) <b>Chief of Staff</b> , D-2 (RB), part-time (5 per cent)	<b>16 PSEA focal points</b> spread across the 5 field and headquarters offices	The Ethics Office also has a number of responsibilities related to the Agency's policies on PSEA of beneficiaries and on the prohibition of discrimination, harassment – including sexual harassment – and abuse of power in the work context.	Impact currently unknown.

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Location and reporting line of the official and the function in charge of global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level</i>	<i>Official who leads global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level, and personnel assigned to the function</i>	<i>Focal points and other mechanisms on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the regional and/or country levels</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (information as at 30 June 2025)</i>
UN-Women	Human Resources Division Reports to: Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships	<b>Director of Human Resources</b> , D-1 (XB), part-time (10 per cent) <b>Workplace Relations Adviser</b> , P-4 (XB), part-time (20 per cent). <b>PSEA and Sexual Harassment Specialist</b> , P-3 (XB), full-time. <b>Protection Knowledge Management Specialist</b> , P-3 (XB), part-time (6 per cent) <b>Policy Specialist – Strategic Military Adviser</b> , affiliate personnel (XB), part-time (6 per cent). <b>Manager – Programme Support</b> , P-4 (XB), part-time (1 per cent) related to PSEA with implementing partners.	In total, 118 PSEA focal points in the country offices, who are further divided into: <b>6 primary regional PSEA focal points</b> , part-time (20 per cent) and <b>6 alternate regional PSEA focal points</b> , part-time (10 per cent) <b>106 in-country PSEA focal points</b> , part-time.		No changes foreseen.
WFP	Office of the Chief of Staff (as of January 2025) Reports to: Executive Director through administrative reporting to the Chief of Staff	<b>PSEA Director</b> , D-1, full-time (12-month funding by the programme support and administrative budget – inter-agency loan agreement) <b>Senior PSEA Advisor</b> , P-4 (RB), full-time. <b>PSEA Officer</b> , P-3 (RB), full-time <b>2 PSEA and Partnerships Consultants</b> , consultant (level 1 and level 2) (RB), full-time <b>Director of Ethics Office</b> , D-1 (RB), part-time (45 per cent) until the appointment of the PSEA Director <b>Ethics Officer</b> , short-term P-3 (RB), part-time (50 per cent)	A network of approximately <b>670 PSEA focal points</b> across WFP duty stations and operations worldwide, part-time, while PSEA remains a responsibility of the respective WFP country directors. <b>4 PSEA Advisers</b> , dedicated full-time posts as at 29 November 2024, funded by the respective country offices: in South Sudan (fixed-term, P-4), Democratic Republic of the Congo (consultant (level II)), Burkina Faso (fixed-term, National Professional Officer, level A), and Sudan (consultant (level II), until the end of 2024.	As of January 2025, the PSEA team, which was previously part of the Ethics Office, is located within the Office of the Executive Director As per circular OED2023/011, each WFP country office requires at least two PSEA focal points at the country level: a senior PSEA focal point (the Deputy Country Director, where possible, or the most senior WFP employee aside from the head of office); and an alternate focal point. In addition, all WFP field offices are required to have one PSEA focal point.	Due to severe budget constraints and corporate efficiency measures, the PSEA unit at headquarters had to significantly reduce its scope of work in 2025, including due to a ban on travel and a recruitment freeze. The 2026 outlook is even more concerning, with much fewer core resources available for the global PSEA team. At the regional level, those positions that were also partially dedicated to PSEA technical focal point functions will be terminated within the year, also considering corporate restructuring exercises. At the country level, the few existing dedicated PSEA adviser positions may also be terminated because of budget cuts.

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Location and reporting line of the official and the function in charge of global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level</i>	<i>Official who leads global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level, and personnel assigned to the function</i>	<i>Focal points and other mechanisms on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the regional and/or country levels</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (information as at 30 June 2025)</i>
ITC	Office of the Executive Director, Division of Programme Support Reports to: Executive Director	<b>Director, Division of Programme Support</b> , D-1 (RB), part-time (10 per cent) <b>Chief of Human Resources</b> , P-5 (RB), part-time (5 per cent) <b>Intake Officer</b> , P-4 (RB), part-time (3 per cent) <b>Legal Officer</b> , P-3 (RB), part-time (3 per cent)	n/a	ITC does not have regional or country offices	Not reported.
UNAIDS	Ethics Office Reports to: Executive Director and the Programme Coordinating Board	<b>Head of Ethics</b> , P-5 (RB), part-time (11 per cent)	In total, 58 focal points at the country level, who are further divided into <b>52 primary PSEA focal points</b> , part-time, and 6 alternates, part-time		The planned reduction in staffing by more than 50 per cent will result in the abolishment of most staff members who act as PSEA focal points in country offices.
<b>Specialized agencies and International Atomic Energy Agency</b>					
FAO	Office of Emergencies and Resilience Reports to: Deputy Director-General and Chairperson of the Committee on Workplace Conduct and PSEA, FAO Senior PSEA Champion	<b>Director, Office of Emergencies and Resilience</b> , D-2 (RB), part-time (5 per cent) <b>Senior Emergency and Rehabilitation Officer</b> , part-time P-5 (RB, XB), part-time (20 per cent) <b>Technical Officer-PSEA</b> , P-4 (XB-emergency projects), full-time <b>Two PSEA Specialists</b> , category A and C consultancies (XB-emergency projects), full-time <b>PSEA Specialist on PSEA Capacity Development</b> , category A consultancy (XB), part-time	<b>20 regional PSEA focal points and alternates</b> in 11 FAO regional offices, part-time (20 per cent). <b>262 PSEA focal points</b> at FAO duty stations and operations around the world, part-time (20 per cent), further divided into 145 primary PSEA focal points and 117 alternate focal points <b>11 country-office PSEA specialists</b> (National Project Personnel) in 11 high-priority countries (Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Ukraine), hired by October 2024 as consultants (XB), full-time.	Both regional and other PSEA focal points and alternates are encouraged under the terms of reference to spend a recommended 20 per cent of their time on PSEA-related responsibilities and to reflect them in their annual workplans and performance evaluations.  It is noted that time dedicated to PSEA varies depending on context, and that responsibilities may be split between the PSEA focal points and alternates.  The 11 country-office PSEA specialists will work closely with the PSEA focal points and alternates at the respective FAO country offices.	No impact foreseen.

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Location and reporting line of the official and the function in charge of global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level</i>	<i>Official who leads global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level, and personnel assigned to the function</i>	<i>Focal points and other mechanisms on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the regional and/or country levels</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (information as at 30 June 2025)</i>
IAEA	Director General's Office Reports to: Director General	<b>Special Assistant to the Director General for Management, D-2, part-time</b> <b>Staff Relations Specialist, part-time</b>	None	At the headquarters level, a single mechanism exists to oversee SEA: a working group established by the Director General, co-chaired by the Ethics Office and OIOS, with participation from the Office of Legal Affairs, human resources and the Director General's Office, and supported by the Staff Relations Specialist.	No impact foreseen.
ICAO	Bureau of Administration and Services Reports to: Director, Bureau of Administration and Services	<b>Specialist, Administrative Law, Policy and Disciplinary Matters, P-4 (RB), part-time (15 per cent)</b>	None		Not reported.
ILO	Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Officer (position created effective 1 November 2024, intended to be properly advertised and filled as of 1 January 2026) Reports directly to: Director-General	<b>Specialist, Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, P-4 (RB, temporary), part-time (80 per cent)</b>	None	From July 2022 to October 2024, PSEA responsibilities in ILO were assumed by the Ethics Officer (P-5), with the support of a PSEA Specialist (P-4) from July 2023. Following a recommendation of the ILO Independent Oversight Advisory Committee and based on a benchmarking analysis of PSEA resourcing and placement within the United Nations system conducted by the Ethics Office, the Director-General decided to:  (a) Place the PSEA function under his direct report and under the name "Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Officer" (effective 1 November 2024 until the end of 2025);  (b) Propose the creation of a full-time position at the P-4 level as of January 2026.	The PSEA Specialist position was renamed PSEA Officer effective 1 November 2024 and its time allocation increased from 80 per cent to full-time as at 1 April 2025. A proposal to establish it as a full-time, RB-funded post starting in January 2026 is pending approval as part of the overall programme and budget for the 2026–2027 biennium by the International Labour Conference in June 2025.

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Location and reporting line of the official and the function in charge of global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level</i>	<i>Official who leads global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level, and personnel assigned to the function</i>	<i>Focal points and other mechanisms on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the regional and/or country levels</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (information as at 30 June 2025)</i>
IMO	Administrative Division Reports to: Secretary-General	<b>Director, Administrative Division</b> , D-2, part-time (5 per cent, combined with sexual harassment) <b>Business Coordinator</b> , P-3, part-time (5 per cent, combined with sexual harassment) supported by a small internal working group	n/a		No impact.
ITU	Ethics Office Reports to: Secretary-General	<b>Ethics Officer</b> , P-5 (RB), part-time (15 per cent covering 90 per cent of PSEA work) <b>Human Resources Employee Relations Officer</b> (RB), part-time (5 per cent of which is spent on 10 per cent of the PSEA function that is dedicated to policy and victim support work)	n/a		Not reported.
UNESCO	Ethics Office Reports to: Director-General	<b>Ethics Adviser</b> , P-5 (RB), part-time (20 per cent) <b>Ethics Officer</b> , P-3 (temporary), part-time (20 per cent) <b>Ethics Assistant</b> , G-5 (RB), part-time (20 per cent)	In total, 111 focal points in the field, who are further divided into: <b>68 primary PSEA focal points</b> , part time (up to 10 per cent) and 46 alternates, part time (up to 10 per cent, when needed to replace the respective primary PSEA focal point at their duty station). All focal points serve in addition to their regular functions.	All UNESCO field offices and category I institutes have appointed PSEA focal points or alternates, while 60 per cent of these have alternates as well.	Currently, there is no specific PSEA budget allocated. During the 221st session of the Executive Board (April 2025), the Ethics Office highlighted the need for sustainable funding for PSEA, and the Executive Board adopted a decision in which it invited the Director-General to allocate additional resources to the Ethics Office to support the Office's additional responsibility as UNESCO focal point on PSEA and to ensure the effective implementation of the UNESCO Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse within all budget scenarios.
UNIDO	Ethics and Accountability Unit Reports to: Deputy Director General and Managing Director of Corporate Services and Operations	<b>Senior Ethics Officer and PSEA Focal Point</b> , P-5 (RB), part-time <b>Ethics Assistant</b> , G-5, part-time	As and when required, officials from the 48 regional and country UNIDO offices that constitute the UNIDO field network around the world may be selected as UNIDO representatives at the inter-agency PSEA meetings that concern them.	Under the Director-General's bulletin on protection from SEA (UNIDO/DGB/2023/13, para. 17), UNIDO field offices are responsible for representing UNIDO at meetings of inter-agency PSEA networks in the field.	No impact.

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Location and reporting line of the official and the function in charge of global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level</i>	<i>Official who leads global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level, and personnel assigned to the function</i>	<i>Focal points and other mechanisms on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the regional and/or country levels</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (information as at 30 June 2025)</i>
UN Tourism	Ethics Officer Reports to: Secretary-General	<b>Ethics Officer</b> (currently vacant, under recruitment), part-time (the percentage of dedicated time is not yet determined, as no SEA cases have been reported to date and no PSEA activities have been undertaken)	n/a	The function will be centralized at UN Tourism Headquarters in Madrid	Not reported.
UPU	Human Resources Directorate Reports to: Director of Administration and Cabinet Directorate, with direct weekly access to the Director General and Deputy Director General when both are available, or  either of them in case only one of them is available for the reporting.	<b>Ethics Officer</b> (employee of the outsourced services provider), part-time (10 per cent)  <b>Director, Human Resources Directorate</b> , D-1 (RB), part-time (10 per cent)	n/a	UPU is predominantly a headquarters-based organization with a small number of non-staff seconded by governments at the country level. Therefore, there is no need for regional or country-level PSEA coordination.	The Organization continues to have available the budget required for PSEA despite budgetary constraints.
WHO	Director-General Office Reports to: Director-General	<b>Director, Prevention of and Response to Sexual Misconduct (PRS)</b> , D-1 (RB), full-time <b>Victim/Survivor Support</b> , P-5 (RB), full-time <b>2 Technical Officers</b> , P-4 and P-3 (RB), full-time <b>Team Assistant</b> , G-5 (RB), full-time <b>Inter-Agency Coordination Consultant</b> , P-4 equivalent (RB), full-time <b>Victim Support Consultant</b> , P-3 equivalent (RB), full-time <b>PRS Network Coordination Consultant</b> , P-3 equivalent (RB), full-time <b>Capacity Development</b> , P-3 equivalent (RB), full-time	<b>6 regional PRS coordinators</b> , P-5 (RB), full-time <b>Two regional Technical Officers</b> , P-3 (RB), full-time <b>2 regional PRS Team Assistants</b> , G-5 (RB), full-time <b>16 country-office focal points on the prevention of SEA</b> , P-4 (RB, centrally funded), full-time, split between regions as follows: Africa: 8 country offices Americas: 1 country office Eastern Mediterranean: 5 country offices Europe: 1 country office South-East Asia: 1 country office <b>458 WHO PRS Network members</b> , National Professional Officers, at various grades, are funded (some on a part-time basis) in all duty stations through country office budgets.	One in three of the country-office focal points on the prevention of SEA are in high-risk, priority countries.  The accountability framework foresees that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heads of country offices are required to nominate at least one (minimum part-time 50 per cent full-time equivalent) PRS focal point for each office</li> <li>• All regional directors are required to have in place a regional PRS coordinator.</li> </ul>	The budget for 2026-2027 has not yet been approved or allocated. Various cost-saving scenarios exist. The accountability framework requirements will be maintained.

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Location and reporting line of the official and the function in charge of global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level</i>	<i>Official who leads global coordination on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the organizational level, and personnel assigned to the function</i>	<i>Focal points and other mechanisms on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at the regional and/or country levels</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Potential impact on human resources in 2025 and beyond due to budget constraints (information as at 30 June 2025)</i>
WIPO	Human Resources Management Department Reports to: Director-General	<b>Gender and Diversity Specialist</b> , P-4 (RB), part-time (less than 5 per cent) <b>Staff Counsellor</b> , P-3 (RB), part-time (percentage depending on cases)	None	WIPO has a very limited presence at the country level (i.e. 38 staff members and affiliate personnel distributed across 8 countries, who represent only 2.2 per cent of the overall WIPO workforce).  Given this limited field presence, WIPO does not allocate resources to PSEA at the country level.	Not reported.
WMO	Human Resources Section, Administration Division Reports to: Director, Administration Division	<b>Chief of Human Resources section</b> , Administration Division, part-time (at most 1 per cent of time)	n/a		Not reported.

## Annex VI

## Governance and procedures for ClearCheck at Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations

Participating organization	Has the organization issued its own standard operating procedures and other guidelines on the use and handling of the ClearCheck database?	What office(s)/unit(s) and who enters the names of subjects of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment allegations into the ClearCheck database?	Are names entered into ClearCheck also under the following exceptional circumstances?:				Number of active sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment subjects recorded in the ClearCheck database by the participating organization out of a total of 899 active records (data as at 15 January 2025)
			(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	
United Nations Secretariat, its funds and programmes and other bodies or entities							
United Nations Secretariat	<b>Yes:</b> Standard operating procedure – ClearCheck screening tool (2019) ClearCheck screening tool guidelines on the component related to SEA (2018) <a href="#">ST/SGB/2019/8</a> provisions on ClearCheck	Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance/Office of Human Resources/Administrative Law Division; Conduct and Discipline Service; and Disciplinary Accountability Service	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>564</b> (of which 452 relate to uniformed personnel and 112 to civilian personnel)
UNCTAD	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>
UNEP	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>
UN-Habitat	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>
UNODC	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>
UNDP	<b>Yes:</b> ClearCheck database, standard operating procedure on vetting candidates (issued in 2019) ClearCheck database bridge instructions (updated March 2024)	Executive Office: ClearCheck focal point/PSEAH global lead	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>24</b>



Participating organization	Has the organization issued its own standard operating procedures and other guidelines on the use and handling of the ClearCheck database?	What office(s)/unit(s) and who enters the names of subjects of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment allegations into the ClearCheck database?	Are names entered into ClearCheck also under the following exceptional circumstances?:				Number of active sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment subjects recorded in the ClearCheck database by the participating organization out of a total of 899 active records (data as at 15 January 2025)
			(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	
UNFPA	<b>Yes:</b> ClearCheck database: UNFPA standard operating procedure on vetting candidates (2020)	Office of the Executive Director: Office of PSEAH Global Coordinator – Global PSEAH Coordinator	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>19</b>
UNHCR	<b>No</b>	Legal Office: Data Administrator Senior Legal Associate	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>74</b>
UNICEF	<b>No</b>	Office of the Executive Director: Chief, Administrative Law Unit, or delegated authorized staff, Administrative Law Unit	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>30</b>
UNOPS	<b>No</b> <i>Reference to actual practices and relevant documents:</i> Standard operating procedure No. 15 (Rev.3) – sexual exploitation and abuse investigations, Internal Audit and Investigation Group (2022); Process and Quality Management System policy 7.3.26: – perform candidate check – mandatory procedures	Internal Audit and Investigations Group: Senior Investigations Assistant (as relayed by the Human Resources Legal Officer, Administrative Law Practice)	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>9</b>
UNRWA	<b>No</b> <i>Reference to:</i> automated online ClearCheck database guides and guidelines; UNRWA training notes for recruitment users/hiring managers (2020); recruitment policies, including on the hiring of non-staff, and agreement/contractual modalities; and Department of Internal Oversight Services Guide to Conducting Investigations 2021 (DIOS/ID/2021/ID1)	Human Resources Department: Human Resources Legal Officer, Administrative Law Office	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>21</b>

Participating organization	Has the organization issued its own standard operating procedures and other guidelines on the use and handling of the ClearCheck database?	What office(s)/unit(s) and who enters the names of subjects of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment allegations into the ClearCheck database?	Are names entered into ClearCheck also under the following exceptional circumstances?:				Number of active sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment subjects recorded in the ClearCheck database by the participating organization out of a total of 899 active records (data as at 15 January 2025)
			(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	
UN-Women	<b>Yes:</b> ClearCheck screening tool Guidelines on the component related to SEA (2018) external legislation (2019)	Human Resources Division: the ClearCheck Coordinator/Data Administrator whose function is workplace relations adviser, and the Human Resources Policy Specialist as the designated alternate.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>3</b>
WFP	<b>Yes:</b> Standard operating procedures – ClearCheck screening tool and other disciplinary record checks (2019)  Human Resources Manual, chap. II.1 (general provisions applicable to all staff members on continuing, indefinite and fixed-term appointments)	Human Resources Management Division: Human Resources Assistant, Relations Branch	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>32</b>
ITC	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat and</i>  <i>A reference in a bulletin on the Executive Director's obligations (ITC/EDB/2024/05/Corr.1)</i>	Human Resources: Chief Legal Office: Legal Officer	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>0</b>
UNAIDS	<b>No</b> <i>Reference to citation in relevant human resources policies:</i> UNAIDS recruitment policy, HRM/IN 2022-1 (rev. 1); Guidelines for recruitment administrators and other staff handling recruitment processes at UNAIDS (HRM/IG 2022-1); WHO policy on preventing and addressing sexual misconduct, March 2003; and WHO eManual	People Management Department (Human Resources Management): Team Lead, Human Resources Operations, and Team Lead, Human Resources Policy and Legal Division (but, <i>due to staff movements, currently only the Team Lead, Human Resources Operations</i> )	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>4</b>

Participating organization	Has the organization issued its own standard operating procedures and other guidelines on the use and handling of the ClearCheck database?	What office(s)/unit(s) and who enters the names of subjects of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment allegations into the ClearCheck database?	Are names entered into ClearCheck also under the following exceptional circumstances?:				Number of active sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment subjects recorded in the ClearCheck database by the participating organization out of a total of 899 active records (data as at 15 January 2025)
			(a) Subject's resignation before the completion of the investigation and failure to cooperate with it;	(b) Subject's resignation yet continuation of the investigation leading to substantiation of the allegations that would warrant his or her dismissal, had he or she not left;	(c) Involvement in high-profile sexual exploitation and abuse cases (reputational risk);	(d) Other circumstances (please clarify)	
			(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	
Specialized agencies and International Atomic Energy Agency							
FAO	Yes: Administrative circular No. 2021/04 (Procedures for the use of the ClearCheck screening database)	Human Resources Division: Administrators (FAO personnel authorized by the Director of the Human Resources Division)	Yes	Yes	No	No	13
IAEA	Yes: Guidelines on the Sexual Harassment Screening Database	Division of Human Resources: Head, Human Resources Management Section and Staff Relations Specialist	No	No	No	No	2
ICAO	No	Human Resources: Chief, Recruitment, Classification and Post Management Section	No	No	No	No	2
ILO	No	Human Resources Strategic Support: Branch Chief or Head of Legal and Policy Unit	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	0
IMO	No	Human Resources Service: Entitlements and Information Management Senior Human Resources Officer	Yes	Yes	No	No	0
ITU	No	Human Resources Management Department	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	1
UNESCO	No	Bureau of Human Resources Management: Human Resources Data and Workforce Analyst, Management Support and Coordination Unit	No	No	No	No	4
UNIDO	No	Division of Human Resource Management: Head of the Human Resources Policy and Employee Relations Unit	Yes	Yes	No	No	1
UN Tourism	No	Human Resources: Chief, Human Resources; Senior	No	No	No	No	0

Participating organization	Has the organization issued its own standard operating procedures and other guidelines on the use and handling of the ClearCheck database?	What office(s)/unit(s) and who enters the names of subjects of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment allegations into the ClearCheck database?	Are names entered into ClearCheck also under the following exceptional circumstances?: (a) Subject's resignation before the completion of the investigation and failure to cooperate with it; (b) Subject's resignation yet continuation of the investigation leading to substantiation of the allegations that would warrant his or her dismissal, had he or she not left; (c) Involvement in high-profile sexual exploitation and abuse cases (reputational risk); (d) Other circumstances (please clarify)				Number of active sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment subjects recorded in the ClearCheck database by the participating organization out of a total of 899 active records (data as at 15 January 2025)
			(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	
		Programme Assistant; and Senior Human Resources Specialist					
UPU	No	Human Resources Directorate: Policy Unit	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	0
WHO	Yes: Internal standard operating procedures for vetting candidates against ClearCheck at WHO WHO policy on preventing and addressing sexual misconduct WHO eManual, sect. III.4.2 on selection, and sect. III.11.2 on administrative leave, disciplinary measures and ClearCheck	Human Resources and Talent Management: Manager (Internal Justice), Human Resources Policy Coordination and Internal Justice Human Resources Specialist (Internal Justice), Human Resources Policy Coordination and Internal Justice	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	30
WIPO	No Reference to citation in relevant standard operating procedure: ClearCheck procedure; internal standard operating procedures, Administrative Law Section, Office of the Legal Counsel (version 2, 2024)	Human Resources Management Department: Talent Acquisition and Development Manager, Talent Acquisition Assistant and Administrative Officer	No	No	No	No	0
WMO	No	Chief of Human Resources	No	No	No	No	1

<sup>a</sup> If the Office of Audit and Investigations cannot investigate or continue its investigation, due to an ongoing criminal investigation or proceedings by national authorities, if there is strong corroborating evidence that the allegation is credible; or there is evidence of a prior criminal conviction for a serious sexual offence by a competent court and the conduct would have resulted in termination of appointment if the individual had been a staff member at the time the conduct occurred, or, in cases of non-staff personnel, where the conduct would have been a breach of the individual's contract had the contract not expired.

## Annex VII

## ClearCheck coverage and data transactions by Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations

Participating organization	Number of screening transactions/ searches in the ClearCheck database, 2018-2024	Applicants screened in the ClearCheck database			Applicants undergoing further screening for history of sexual misconduct through other mechanisms
		United Nations system staff positions		Affiliate personnel positions	
		Internationally recruited positions	Locally recruited positions		
United Nations Secretariat, its funds and programmes and other bodies or entities					
United Nations Secretariat	3,175, <sup>a</sup> including those conducted on behalf of UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC	<b>Yes</b> All candidates selected for job openings and temporary job openings for staff positions the incumbents of which sign a letter of appointment	<b>Yes</b> All candidates selected for job openings and temporary job openings for staff positions the incumbents of which sign a letter of appointment	<b>No</b> Candidates for affiliate personnel vacancies who do not sign a letter of appointment subject to the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations when hired, including: (a) Consultants; (b) Contractors; (c) United Nations Volunteers; (d) Junior Professional Officers; (e) Interns	Internal candidates for international and national staff vacancies are also screened through the secured SEA module of the Case Management Tracking System, where SEA cases are recorded internally at the headquarters level by a reporting officer, reviewed by senior officers and approved by the Chief of the Conduct and Discipline Service.
UNCTAD	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat
UNEP	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat
UN-Habitat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat
UNODC	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat	See United Nations Secretariat
UNDP	27 528 <sup>a</sup>	<b>Yes</b> All recommended or selected candidates to sign a UNDP letter of appointment subject to the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, as staff	<b>Yes</b> All recommended or selected candidates to sign a UNDP letter of appointment subject to the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations	<b>Yes</b> All recommended or selected candidates for other personnel contracts administered by UNDP: (a) Service contractors; (b) National and international personnel hired under a personnel services agreement; (c) Individual contractors; (d) Individuals engaged as partner personnel by UNDP for another United Nations entity and for which UNDP provides investigative and	As of January 2025, UNDP is piloting participation in the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme in select staff recruitments in a number of crisis country duty stations where SEA and sexual harassment risks are usually higher, and recruitment volumes are significant

Participating organization	Number of screening transactions/ searches in the ClearCheck database, 2018-2024	Applicants screened in the ClearCheck database			Applicants undergoing further screening for history of sexual misconduct through other mechanisms
		United Nations system staff positions		Affiliate personnel positions	
		Internationally recruited positions	Locally recruited positions		
				legal services under the partner agreement; (e) Fellows; (f) Interns working with UNDP	
UNFPA	14 430 <sup>a</sup>	<b>Yes</b> For all recommended <u>external</u> candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all recommended <u>external</u> candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all recommended <u>external</u> candidates	Misconduct Disclosure Scheme for top/selected candidates for international recruitments, as part of outsourced background verification checks by the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services (OneHR Centre)
UNHCR	58 257 <sup>a</sup>	<b>Yes</b> For all recommended <u>external</u> candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all recommended <u>external</u> candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all recommended <u>external</u> candidates, including: (a) UNOPS contractors; (b) Consultants; (c) Junior Professional Officers; (d) United Nations Volunteers; (e) Interns	Misconduct Disclosure Scheme for top/selected external candidates for new international and national staff recruitment in 16 UNHCR country offices (Bangladesh, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania), as part of outsourced background verification checks by the OneHR Centre
UNICEF	2 753 <sup>a</sup>	<b>Yes</b> For all recommended candidates <u>except</u> temporary appointments	<b>Yes</b> , but only for all recommended candidates for national professional positions <u>except</u> temporary appointments  For General Service positions, only for <u>external</u> candidates who indicate previous United Nations experience	<b>Yes</b> , but only for candidates who indicate previous United Nations experience	None
UNOPS	5 463 <sup>a</sup>	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates <u>except</u> candidates for individual contract agreements generated by UNOPS on behalf of partner entities, as the screening is the responsibility of partner entities	Misconduct Disclosure Scheme for top/selected candidates for international and national recruitment for both staff and affiliate personnel since February 2024 in three regions (Africa, Asia and Middle East)

Participating organization	Number of screening transactions/ searches in the ClearCheck database, 2018-2024	Applicants screened in the ClearCheck database			Applicants undergoing further screening for history of sexual misconduct through other mechanisms
		United Nations system staff positions		Affiliate personnel positions	
		Internationally recruited positions	Locally recruited positions		
				Candidates for specific contract types that are not centrally managed, i.e. they are exclusively managed at by local offices in the field (e.g. “cash for work” contracts)	
UNRWA	23 710 <sup>a</sup>	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	None
UN-Women	17 875	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates <u>except</u> United Nations Volunteers, as they are screened by the United Nations Volunteers Programme	None
WFP	32 580 <sup>a</sup>	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates, including those for local personnel (special service agreement personnel and service contract holders)	None
UNAIDS	380	<b>Yes</b> For all external selected candidates to whom UNAIDS intends to offer a position	<b>Yes</b> For all external selected candidates to whom UNAIDS intends to offer a position	<b>No</b>	None
ITC	152	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> <b>(starting in 2025)</b>	None
Specialized agencies and International Atomic Energy Agency					
FAO	21 360 <sup>a</sup>	<b>Yes</b> For all selected <u>external</u> candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all selected <u>external</u> candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	INTERPOL list of offenders List of individuals subject to Security Council sanctions
IAEA	201 <sup>a</sup>	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> <b>For all selected candidates</b>	<b>No</b>	None
ICAO	All ClearCheck transactions were carried out by the OneHR Centre as part of its outsourced background verification process	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b> <b>For all selected candidates</b>	None

Participating organization	Number of screening transactions/ searches in the ClearCheck database, 2018-2024	Applicants screened in the ClearCheck database			Applicants undergoing further screening for history of sexual misconduct through other mechanisms
		United Nations system staff positions		Affiliate personnel positions	
		Internationally recruited positions	Locally recruited positions		
ILO	All ClearCheck transactions were carried out by the OneHR Centre as part of its outsourced background verification process	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected candidates for positions being offered a fixed- term contract (over 12 months)  For all selected candidates at the level of P-5 and above	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	None
IMO	54	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected <u>external</u> candidates	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected <u>external</u> candidates	<b>No</b>	None
ITU	951	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b>  For positions that are remunerated by ITU, including Junior Professional Officers, thus excluding interns and positions under the Human Resources Partnership Programme such as United Nations Volunteers	None
UNESCO	10	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected <u>external</u> candidates who indicate previous United Nations experience	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected <u>external</u> candidates who indicate previous United Nations experience	<b>No</b>	None
UNIDO	17 <sup>a</sup>	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected candidates	<b>No</b>	None
UN Tourism	649	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected candidates	None
UPU	All ClearCheck transactions were carried out by the OneHR Centre as part of its outsourced background verification process	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected <u>external</u> candidates	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	None
WHO	78 792 <sup>a</sup>	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected candidates	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected candidates	None



Participating organization	Number of screening transactions/ searches in the ClearCheck database, 2018-2024	Applicants screened in the ClearCheck database			Applicants undergoing further screening for history of sexual misconduct through other mechanisms
		United Nations system staff positions		Affiliate personnel positions	
		Internationally recruited positions	Locally recruited positions		
WIPO	64	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected <u>external</u> candidates who indicate previous United Nations experience	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected <u>external</u> candidates who indicate previous United Nations experience	<b>No</b>	For senior positions (P-5 and above) and professional positions in selected functions, WIPO carries out comprehensive background checks, including a check of the candidate’s criminal record, covering also any unlawful sexual abuse and harassment
WMO	All ClearCheck transactions were carried out by the OneHR Centre as part of its outsourced background verification process	<b>Yes</b>  For all selected <u>external</u> candidates who indicate previous United Nations experience	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	None

*Note:* Data as at 31 March 2025.

<sup>a</sup> Excluding the transactions carried out by the OneHR Centre as part of an outsourced background verification check or those processed through the recruitment platforms, or both.

## Annex VIII

## List of United Nations system administrative tribunal judgments on 34 sexual misconduct cases (2023–2024)

Figure VIII Reference	Competent tribunal	Tribunal judgment number	Tribunal case reference	Joint Inspection Unit participating organization	Function or/and category and grade of staff involved as subject	Sexual misconduct and other related misconduct	Verdict in favour of Organization?
Case 1	ILOAT	4944	<i>S. S. v. FAO</i>	FAO	P-4	Sexual harassment (assault/rape)	Yes
Case 2	ILOAT	4945	<i>Y. v. FAO</i>	FAO/WFP	Head of WFP field office	Sexual harassment	No
Case 3	ILOAT	4968	<i>D. (No. 7) v. WIPO</i>	WIPO	Acting Director, Internal Oversight Division at headquarters	Protection against retaliation for reporting sexual harassment	Yes
Case 4	ILOAT	5001	<i>A.G. (No. 4) v. WHO</i>	UNAIDS/WHO	Senior official at headquarters	Protection against retaliation for reporting sexual harassment	Yes
Case 5	ILOAT	5003	<i>A. v. WHO</i>	WHO	P-5, Team Lead (field)	Sexual harassment	No
Case 6	UNAT	2023-UNAT-1311	<i>Szvetko v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNHCR	P-2	Sexual harassment	Yes
Case 7	UNAT	2023-UNAT-1332	<i>AAE v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNFPA	D-1 (field)	Sexual assault and harassment	Yes
Case 8	UNAT	2023-UNAT-1348	<i>AAK v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNIOGBIS	FS-4 (field)	Sexual exploitation	Yes
Case 9	UNAT	2023-UNAT-1352	<i>Mohammad v. Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East</i>	UNRWA	Teacher/staff (field)	SEA	Yes
Case 10	UNAT	2023-UNAT-1354	<i>Okwakol v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	MONUSCO	P-5, OIOS Auditor (field)	Failure to report SEA	Yes
Case 11	UNAT	2023-UNAT-1361	<i>AAO v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNODC	Staff	Sexual harassment	No
Case 12	UNAT	2023-UNAT-1362	<i>Loto v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	MONUSCO	Staff (field)	Failure to report SEA	Yes

<i>Figure VIII Reference</i>	<i>Competent tribunal</i>	<i>Tribunal judgment number</i>	<i>Tribunal case reference</i>	<i>Joint Inspection Unit participating organization</i>	<i>Function or/and category and grade of staff involved as subject</i>	<i>Sexual misconduct and other related misconduct</i>	<i>Verdict in favour of Organization?</i>
Case 13	UNAT	2023-UNAT-1366	<i>AAN. v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNICEF	P-4 (field)	Sexual harassment	Yes
Case 14	UNAT	2023-UNAT-1370	<i>AAC. v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNICEF	P-5, Head of Office (field)	Sexual harassment	No
Case 15	UNAT	2023-UNAT-1375	<i>Stefan v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNMISS	Close protection of SRSG	Sexual exploitation	No
Case 16	UNAT	2023-UNAT-1382	<i>Kazazi v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNAMID	FS-4 (field)	Sexual harassment	Yes
Case 17	UNAT	2023-UNAT-1384	<i>Shumba v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNFPA	National Professional Officer, level C, Programme Specialist	Sexual exploitation and abuse	No
Case 18	UNAT	2024/UNDT/018	<i>Hatungimana v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNHCR	Staff (field)	Sexual harassment	Yes
Case 19	UNAT	2024-UNAT-1412	<i>AAT. v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNHCR	P-4, Senior Protection (field)	Sexual harassment	Yes
Case 20	UNAT	2024-UNAT-1417	<i>Wakid v. Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East</i>	UNRWA	School Principal/staff (field)	Sexual exploitation and abuse	Yes
Case 21	UNAT	2024-UNAT-1440	<i>Radu v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	ICAO	D-1, Deputy Director at Headquarters	Sexual harassment	No
Case 22	UNAT	2024-UNAT-1441	<i>AAR. v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	Department of Safety and Security	Acting Chief Security Officer (field)	Protection against retaliation for reporting sexual harassment	Yes
Case 23	UNAT	2024-UNAT-1443	<i>Safi v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNRWA	Teacher/staff (field)	Sexual exploitation and abuse	Yes
Case 24	UNAT	2024-UNAT-1461	<i>Makeen v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNMISS	GL-4 (field)	Sexual exploitation	Yes
Case 25	UNAT	2024-UNAT-1469	<i>Soobrayan v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNICEF	P-5	Sexual harassment	Yes

Figure VIII Reference	Competent tribunal	Tribunal judgment number	Tribunal case reference	Joint Inspection Unit participating organization	Function or/and category and grade of staff involved as subject	Sexual misconduct and other related misconduct	Verdict in favour of Organization?
Case 26	UNAT	2024-UNAT-1493	<i>AAY. v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	United Nations Secretariat	P-5 at Headquarters	Sexual harassment	Yes
Case 27	ILOAT	4754	<i>M. (No. 2) v. IAEA</i>	IAEA	P-4 (resigned)	Sexual harassment	Yes
Case 28	UNDT	UNDT/2024/007	<i>Valle v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	Department of Safety and Security	Staff (field)	Sexual harassment	No
Case 29	UNDT	UNDT/2024/012	<i>Bham v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNSOS	Staff (field)	Sexual harassment	Yes
Case 30	UNDT	UNDT/2024/016	<i>Applicant v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNODC	P-3	Sexual harassment	Yes
Case 31	UNDT	UNDT/2024/020	<i>Kavosh v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNHCR	G-6 (field)	Sexual exploitation and abuse	Yes
Case 32	UNDT	UNDT/2024/034	<i>IK v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNHCR	Senior manager (field)	Sexual harassment	Yes
Case 33	UNDT	UNDT/2024/080	<i>Sophocleous v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNODC	D-1	Sexual harassment	Yes
Case 34	UNDT	UNDT/2024/091	<i>Ngueto v. Secretary-General of the United Nations</i>	UNHCR	P-4 (field)	Sexual harassment	Yes

*Note:* For an examination of the timeline of investigation and disciplinary processes in Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations, see figure VIII in the full report.

## Annex IX

## Reporting practices on disciplinary measures at Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Report on disciplinary measures or citing such measures: reference of latest issuance</i>	<i>Frequency of reporting</i>	<i>Is the report public? (Yes/No)</i>	<i>Nature of allegations included</i>	<i>Category and level of perpetrators included</i>	<i>Location of misconduct included</i>	<i>Disciplinary measure taken indicated</i>	<i>Addition of subject's name to ClearCheck indicated*</i>	<i>Criminal referrals included</i>
<b>United Nations Secretariat, its funds and programmes and other bodies or entities</b>									
United Nations Secretariat	Report of the Secretary-General on the practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and cases of possible criminal behaviour, from 1 January to 31 December 2023 (A/79/615) and compendium of disciplinary measures ( <a href="https://hr.un.org/page/compendium-disciplinary-measures">https://hr.un.org/page/compendium-disciplinary-measures</a> )	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes It indicates, in aggregate, Professional, Field Service and General Service categories, plus mentions seniority and managerial responsibilities	Yes Mission vs. non-mission for the aggregate data without specifying the entity or operation concerned	Yes	Yes	Yes, in aggregate
UNCTAD	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>								
UNEP	Conduct and Discipline Annual Report 2022, annex 1 (complaints from 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2022) displays actions taken (while those data are missing from the 2023 report)	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes It indicates whether staff member or non-staff member	No	Yes	Yes	No
UN-Habitat	Overviews of the report of OIOS and the report of the Ethics Office and related UN-Habitat activities, such HSP/EB.2024/21 and HSP/EB.2023/20; and reports on action by	Annual	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Report on disciplinary measures or citing such measures: reference of latest issuance</i>	<i>Frequency of reporting</i>	<i>Is the report public? (Yes/No)</i>	<i>Nature of allegations included</i>	<i>Category and level of perpetrators included</i>	<i>Location of misconduct included</i>	<i>Disciplinary measure taken indicated</i>	<i>Addition of subject's name to ClearCheck indicated*</i>	<i>Criminal referrals included</i>
	UN-Habitat to strengthen protection against sexual and any other type of exploitation and abuse and against sexual harassment in the workplace, such as HSP/EB.2024/10								
UNODC	<i>Same as the United Nations Secretariat</i>								
UNDP	Annual report on the administration of justice and other accountabilities at UNDP (2022), annex A (summary of cases resulting in disciplinary measures against staff members in 2022), annex B (actions taken pursuant to paragraph 72 (a) of the legal framework in 2022) and annex C (summary of cases involving non-staff personnel in 2022)	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes  It indicates whether staff member or non-staff member	No	Yes	Yes	No
	Annual report of the Office of Audit and Investigations on internal audit and investigation activities, such as <a href="#">DP/2024/10</a> , annex IV (investigation reports by type of allegation)	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes  It indicates whether staff member, contract holder or non-staff member	Yes  By country	Yes	No	No
	<b>Good practice:</b> Annex B includes information on cases in which the staff member had resigned or otherwise separated from UNDP during the								

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Report on disciplinary measures or citing such measures: reference of latest issuance</i>	<i>Frequency of reporting</i>	<i>Is the report public? (Yes/No)</i>	<i>Nature of allegations included</i>	<i>Category and level of perpetrators included</i>	<i>Location of misconduct included</i>	<i>Disciplinary measure taken indicated</i>	<i>Addition of subject's name to ClearCheck indicated*</i>	<i>Criminal referrals included</i>
	investigation or prior to a final decision on the case								
UNFPA	Practice of UNFPA in cases of allegations of wrongdoing  (1 January–31 December 2023), circular of the Deputy Executive Director (Management) (7 March 2024), sect. I (practice of UNFPA in cases of allegations of staff misconduct)	Annual	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Report of the Office of Audit and Investigation Services on UNFPA internal audit and investigation activities, such as <a href="#">DP/FPA/2024/6</a> , annex 4 (summary of investigation and closure reports issued in 2023, by type of allegation, as of 31 December 2023)	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes  It indicates whether staff member, consultant, United Nations Volunteer or service contractor, plus mentions seniority	Yes, by region	Yes	Yes	No
UNHCR	Practice of the High Commissioner in disciplinary matters and cases of criminal behaviour	Annual	No	Yes	Yes  By grade and type of contract	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, in aggregate
UNICEF	Annual report on disciplinary measures and other actions in response to misconduct	Annual	No	Yes	Yes  It indicates whether staff member or implementing partner personnel	Yes, by region	Yes	No	No

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Report on disciplinary measures or citing such measures: reference of latest issuance</i>	<i>Frequency of reporting</i>	<i>Is the report public? (Yes/No)</i>	<i>Nature of allegations included</i>	<i>Category and level of perpetrators included</i>	<i>Location of misconduct included</i>	<i>Disciplinary measure taken indicated</i>	<i>Addition of subject's name to ClearCheck indicated*</i>	<i>Criminal referrals included</i>
	UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2024 annual report to the Executive Board, Cases closed after investigation and cases closed after assessment with established financial losses during 2024 (11 April 2025) ( <a href="#">E/ICEF/2025/AB/L.3/Add.2</a> )	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes It indicates whether staff member or personnel of an implementing partner or a vendor	Yes, by region	Yes, when known at the time of publication of the report	No	No
UNOPS	Executive Director's report of cases of misconduct that resulted in the imposition of disciplinary and administrative measures in 2023	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes It indicates whether the personnel member is senior	No	Yes	No	No
UNRWA	No reporting on disciplinary measures	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
UN-Women	Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2023 ( <a href="#">UNW/2024/3</a> ), annex III  Report of the Executive Director of UN-Women on disciplinary measures and other actions taken in response to misconduct by UN-Women staff members, affiliate personnel or third parties and cases of possible criminal behaviour 1 January–31 December 2023	Annual	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes, in aggregate



<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Report on disciplinary measures or citing such measures: reference of latest issuance</i>	<i>Frequency of reporting</i>	<i>Is the report public? (Yes/No)</i>	<i>Nature of allegations included</i>	<i>Category and level of perpetrators included</i>	<i>Location of misconduct included</i>	<i>Disciplinary measure taken indicated</i>	<i>Addition of subject's name to ClearCheck indicated*</i>	<i>Criminal referrals included</i>
WFP	Report on practice in disciplinary matters for 2023, sect. II (description of matters of confirmed misconduct and resulting measures)	Annual	No  (Limited to the Executive Board website)	Yes	No	No  The summary indicates the type of duty station (field, hardship etc.)	Yes	Yes	Yes
ITC	2024 ITC report of the Executive Director on disciplinary measures and other actions taken in response to fraud, corruption and other wrongdoing	Annual	No  (Shared with the Consultative Committee of ITC Trust Fund and all ITC personnel)	Yes	Yes, by personnel category (staff or affiliate personnel)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, in aggregate
UNAIDS	Corrective administrative actions, including disciplinary measures taken, such as UNAIDS/PCB (54)/CRP6 (13 June 2024)  <b>Good practice:</b> includes information on assistance and support provided to victims of abusive conduct (sexual harassment), such as in 2022	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes  It indicates whether the staff member is senior	No	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Specialized agencies and International Atomic Energy Agency</b>									
FAO	Annual Report of the Inspector General, such as annex A (summary of 2024 investigation reports, investigation memorandums and pending recommendations from prior years), table 1 (summary of 2024 investigation reports and memorandums concerning	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes  It indicates whether personnel or vendor/ implementing partner, and whether personnel member is in a management position	No	Yes	Yes	No

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Report on disciplinary measures or citing such measures: reference of latest issuance</i>	<i>Frequency of reporting</i>	<i>Is the report public? (Yes/No)</i>	<i>Nature of allegations included</i>	<i>Category and level of perpetrators included</i>	<i>Location of misconduct included</i>	<i>Disciplinary measure taken indicated</i>	<i>Addition of subject's name to ClearCheck indicated*</i>	<i>Criminal referrals included</i>
	FAO personnel and related management action taken), table 2 (summary of 2024 investigation reports and memorandums concerning FAO vendors or implementing partners and related management action taken) and table 4 (summary of pending recommendations from investigation reports concerning FAO personnel from prior years and related management action taken during 2024) (FC 203/13.1, February 2025)								
IAEA	No reporting on disciplinary measures	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
ICAO	Annual report on actions taken in response to complaints of misconduct and retaliation, such as that of 29/1/2025 presented by the Secretary General	Annual	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, by region	Yes	Yes	Yes
ILO	No reporting on disciplinary measures	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
IMO	No reporting on disciplinary measures	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
ITU	No reporting on disciplinary measures	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Report on disciplinary measures or citing such measures: reference of latest issuance</i>	<i>Frequency of reporting</i>	<i>Is the report public? (Yes/No)</i>	<i>Nature of allegations included</i>	<i>Category and level of perpetrators included</i>	<i>Location of misconduct included</i>	<i>Disciplinary measure taken indicated</i>	<i>Addition of subject's name to ClearCheck indicated*</i>	<i>Criminal referrals included</i>
UNESCO	The Director General reports cases of misconduct that resulted in the imposition of disciplinary and administrative measures each year through an administrative circular issued by the Assistant Director General for Administration and Management  The annual report of the Ethics Office mentions SEA, if it occurred	Annual	No  Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
UNIDO	Report by the Director General on personnel matters, such as <a href="#">IDB.51/26/Rev.1</a> , chap. I (developments on personnel-related matters), section on addressing sexual harassment and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse within the organizations of the United Nations system)	Annual	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
UN Tourism	No reporting on disciplinary measures	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
UPU	No reporting on disciplinary measures	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
WHO	Report of the Internal Auditor, such as A77/23, annex 5 (summary of substantiated investigations reports issued in 2022 and 2023)	Annual	Yes	Yes	Yes  It indicates whether staff member, consultant or contractor, and implementing partner	Yes, by country office versus headquarters	Yes	No	No

<i>Participating organization</i>	<i>Report on disciplinary measures or citing such measures: reference of latest issuance</i>	<i>Frequency of reporting</i>	<i>Is the report public? (Yes/No)</i>	<i>Nature of allegations included</i>	<i>Category and level of perpetrators included</i>	<i>Location of misconduct included</i>	<i>Disciplinary measure taken indicated</i>	<i>Addition of subject's name to ClearCheck indicated*</i>	<i>Criminal referrals included</i>
	Sexual Misconduct and Abusive Conduct Investigations Dashboard, presenting actions taken on investigative reports issued beginning January 2022	Monthly	Yes	Yes	Yes Job grade of subject	Yes By region	Yes	Yes	No
	Information note to all personnel on “Matters of misconduct: WHO headquarters, regional and country offices”	Quarterly	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
WIPO	Annual report of the Director General on administration of justice	Annual	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
WMO	No reporting on disciplinary measures	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

## Annex X

### List of formal and informal recommendations

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Recommendation statement</i>
II	Formal	Recommendation 1: Executive heads of United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2027, review their respective policies, staff regulations and rules, and standards of conduct to ensure that they all include PSEA, are aligned and support disciplinary processes and procedures.
II	Informal	The Inspectors encourage executive heads to reference their organization's policy on protection against retaliation in their respective PSEA policy to protect relevant witnesses and victims from retaliation, and consider this a good practice for the promulgation of a PSEA policy.
II	Informal	The Inspectors suggest that organizations address SEA risks associated with emerging technologies in the next revisions of their PSEA policies.
II	Informal	With regard to sexual relations with beneficiaries, the Inspectors recommend that participating organizations frame their policy language around the conduct of personnel and the improper use of rank or position, while avoiding ambiguous or equivocal language that may hinder consistent interpretation or application across United Nations operating contexts.
II	Informal	The Inspectors strongly request the organizations still permitting an exception to underage marriage for their personnel to eliminate this exception from relevant policy documents.
II	Informal	The Inspectors suggest that PSEA policies clearly state that solicitation of transactional sex, including from sex workers, is not tolerated in United Nations system organizations, underlining that clarity may be necessary for organizations that operate where solicitation of sex workers is legal.
II	Informal	The Inspectors request that, to set consistent, realistic and clear expectations regarding the organizational stance and commitment to addressing sexual misconduct, participating organizations either fully define "zero tolerance" or use more accessible language in their PSEA policies and outreach and training materials as well as their disciplinary procedures related to SEA.
II	Informal	PSEA policy should focus on the prohibited conduct, rather than on the status of the victim and/or setting of the misconduct.
II	Informal	The Inspectors encourage organizations to incorporate a victim-centred approach in their PSEA policies and internal oversight charters and to develop corresponding standard operating procedures.
II	Informal	Given its system-wide influence and external reach, the Secretary-General should consider the findings in the present review when revising the 2003 bulletin.
II	Formal	Recommendation 2: Executive heads of United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2027, review sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment policies to more broadly cover sexual misconduct by focusing on the prohibited conduct of personnel, affirming victims' rights, defining "zero tolerance" and incorporating good practices, such as those related to protection against retaliation and the improper use of technology.

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Recommendation statement</i>
II	Formal	Recommendation 3: At the beginning of 2028, legislative organs and/or governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should request an update from the executive heads of their respective organization with regard to progress made in reviewing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment policies as well as any change management procedures associated with the revisions.
III	Informal	The Inspectors advise the United Nations Secretariat to clarify the roles and responsibilities with respect to PSEA within the organization, giving strong consideration to the fact that the Special Coordinator has a system-wide mandate.
III	Informal	As the Victims' Rights Advocate holds a system-wide mandate rather than an operational role within individual organizations, the Inspectors advise the United Nations Secretariat, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC to assign roles and responsibilities within their own structures for providing assistance to victims of SEA perpetrated by their own personnel, and to clearly define these responsibilities to ensure effective support in line with a victim-centred approach.
III	Formal	Recommendation 4: By the end of 2026, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should take individual and/or collective action, in consultation with the executive heads of other CEB organizations, preferably within the framework of existing inter-agency mechanisms, to comprehensively address and coordinate with regard to the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (sexual misconduct) and create a new strategy that builds on the approach set out in the Secretary-General's 2017 report ( <a href="#">A/71/818</a> and <a href="#">A/71/818/Corr.1</a> ), focusing on prevention, response and integrating a victim-centred approach.
III	Formal	Recommendation 5: By the end of 2026, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should take individual and/or collective action in consultation with the executive heads of other CEB member organizations, preferably within the framework of existing inter-agency coordination mechanisms, to establish a working group to address the coherence and harmonization of SEA data, including what data are reported and in what context, when allegations should be entered and updated as well as the addition of data fields and functions to improve the analysis, transparency and integrity of SEA data.
III	Informal	The Inspectors advise the Special Coordinator to ensure systematic reporting on SEA allegations to the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators and inter-agency PSEA coordinators, particularly to support the development of annual PSEA action plans.
III	Formal	Recommendation 6: At its eighty-first session, the General Assembly should request that all allegations of SEA in United Nations Secretariat entities be recorded in the iReport SEA Tracker and included in the Secretary General's annual report on special measures for PSEA.
IV	Informal	The Secretary-General should ensure these letters are stored in a centralized, publicly accessible repository, and should request that they give greater emphasis to reflections regarding responses to SEA and how victims' rights are upheld.
IV	Informal	The Inspectors call on JIU participating organizations with a field presence that have not yet done so to consider formally delegating roles and responsibilities related to PSEA to senior management outside headquarters and providing necessary resources.
IV	Formal	Recommendation 7: By the end of 2026, the Secretary-General should commission a report with regard to the feasibility of establishing shared and/or common services to support sustained and regular funding for inter-agency PSEA coordinators in high-risk and priority countries.

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Recommendation statement</i>
V	Informal	Since affiliate personnel play a vital role in supporting the United Nations system in fulfilling its mandate, participating organizations are encouraged to require PSEA training among their affiliate personnel.
V	Informal	Participating organizations are encouraged to initiate or continue providing mandatory PSEA training while also delivering additional context-specific capacity-building and awareness-raising activities for their personnel and ensuring that a victim-centred approach is incorporated.
V	Informal	JIU participating organizations are encouraged to develop and implement outreach and training materials tailored to government implementing partners and vendors.
V	Informal	The Inspectors encourage executive heads to use change management principles to implement updated policies and procedures for the prevention of and response to sexual misconduct, including using context-specific training for their personnel and innovative outreach strategies.
VI	Informal	The Inspectors call on JIU participating organizations that do not yet have their own standard operating procedures for ClearCheck to develop such procedures, reflecting their own context, policies and functions.
VI	Informal	Participating organizations should, at a minimum, apply risk-based criteria to determine the scope of their ClearCheck processes, ensuring thorough vetting of affiliate personnel who have access to beneficiaries or other vulnerable populations
VI	Formal	Recommendation 8: At the beginning of 2026, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should take individual and/or collective action, in consultation with the executive heads of other CEB organizations, preferably within the framework of inter-agency mechanisms, to agree on system-wide coherence and harmonization of ClearCheck procedures, including with respect to entering subjects, name removal procedures, screening of affiliate personnel categories as well as the potential expansion of its use to include other types of misconduct.
VI	Informal	JIU participating organizations should consider participating in the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme and Project Soteria in order to vet candidates who have worked in non-governmental and civil society organizations as well as to share information on subjects entered into ClearCheck with members of the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme and Project Soteria.
VI	Formal	Recommendation 9: Executive heads of United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2026, conduct an assessment of the mechanisms used for screening and vetting of personnel for substantiated sexual misconduct allegations, including identifying types of personnel to be screened and determining gaps as well as risks in not implementing the most comprehensive vetting and screening procedures.
VII	Informal	The Inspectors commend the efforts of some participating organizations in developing SEA risk assessment methodologies. However, the frequency and depth of these assessments require further examination, as these directly influence the quality and effectiveness of PSEA action plans.
VII	Informal	Participating organizations should review their current cooperative agreements and strengthen the accountability of implementing partners for PSEA, while ensuring the incorporation of a victim-centred approach.

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Recommendation statement</i>
VII	Informal	JIU participating organizations are encouraged to establish, at minimum, a risk-based screening process and/or a set of minimum requirements for their implementing partners with respect to PSEA capacity.
VII	Informal	Sixteen organizations include an exception allowing vendor employees to engage in sexual activity with individuals under the age of 18 if they are legally married and the marriage is recognized under the laws of the employee's home country. While this is in line with the 2003 Bulletin, this exemption has already been removed from most organizations' staff regulations and rules. Participating organization should update their contractual terms and conditions accordingly and consider taking action to align their contractual terms and conditions with the upcoming revision of the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin.
VII	Informal	A risk-based approach should be adopted to prioritize the assessment of capacities for PSEA of vendors that pose a high risk of SEA.
VII	Formal	Recommendation 10: By the end of 2026, executive heads of United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should incorporate SEA into their enterprise risk management processes to identify and mitigate risks of SEA at different operational levels, including risks associated with implementing partners and vendors, to inform their PSEA action plans.
VIII	Informal	Participating organizations should conduct regular consultations with target populations on their access to complaint channels, also in collaboration with the respective inter-agency PSEA network.
VIII	Informal	The investigation units that have not yet done so should formulate a protocol or a standard operating procedure to formalize a victim-centred approach in their investigations.
VIII	Informal	Given that a significant proportion of SEA allegations involves implementing partner personnel, participating organizations should consider providing systematic support to strengthen the investigative capacity of implementing partners, including the incorporation of a victim-centred approach.
VIII	Informal	The Inspectors urge participating organizations that have not already done so to establish a defined timeline for determining disciplinary measures to be applied in sexual misconduct cases, for the purposes of internal accountability and expediency.
VIII	Informal	While acknowledging the rights of staff members under investigation, the presumption of innocence and the potential hardship that administrative leave without pay may impose, the Inspectors believe that a more rigorous approach could be adopted to impose administrative leave without pay when the established criteria are met.
VIII	Formal	Recommendation 11: By the end of 2026, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should assess: (a) the use of administrative leave without pay; (b) the criteria for imposing disciplinary measures in sexual misconduct cases; (c) the timeline from completion of an investigation to the imposition of disciplinary measures; and (d) the procedures in place for informing victims of measures taken.
VIII	Informal	The Victims' Rights Advocate should lead the revision of the 2019 protocol to clarify the United Nations system's approach to victim assistance, aiming to align it with the United Nations victims' rights statement.



<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Recommendation statement</i>
VIII	Formal	Recommendation 12: By the end of 2028, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should take collective action, in consultation with the executive heads of other members of the CEB, preferably within the framework of inter-agency mechanisms, to explore the establishment of an inter-agency pooled funding mechanism to assist victims of SEA.
IX	Formal	Recommendation 13: By the end of 2026, legislative organs and/or governing bodies should request that executive heads of United Nations system organizations produce an annual report on all disciplinary measures taken against their respective personnel for sexual misconduct, including the nature of the misconduct, whether subjects were added to the ClearCheck database of sexual misconduct records, any assistance provided to victims and the number of all relevant criminal referrals made to the competent national authorities.
IX	Informal	The Inspectors respectfully request Member States to provide timely and detailed updates on the criminal cases that have been referred to them, in order to enhance transparency and accountability within the United Nations system with regard to its personnel with substantiated SEA allegations.
IX	Informal	The Inspectors encourage governing bodies of specialized agencies that do not have in place proper policies and procedures that are based on their legal frameworks and aligned with principles, such as taking a victim-centred approach, to request that their executive heads establish policies and/or procedures for making criminal referrals concerning SEA allegations to national authorities.
IX	Informal	Member States should proactively engage with the United Nations Secretariat to address the gaps in policies and procedures inherent in the deployment of troops under the auspices of the Security Council and develop policies and training with regard to PSEA that will apply to all non-United Nations forces operating under a United Nations mandate.
IX	Formal	Recommendation 14: At its eighty-first session, the General Assembly should establish a mechanism to address the processes and procedures for adjudicating paternity and related support claims as a result of SEA involving personnel in peace operations, including the roles and responsibilities of the United Nations Secretariat, Member States and relevant parties when claims are made.
IX	Formal	Recommendation 15: At its eighty-second session, the General Assembly should consider endorsement of a new system-wide approach and strategy for addressing sexual misconduct that ensures a victim-centred approach, mobilizes inter-agency capabilities and capitalizes on available resources.

