

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

The United Nations defines sexual exploitation “any actual or attempted abuse of 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 persons of concern”, and sexual abuse as “the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force, or under unequal coercive conditions”.

OCHA is committed to a global system of accountability towards its beneficiaries and in line with the UN Secretary-General's PSEA strategy. For this reason, it has adopted a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse, determined to take all appropriate measures to eradicate these wrongdoings and to fully respond to any incident perpetrated by its aid workers.

Professional and Ethical Standards

All OCHA staff must always adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards as set out in the six core IASC-adopted PSEA principles:



Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute **acts of gross misconduct** and are therefore grounds for dismissal and termination of employment.



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 defense.



Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is **prohibited**. This includes prostitution, even if it is legal in the country.



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**.



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.



Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an **environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse** and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this.