



# administrative circular

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## PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (PSEA)

### I. Introduction

1. This Policy sets out the Organization's responsibilities and approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) constitutes a fundamental breach of the human rights of those affected by it. SEA in all its forms is contrary to [Article I of the Staff Regulations](#) and the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service ([Administrative Manual Section 304 Appendix A](#)).
2. The Organization is strongly committed to taking all reasonable measures against SEA as part of its overall responsibility to uphold and safeguard the rights and dignity of the people it serves, as part of its commitment to accountability to affected people. This Policy therefore aims to prevent SEA in all its forms, to mitigate risks of SEA, and to ensure a prompt response to allegations, incidents, and concerns involving SEA.
3. When SEA occurs, it can cause severe and long-lasting harm to the people that the Organization serves pursuant to its mandate. At the centre of this Policy is therefore a commitment to the rights, needs, safety, dignity, and well-being of Victims/Survivors of SEA, in line with the Victim/Survivor-centred approach of the United Nations (UN) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).
4. Risks of SEA are especially high in complex humanitarian emergency contexts, where power imbalances between people in need of assistance and services and those providing such assistance are exacerbated. Women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons, and other groups at risk of exclusion are often at increased risk of SEA. Concerted efforts must therefore be made in these contexts to implement measures to actively prevent and address SEA. It is also recognised that PSEA must be firmly integrated in all other operational contexts, including development programmes.

### II. Zero-Tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse

5. FAO has a "zero-tolerance" policy towards any form of SEA and for inaction on SEA by its personnel and by the employees of entities working with or providing services to the Organization across all programmes, projects, and activities. Such acts constitute serious misconduct and, when substantiated,

are grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal, or termination of contract. Any allegation of SEA that comes to the attention of the Organization will be addressed as promptly, fairly, and effectively as possible, in accordance with this Policy and applicable rules and procedures.

6. The Organization is firmly committed to implementing strong prevention measures against SEA. It is also recognized that risks of SEA must be effectively mitigated on an ongoing and proactive basis, and that robust and Victim/Survivor-centred response and accountability mechanisms must be in place.

### III. Definitions

7. For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:
  - i. *Child/Children* means a person or persons under the age of 18, regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally.
  - ii. *FAO Personnel* refers to staff members and other personnel within the meaning of Staff Regulation 301.13.6, including Consultants under Manual Section 317, National Project Personnel under Manual Section 375, as well as subscribers to Personal Services Agreements under Manual Section 319, interns, volunteers, and any other individual engaged directly by the Organization.
  - iii. *Sexual abuse* is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.
  - iv. *Sexual exploitation* is 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.
  - v. *Victim/Survivor* is a person who is or has been sexually exploited or abused. This Policy uses the terminology Victim/Survivor, recognizing the right of those who have experienced SEA to choose to identify themselves as either.
8. The [UN Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) may be consulted for a full list of definitions.

### IV. Scope and application

9. This Policy applies to all FAO Personnel at all times, both during and outside working hours, at the duty station and away from the duty station.
10. This Policy sets out FAO's commitments in relation to Operational Partners (Manual Section 701), Service Providers (Manual Section 507), Vendors (Manual Section 502), as well as other entities with which the Organization enters into contracts or agreements, and the employees of such entities, throughout all activities and operations of FAO in all contexts. For the purposes of this Policy, all references to "other entities" shall exclude donors to FAO.
11. This Policy is in line with the UN Secretary General's Bulletin "[Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse](#)" (ST/SGB/2003/13) and the 2017 Secretary-General's Report "[Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: a new approach](#)" (A/71/818).
12. The Director-General is one of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals and FAO has committed to IASC-endorsed standards and guidance on PSEA, as set out in this Policy. This includes IASC guidance and tools which are based on, and operationalize, the 2019 [UN Protocol on Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) and the 2018 [UN Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse involving Implementing Partners](#) ("UN Implementing Partners Protocol").

13. This Policy does not cover sexual harassment, which is covered by other directives of the Organization. In the context of the UN system, the term “sexual harassment” primarily refers to sexual misconduct against another member of personnel. SEA and sexual harassment are driven by the same power and gender inequalities, and the Organization recognizes the importance of comprehensively and holistically addressing both.

## V. Core Principles and Approaches

### A. *The Six Core Principles*

14. The IASC has established six Core Principles on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The [Six Core Principles](#) were updated in 2019 and are as follows:

- i. Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers **constitute acts of gross misconduct and are, therefore, grounds for termination of employment.**
- ii. **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.
- iii. **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 the exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries. (This also means that exchange of money for sex is prohibited, including hiring prostitutes.)
- iv. 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.
- v. 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.**
- vi. 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 responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

15. The Six Core Principles are not intended as an exhaustive list. Other types of sexually exploitative or sexually abusive behaviour, including online/technology-enabled abuse and exploitation, such as sending sexual content or requests, also constitute SEA and are considered serious misconduct. **These principles apply to all FAO Personnel in all settings, including headquarters and all Decentralized Offices.**

### B. *A Victim/Survivor-centred Approach*

16. The Organization is committed to ensuring a Victim/Survivor-centred and rights-based approach to all engagement with Victims/Survivors of SEA from the moment FAO is made aware of an allegation, incident, or concern. A victim/survivor-centred approach places the rights, wishes, needs, safety, dignity, and wellbeing of the Victim/Survivor at the centre of all SEA prevention and response measures. At all times the **central principle of ‘do no harm’** must be applied (see Section VII below).

## VI. Roles and Responsibilities

### A. *Organizational Leadership on PSEA*

17. The Organization is committed to pursuing a comprehensive and proactive approach to prevent and respond to SEA, including through:
  - i. PSEA training and awareness for all FAO Personnel.
  - ii. Ensuring vetting and reference-checking of all FAO Personnel prior to hiring.
  - iii. Ensuring adequate safeguards when engaging with Operational Partners, Vendors, and Service Providers, as well as other entities with which the Organization enters into a contract or agreement.
  - iv. In line with the Organization's commitments on accountability to affected people, ensuring awareness and engagement with communities where the Organization's work is being implemented, and that beneficiaries are regularly informed of FAO's prohibition of SEA and how they can safely and confidentially report SEA.
  - v. Ensuring that the rights, needs, safety, dignity, and well-being of Victims/Survivors are central to all the Organization's efforts to prevent and address SEA, including, where appropriate, referring Victim/Survivors for assistance and/or provision of other support.
  - vi. Ensuring that all allegations of SEA that are reported to the Organization, or that the Organization becomes aware of, are duly investigated, where appropriate, and in cases where SEA is substantiated, measures to ensure accountability are promptly taken in line with applicable rules and policies.
18. The **Director-General** has overall accountability for ensuring the Organization's PSEA commitments are met. Leadership and a comprehensive, cross-organizational approach are essential to effectively preventing and responding to SEA.
19. As announced in [Director-General's Bulletin 2021/31](#) and set out in [Appendix U to Manual Section 146](#), a **Committee on Workplace Conduct and PSEA** has been established to oversee organization-wide work in these areas.
20. A **Deputy Director-General** is appointed by the Director-General as the Organization's **Champion for PSEA** and participates in IASC mechanisms on PSEA. This Deputy Director-General chairs the Committee on Workplace Conduct and PSEA, provides oversight and monitoring of the Organization's prevention of and response to SEA, promotes PSEA as a priority across the Organization, and ensures that financial and human resources are allocated and that appropriate mechanisms are implemented to prevent, mitigate, and respond to SEA in all areas of the Organization's work.
21. The **Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER)** is the designated office for PSEA coordination within the Organization. The Director, OER, chairs a Working Group on PSEA that reports to the Committee on Workplace Conduct and PSEA. OER coordinates the development of an annual organizational PSEA Action Plan and oversees its implementation, monitoring, and reporting. OER provides technical support on PSEA to Decentralized Offices and to Centres/Offices/Divisions at headquarters, and develops, delivers, and facilitates PSEA capacity building, including training, awareness, and related activities.
22. Each member of FAO Personnel plays an essential role in preventing and responding to SEA. In addition, some Offices/Centres/Divisions at headquarters, have additional and specific responsibilities, as detailed below.

*B. All FAO Personnel*

23. It is incumbent upon all FAO Personnel to:

- i. Comply with this Policy and follow the Code of Ethical Conduct, as well as the rules and policies referenced therein.
- ii. Treat communities and beneficiaries with dignity and respect at all times.
- iii. In their daily work, support efforts to foster an ethical and respectful working environment that actively raises awareness and discourages SEA and other forms of misconduct.
- iv. Complete mandatory training and take part in annual awareness or refresher training sessions on PSEA.
- v. Promptly report in good faith all allegations, concerns, or suspicions regarding acts of SEA via established mechanisms (see Section VII below).
- vi. At all times, respect the strict confidentiality of information involving SEA.
- vii. Cooperate fully with the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in its review of allegations involving SEA.

*C. Managers and Supervisors*

24. In addition to the above, managers and supervisors at all levels and in all offices, including Decentralized Offices, must:

- i. Ensure that all FAO Personnel under their supervision are informed of, and regularly reminded of, the contents of the present Policy.
- ii. Act as role models by making every reasonable effort to create and maintain an environment that actively prevents SEA and fosters a “speak up” culture where personnel under their supervision are actively encouraged to report misconduct and receive information regarding the Whistleblower Protection Policy (Administrative Circular 2021/10 corr. 2).
- iii. Ensure that all FAO Personnel under their supervision complete mandatory training and annual awareness or training sessions on PSEA.
- iv. Ensure that when entering into contracts or agreements, counterpart entities are made aware of the Organization’s requirements on PSEA and the expectation that they will fulfil their obligations on PSEA as set out in contracts or agreements.
- v. Ensure that all incidents of alleged SEA that come to their attention are referred immediately to OIG.

*D. Heads of Decentralized Offices and PSEA Focal Points*

25. The **Heads of Decentralized Offices** (Assistant Directors-General/Regional Representatives, Subregional Representatives, FAO Representatives, Heads of Liaison Offices) have overall responsibility for implementing this Policy in their respective areas of responsibility.

26. Heads of Decentralized Offices oversee the integration of prevention, mitigation, and response to SEA into country operations and programme/project activities, including those carried out by any entities with which the Organization enters into contracts or agreements, and ensure that beneficiaries receive information about PSEA, their rights, and how and where to safely report on SEA. Financial resources should be allocated to support activities.

27. Heads of Decentralized Offices must appoint a **PSEA Focal Point** and **Alternate** for the Decentralized Office. PSEA Focal Points should have sufficient seniority (at least grade P3/P4 or senior National Professional Officer), be allocated sufficient time to carry out PSEA responsibilities and, where possible, have relevant experience. Due consideration must be given to gender balance in selecting the PSEA Focal

Point and Alternate. Heads of Decentralized Offices may appoint additional PSEA Focal Points for sub/field offices, as needed.

28. PSEA Focal Points have [Terms of Reference](#) pursuant to which they support the Head of Office in developing and implementing an annual PSEA work plan for the office, as well as participation in the UN/Humanitarian Country Team Inter-Agency PSEA Network (where there is one), and inter-agency initiatives to collectively strengthen PSEA. Key PSEA Focal Point responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
  - i. PSEA Focal Points provide technical support to integrate PSEA in all areas of country operations and projects/programmes.
  - ii. PSEA Focal Points are also responsible for delivering training on PSEA annually with all Personnel in the Decentralized Office.
  - iii. PSEA Focal Points may also receive allegations or concerns of SEA at the country level and must promptly report such information to OIG.
29. The PSEA Focal Point and Alternate must include this role as part of their annual work plan and performance evaluation. When a PSEA Focal Point or Alternate leaves their position, a new Focal Point/Alternate must promptly be appointed, and a handover conducted.
30. Heads of Decentralized Offices are responsible for ensuring that the officers responsible for contracts and agreements entered into by Decentralized Offices ensure that applicable due diligence procedures are followed, and that measures to prevent and respond to SEA are addressed in all contracts and agreements as appropriate, with technical support from the PSEA Focal Point as necessary.
31. Heads of Decentralized Offices are responsible for ensuring that Victims/Survivors and community members receive appropriate and accessible information about their rights and the conduct and behaviour expected of all FAO Personnel.
32. Heads of Decentralized Offices must also ensure that community members have access to safe, confidential, and appropriate mechanisms for sharing allegations or concerns about SEA. Such mechanisms may include complaints and feedback mechanisms or grievance and redress mechanisms at country level. Decentralized Offices should also participate in inter-agency community-based complaint mechanisms (CBCMs), where such mechanisms are established by the UN Country Team or Humanitarian Country Team Inter-Agency PSEA Network
33. Any complaint and feedback mechanism that is established by a Decentralized Office must have clear procedures for how to handle allegations of SEA safely and confidentially, which include:
  - i. Ensuring that all allegations regarding SEA are directly reported to OIG.
  - ii. Measures to consider the safety and protection of the individual reporting.
  - iii. Ensuring that procedures are in place to refer Victims/Survivors for appropriate assistance, where required and with the informed consent of the Victim/Survivor.
  - iv. Ensuring personnel involved in feedback mechanisms have received training on PSEA.

## E. Other roles and responsibilities

### *Human Resources Division (CSH)*

34. CSH is responsible for:

- i. Together with the hiring unit, ensuring that FAO's commitment to PSEA is reflected in Vacancy Announcements and during the selection process, as part of which candidates are required to disclose any prior misconduct.
- ii. Together with the hiring unit, screening all selected candidates for prior misconduct in accordance with [Administrative Circular 2021/04 – Procedures for the Use of the ClearCheck Screening Database](#) and other applicable directives.
- iii. Proposing interim measures as necessary, including suspension from duty pending investigation, as provided for in Staff Rule 303.0.3.
- iv. Initiating disciplinary or administrative action as appropriate and including records in the ClearCheck Screening Database as necessary.

### *Project Support Services Division (PSS)*

35. PSS is responsible for:

- i. Ensuring due diligence is part of relevant procedures.
- ii. Ensuring assessment of capacity of Operational Partners to prevent and respond to SEA, before entering into agreements, with technical support from OER as necessary.
- iii. Ensuring agreements with Operational Partners reflect FAO's commitment to PSEA and include relevant provisions (see Section IX below).

### *Logistics Services Division (CSL)*

36. The Logistics Services Division (Procurement and Letters of Agreement Unit - CSLP) is responsible for:

- i. Ensuring PSEA due diligence is part of relevant procedures.
- ii. Ensuring that the appropriate PSEA screenings or checks are conducted in respect of Vendors and Service Providers that fall under CSLP's responsibility.
- iii. Ensuring templates for contracts and agreements with Vendors and Service Providers include relevant provisions on PSEA to reflect FAO's commitments (see Section IX below).

### *Office of the Inspector General (OIG)*

37. OIG reviews, and investigates as appropriate, all allegations that it receives concerning alleged acts of SEA by any member of FAO Personnel or by employees of Operational Partners, Vendors and Service Providers (other than state actors and other UN entities).

38. OIG investigative activities into allegations of SEA are conducted in accordance with Administrative Circular 2021/06 – *FAO Investigation Guidelines* and in line with a Victim/Survivor-centered approach. As part of this, throughout the investigative process, OIG will keep the Victim/Survivor informed of key investigative steps and of the outcome of its preliminary review and investigation, as appropriate and possible.

39. Reports received by OIG that do not fall within OIG's investigative mandate will be referred to a competent entity wherever possible and appropriate, in line with strict confidentiality and the need-to-know principles set out in this Policy. This includes allegations of SEA that pertain to other UN system organizations, or external parties.

*Ethics Office*

40. The Ethics Office promotes awareness and understanding of ethics across the Organization, including with regard to PSEA. The Ethics Office also plays an important role in ensuring that any member of FAO Personnel who reports SEA in good faith to OIG, or who cooperates with duly authorized investigative or oversight activities, is protected from retaliation in line with [Administrative Circular 2021/10 corr. 2 – Whistleblower Protection Policy](#).

## **VII. Reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse**

### **A. Mandatory reporting**

41. All FAO Personnel have an obligation to immediately report any allegation, concern or suspicion of SEA that has become known to them involving other FAO Personnel, other UN entities, or employees of any entity that has a contract or agreement with FAO.
42. Reports should be made as soon as possible, preferably within 48 hours of becoming aware of the information, while ensuring the application of a Victim/Survivor-centred approach. Reports may be made via any of the established channels (see paragraph 46 below).
43. National and local governments in locations where a humanitarian or development response is underway may have laws that require SEA to be reported. The authority to report SEA to national authorities for investigation and/or prosecution lies with the Director-General, in line with the privileges and immunities of the Organization (see [Administrative Circular 2024/04 – Referral of Alleged Criminal Conduct to National Authorities for Investigation and Possible Prosecution](#)).

### **B. Making a Report**

44. Any member of FAO Personnel with information, concerns, or suspicions involving SEA must promptly report these to OIG or to a PSEA Focal Point, who must immediately refer the information to OIG.
45. Victims/Survivors of SEA as well as any member of the community/public may report concerns of possible SEA, including through mechanisms that are established locally. Entities that have entered into contracts or agreements with FAO must immediately report allegations of SEA to the Organization, as required under the terms of their contract or agreement.
46. Reports must be made through the hotline, by telephone, email, mail, or in person, as follows:

**FAO Hotline (<https://https.fao.ethicspoint.com> – an independent third-party site)**  
**Email: [investigations-hotline@fao.org](mailto:investigations-hotline@fao.org)**  
**Office of the Inspector General (OIG)**  
**Building A, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor (room A412)**  
**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**  
**Viale delle Terme di Caracalla**  
**00153 Rome, Italy**

47. Information regarding allegations or concerns of SEA may be reported anonymously; however, because anonymous reports are harder to investigate, those reporting such information are encouraged to identify themselves, knowing that their names will be kept confidential, and that measures may be put in place to protect them against retaliation.

48. Any form of retaliation is not tolerated. Any member of FAO Personnel reporting SEA in good faith pursuant to this Policy has the right to be protected from retaliation in accordance with the Whistleblower Protection Policy.

*C. Strict confidentiality*

49. It is important to make every effort to ensure that no harm, including potential physical, mental, and emotional harm, comes to the Victim/Survivor, complainant, if different, or to any witnesses, through information-sharing. This also ensures due process for the alleged perpetrator.

50. All SEA-related case information, including the personally identifiable information of the Victim/Survivor or the complainant, if different, the alleged perpetrator, and any witnesses, must be protected and kept strictly confidential, in accordance with [Administrative Circular 2022/06 – Data Protection Policy](#).

51. Personally Identifiable Information pertaining to the Victim/Survivor, complainant, alleged perpetrator, or witnesses is particularly sensitive and should only be collected, documented, and shared in a strictly confidential manner with OIG. Information pertaining to SEA allegations may be further shared on a strictly “need to-know” basis, and in a manner consistent with the Victim/Survivor-centred approach. This means that such information may be shared beyond OIG only to FAO Personnel who have a “need-to-know” based on their duties and responsibilities.

52. Documents and material related to SEA allegations, both paper-based and electronic, should only be accessible to authorized persons and must be stored safely to prevent accidental or unauthorized disclosure. Digital storage must be on a secure FAO corporate server. In case of physical filing cabinets, these should be always locked and accessible only with a key managed by an authorized individual. Where electronic records are kept, access to the data storage should be of equivalent security, such as provisions for access control and limitation and password protection.

53. The duty of confidentiality continues after a matter has been closed and after employment with the Organization ends. Failure to comply with the duty of confidentiality may result in disciplinary or other administrative action.

*D. Information-sharing on SEA allegations*

54. Information-sharing regarding allegations of SEA and any related findings must be in line with established procedures and with due consideration for the safety, security, privacy and due process rights of any concerned persons and the integrity of investigative activities.

55. Information on SEA should never be shared outside the UN system, except by those who are specifically authorized to do so as part of their official functions and in line with established procedures.

56. Allegations of SEA are reported under the [UN Allegations Reporting Mechanism](#), which publishes anonymized data on allegations received by the UN, where there is sufficient information to identify an act of SEA against an identifiable perpetrator or identifiable victim. OIG is responsible for entering allegations of SEA into the UN Allegations Reporting Mechanism on behalf of the Organization.

57. In consultation with OIG, Heads of Decentralized Offices should also share allegations of SEA with the senior-most UN representative in the country, in line with [UN guidance for sharing SEA allegations](#).

58. To ensure accountability, in accordance with agreements concluded with donors and principles of transparency and accountability, the headquarters office responsible for funding liaison, OIG and the relevant Head of Decentralized Office will coordinate regarding applicable donor reporting obligations.

## **VIII. Victim/Survivor-centred Approach**

59. In the context of this Policy, a Victim/Survivor-centred approach involves:

- i. Ensuring that the **safety, security, and well-being** of the Victim/Survivor are primary considerations. The principle of “**do no harm**” applies to all communications, referral for assistance, investigations, or other accountability processes. This includes taking steps, as necessary and possible, to ensure the physical security of the Victim/Survivor.
- ii. All actions taken must be guided by **respect for the dignity, choices, wishes, needs, rights, culture, and values of the Victim/Survivor**, and consider their informed choices as a central priority.
- iii. All Victims/Survivors of SEA are entitled to receive **assistance, services, and support** in line with the principle of informed consent. This is the case irrespective of whether the Victim/Survivor initiates or cooperates with an investigation or any other accountability procedure. Services include, but are not limited to, health, mental health, and psychosocial support (MHPSS), Gender-based Violence (GBV) case management, and/or material and financial assistance that may be needed by the Victim/Survivor.
- iv. **Non-discrimination and inclusion:** All Victims/Survivors must receive equal and fair treatment, regardless of their gender, sex, age, cultural, ethnic, or geographical background, or sexual orientation.
- v. **Redress:** Victims/Survivors have the right to pursue accountability processes in addition to, or separate from, any FAO investigation process that may be initiated, and irrespective of the latter’s outcome.
- vi. **Rights of the child:** Assistance and support to child Victims/Survivors (under 18 years of age) must be provided in a manner consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In all cases involving children, the “best interest of child” must be assessed and considered in all matters that concern them.

### *A. Informed consent*

60. All Victims/Survivors have the right to information that enables them to make informed decisions about their lives, health, well-being, and participation in processes that affect them. This involves making every effort to provide the Victim/Survivor, or complainant if different, with appropriate information in an accessible format to allow them to make decisions throughout the reporting and investigation process.

61. Victims/Survivors should therefore also be informed of the limitations to confidentiality, and the mandatory reporting requirements for SEA, as early as possible. Victims/Survivors have the right to be informed of how the information they disclose will be used. It is recognized that the mandatory requirement to report SEA may at times be at odds with the wishes of the Victim/Survivor. In such cases, the Organization will explain the reasons for the course of action to the Victim/Survivor as clearly and as early as possible.

62. In cases where it is deemed that the safety of the Victim/Survivor or the complainant, if different, is at immediate risk due to possible actions by the alleged offender and/or other factors, it may be necessary for the Organization to proceed with an investigation or take other steps to mitigate the risk of further harm, without informed consent. At all times, the principle of “do no harm” must be respected.

*B. Victim/Survivor assistance and support*

63. The Organization is committed to providing protection, assistance, and support to Victims/Survivors of SEA perpetrated by FAO Personnel or by employees of entities carrying out activities on behalf of, or providing services to, the Organization. Assistance is provided in accordance with the principle of informed consent and independent of the participation of the Victim/Survivor in any accountability processes.
64. Access to appropriate assistance and support for Victims/Survivors of SEA will be facilitated using established referral pathways to specialist GBV, child protection, health, psychosocial or other required services, depending on identified needs and expressed wishes of the Victim/Survivor, at the country level, in line with the [UN Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of SEA](#).
65. PSEA Focal Points should ensure that referral pathways for Victim/Survivor assistance and services are identified through the Inter-Agency PSEA Network, where this is established. In contexts where there is no Inter-Agency PSEA Network, they should engage with appropriate UN agencies, governmental or non-governmental entities to identify safe referral pathways for Victims/Survivors of SEA. Where possible and required, the PSEA Focal Point should work with technical specialists such as a GBV Specialist or Child Protection Specialist to support safe, dignified, and appropriate referral for assistance and services for Victims/ Survivors of SEA.
66. If requested by OIG, the PSEA Focal Point will facilitate referral of a Victim/Survivor for appropriate assistance and support. Heads of Decentralized Offices must ensure that resources are available to provide basic support, if required, such as emergency transportation, requirements for interim safe shelter, health assistance, material, and other support.

**IX. Entities working with FAO**

67. The Organization is committed to taking all reasonable measures to protect beneficiaries and local communities from acts of SEA by the employees of entities that have contracts or agreements with FAO for the provision of services or the implementation of projects across all operational contexts. In confirmed cases of SEA by an employee of an entity working with the Organization, FAO may take action pursuant to the entity's contract or agreement with FAO.
68. Contracts and agreements with Operational Partners, Vendors, Service Providers, and other entities with which FAO enters into contracts or agreements, must reflect the Organization's expectations of the entity in relation to PSEA, as appropriate (other than UN entities). These include:
  - i. taking effective measures to prevent SEA;
  - ii. promptly informing the Organization of any allegation and, in cases where an internal investigation is conducted by the entity, informing the Organization of the outcome of the investigation, including providing OIG with a copy of any investigative report, as relevant, and
  - iii. where misconduct is found to have occurred, taking disciplinary and/or corrective action, as appropriate.
69. In line with the UN Implementing Partners Protocol, due diligence procedures must be followed in respect of all entities (in particular, Operational Partners and relevant Service Providers) that have contact with communities to assess their capacity to prevent, respond to and mitigate risks of SEA prior

to entering into an agreement with that entity. Where necessary and appropriate, capacity building and monitoring support should be provided.

70. Officers responsible for contracts and agreements must ensure that due diligence procedures are followed, as set out in guidance to be issued in the near future, and that measures to prevent and respond to SEA are addressed in all contracts and agreements, as appropriate.

## **X. Entry into Force**

71. To integrate learning from cumulative experience and to ensure the Organization continues to align with and adopt best practices on PSEA from the UN system-wide approach and the IASC, this policy will be reviewed and, as required, updated every two years.

This Administrative Circular supersedes Administrative Circular 2013/27 – *Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (PSEA)* and Administrative Circular 2018/02 – *Zero tolerance on Sexual Harassment and SEA* to the extent that the latter relate to PSEA.