

AAP and PSEA Tip Sheet

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1. AIM AND AUDIENCE

This Tip Sheet was prepared by the GFSC Protection Task Force to provide guidance to cluster coordinators and national-level FS clusters' partners on concrete steps to integrate AAP and PSEA into their work. Key tools and guidance documents are also included for more in-depth reference.

2. KEY CONCEPTS

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) is a term used by the UN and NGO community to refer to measures taken to protect people in vulnerable situations from sexual exploitation and abuse by staff and associated personnel or representatives.

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) is an active commitment by humanitarian actors to use power responsibly by taking into account, and being held to account by, the people they seek to assist.

3. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Conflict, disasters and other emergency situations have profoundly different impacts on women, men, girls, boys, people with disabilities and other at-risk groups. Often these situations amplify existing vulnerabilities and risk undermining food and nutrition security and access to basic needs.

During emergencies the relationship between food security actors and affected populations is characterized by extreme power inequality and risks of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) are amplified since humanitarian agencies are perceived as the main actor determining who has access (or not) to humanitarian assistance.

SEA is a form of gender-based violence (GBV) committed against affected or target population by humanitarian, development and peacebuilding workers and it also includes any persons with a contractual relationship with an organisation, including international and national NGO staff and other third parties, such as contractors. Exchange to provide sex in exchange for food.

AAP means implementing measures to ensure that humanitarian organizations are sharing relevant, reliable and timely programme information through two-way communication, involving the affected people in decisions that affect them through wide consultative and inclusive processes and that there is a safe and accessible and effective community-based feedback mechanism.

All food security interventions, regardless of their modality (cash, vouchers or in-kind assistance as well as direct services provision) expose people to certain risks, including those of sexual abuse and exploitation due to the perceived value of food assistance and power imbalances inherent within the humanitarian sector.

4. AAP/PSEA IN FOOD SECURITY HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING

This tip sheet recommends measures to be employed throughout the humanitarian programme cycle to ensure international, national and local FS actors and programmes are fulfilling their commitments on AAP and PSEA, first and foremost the [Core Humanitarian Standards](#).

The fundamental elements of what constitute AAP are also what constitute an effective system for PSEA and the responses are often intertwined. AAP measures such as community engagement, participation, information provision, feedback and complaints mechanism are the cornerstone of a strong approach to PSEA; in other words, a good quality programme that uses power responsibly, ensures that SEA risks are mitigated, including respecting the inherent dignity, safety, aspirations and capacities of communities and staff alike, and ensuring that no one is left behind.



4.1 Community Engagement, Information & Participation

- ☞ Ensure active, meaningful and all-inclusive participation of communities, including the most at-risk in designing, implementing and monitoring FS programmes, safely engage with women, girls, men and boys separately¹ in key decisions regarding the programmes such as: determining the closest, safest and most accessible location and time for the delivery of food assistance, choosing the safest modality and delivery mechanisms or designing user-centred feedback and complaint mechanisms.
- ☞ Ensure the most at-risk groups are effectively and safely informed about their entitlements/ rights (including the right to confidentiality) and the responsibilities and expected behaviors of aid workers. The target community must also be informed about the targeting criteria, duration and process for the implementation of food security interventions in order to foster greater transparency. Information on PSEA should also always be publicly provided (e.g., explaining that communities do not have to provide services or favours in exchange for receiving food rations.) and the agreed upon Feedback and Complaints mechanisms (e.g., the available modalities for reporting cases of sexual abuse and exploitation as well as general feedback and complaints).
- ☞ Ensure that all information is provided in a range of inclusive channels and formats (e.g., radio broadcasts, plays, illustrations) and in the local language(s) to ensure accurate and timely information reaches the most at-risk communities, particularly children, women and people with disabilities indigenous people/ marginalized communities and/or communities with minority affiliations.
- ☞ Ensure that food security related committees² reflect the diverse composition of the community in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic group, etc.
- ☞ Ensure all FSA personnel who engage with affected populations have access to written information about where to refer survivors for care and support.
- ☞ Ensure that F&C mechanisms are accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities, women, men children



4.2 Feedback and Complaint (F&C) Mechanisms

- ☞ Ensure that F&C mechanisms are accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities, women, men children, older people, as well as people from distinguished or socially excluded groups. F&C mechanisms should be relevant

¹ Consider inter community power dynamics in separating groups

² Group of community level people selected to support the implementation of food security projects and acting as a community-level partner to share information, mobilise and select beneficiary households and ensure transparency, ownership and sustainability of food security interventions.

to language (including non-verbal forms of communication), age, literacy level, culture, ethnic/clan dynamics of the affected population and should also aid to address barriers that may prevent people from reporting any concerns. This could include displaying information in formats that are accessible for communities with low levels of literacy, people with disabilities, children and people coming from an oral tradition, for example, by using braille, large-print text, image-based formats, play, drama, games, as well as radio and TV broadcasting.

F&C mechanisms contribute to adaptive programming (by adjusting programmes based on community feedback improved understanding of community perception, promoting enhanced accountability and assisting in the early detection of challenges such as SEA, fraud, and harassment. It is also critical to adopt an approach to F&C mechanisms that considers rapidly evolving emergency contexts and needs by ensuring consistent communication with and the active participation of the target community in designing the mechanisms.

- ☞ Seek the preferences of the affected people and built on local structures and existing systems of addressing issues in the community whenever possible, bearing in mind existing power dynamics to ensure that the most at-risk groups are not excluded. For example, certain groups such as women and children may face barriers accessing traditional reporting mechanisms in communities where men are the traditional power-holders.
- ☞ Ensure that FSA programmes sharing information about SEA-related reports follow appropriate procedures and abide by safety and ethical standards in order to protect the identity or the survivor and ensure that the survivor is not exposed to any additional security risk, including their families and the broader community.
- ☞ Adhere to Information Sharing and Data Protection protocols and Closing the Feedback Loop, providing timely and effective feedback to people using F&C channels to raise their concerns, provide their feedback or ask a question.



4.3 Analysis, Monitoring & Evaluation

- ☞ Ensure active coordination with local and national networks and actors, including the PSEA Network, Community Engagement Working Group, the Food Security Cluster if they are operational in the country.
- ☞ Ensure that coordinated information management, consultations and assessments adhere to Information Sharing and Data Protection protocols, are child and gender sensitive and inclusive of people with disabilities, older persons, and marginalized groups and communities with minority affiliations (such as indigenous peoples).
- ☞ SEA, accountability and inclusion considerations should be integrated in needs, market, Financial Service Providers (FSP) and risk assessments and response analysis with the aim to identify threats, vulnerabilities and capacities of the affected population, possible negative effects of various modalities of assistance (in-kind, cash or vouchers) as well as identifying effective mitigation measures at the project design stage. Potential risks include unsafe and long-distance routes to distribution sites, heavy weight of food rations exposing recipients to additional risk....These risks must be identified, regularly analysed, monitored and managed through effective risk mitigation plans throughout the programme cycle.
- ☞ Identify, collect and analyze a core set of indicators - disaggregated by sex, age and disability for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of risk-identification and mitigation activities in food security interventions.



4.4 Inclusive and Safer Programming

- ☞ Ensure reasonable adjustments for people at-risk, i.e., older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant and lactating women for example, by assessing the physical safety risks associated with FSA activities (e.g., distance to distribution sites, work times and locations) and providing reasonable accommodation to mitigate risks, such as the provision of free transport, home delivery of food items, peer-to-peer/accompaniment system for women and girls).
- ☞ Promote the active participation of women, people with disabilities, children and other at-risk groups in the planning, design and implementation of all FSA activities
- ☞ Ensure that distribution locations, times and procedures are designed and implemented to contribute to PSEA (e.g sex-segregated queues/location, food distributions conducted early in the day to allow women sufficient daylight time to return home).
- ☞ Ensure that the sex-composition of the food distribution team is always balanced. In addition, rotate distribution teams so no individual consistently visits the same community.
- ☞ Establish organisational field-level PSEA focal points in FS agencies who support the PSEA leads in receiving allegations and ensuring a safe environment during distributions.
- ☞ Ensure that training on the prevention of SEA is mandatory for all food security personnel and for participating agencies.



4.5 Capacity-building & Resource mobilisation

- ☞ Ensure all FS agencies staff, implementing partners, other relevant third parties such as contractors and volunteers working with affected populations understand, sign and adhere to a Code of Conduct.
- ☞ Ensure agencies and staff who undertake FS related activities have undertaken training on PSEA and associated policies, such as the Code of Conduct.
- ☞ Ensure codes of conduct are adapted and adequately communicated to communities in an inclusive manner with relevance to language, age and capacity.
- ☞ Recognise that the risk of SEA is linked to power differentials and gender inequalities and as such, ensure sufficient resources are allocated to capacitate staff, volunteers and partner organisations to provide safe, respectful and inclusive working environments free from sexual misconduct.
- ☞ Build SEA knowledge and awareness amongst affected communities. Engage people at-risk, where possible to tackle harmful social norms and power imbalances to prevent SEA.
- ☞ Consider the designation of a focal point on SEA at a field-level (in addition to the main country-level lead) to ensure additional support, capacity, and awareness-raising on SEA during food security-related activities.

5. PSEA REFERRAL AND RESPONSE

Holistic support to survivors requires coordination between legal, medical and psychosocial support actors. For agencies where protection is not part of its core mandate, but rather a cross-cutting concern, partnership and coordination play a crucial role. FS actors will necessarily have to rely on PSEA and/or GBV coordinators/specialists and/or protection actors for survivor assistance and referrals.

- ☞ While FS staff should not be directly involved in responding to SEA issues through providing survivors assistance or conducting investigations, it must be noted that within the UN and most NGOs there is mandatory reporting of SEA issues and it is extremely important for all FS actors to ensure timely and effective reporting to the appropriate agency focal point. SEA investigations are undertaken by dedicated and trained personnel, formally given the responsibility to undertake investigations based on the specific agency's procedures.

- ☞ Check that local survivor-centred services (case management, child protection, gender-based violence services, etc...) are available in the implementing area. Update service referral contact lists as necessary and make sure FS staff are aware of reporting procedures.
- ☞ Regularly engage with specialist organisations involved in service delivery (women's support groups, organisations for persons with disabilities). Many of these agencies and individuals will understand accessibility issues relative to the context and the nature of the intervention (i.e. food security) and will be working towards creating low-resource solutions for addressing these gaps.
- ☞ Ensure that there is an inter-agency agreement in place on complaint and survivor assistance referrals.

6. ROLE OF THE FSC/S TEAM

The FSC/S coordinator and team can play a role to improve AAP and PSEA. In particular, The FSC coordinator should promote AAP to be at the centre of partners' actions, as well as take active part of all inter-cluster initiatives on AAP.

Examples of FSC coordinator activities:

- Include AAP agenda item in cluster/sectors meetings when relevant, either raising awareness on AAP/ PSEA commitments and related reporting mechanisms, or discussing key themes coming through complaints and feedback mechanism (and tracking progress); the protection cluster coordinator can be invited to the FSC meeting, as well as the ProCap person or PSEA Network representative, if present in country.
- Provide guidance notes for AAP activities; create minimum standards or processes with the FSC members and/or with the other clusters. For instance, targeting SOPs should include clear links to assessment findings, consultations with affected communities regarding the process, and the presence of safeguards against corruption and SEA; FSC partners should have a complaint box/desk at every distribution point, etc. A cluster-specific "PSEA prevention and mitigation checklist" can be created using the guiding questions of SEA Risk Assessment
- Integrate relevant indicators on AAP in the HRP (see examples listed under IASC's "Suggested Actions for cluster coordination groups to strengthen Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle").
- Liaise with Protection Cluster, its Areas of Responsibility (AORs) and gender/ AAP specialists to ensure adequate referral systems are in place (e.g. for GBV, SEA, protection of children and older people, HLP, etc.).
- Contribute to the establishment of a Collective AAP Framework and Action Plan.
- Organize capacity strengthening initiatives for partners and members.

Available resources (links)

- [Core Humanitarian Standards](#)
- [IASC Minimum Operating Standards](#)
- [IASC Six Core Principles relating to SEA](#)
- [Results of Collaboration/linkages between AAP and PSEA](#)
- [IASC's "Suggested Actions for cluster coordination groups to strengthen Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle"](#)
- [IASC Revised Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2017](#)