

Reflecting Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) in RRP

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1. Background

This note provides guidance for integrating PSEA into Refugee Response Plans (RRPs) and offers some good practice examples in reflecting PSEA in response activities, plans and monitoring frameworks in RRP. It complements, and should be read in conjunction with, the overall 2025 RRP Guidance Note.

The United Nations Secretary-General’s Bulletin ([ST/SGB/2003/13](#)) and the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee \(IASC\) Six Core Principles relating to PSEA](#) set out the core principles that apply to UN entities and their partners and to organizations working in humanitarian contexts. All partners in the RRP must commit to, institutionalize and promote these principles within their organizations.

The **Refugee Response Plan (RRP)** is an inter-agency planning and coordination tool designed to operationalize the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM). The RRP serves as the basis from which to implement a strategy and activities as well as advocate for refugee situations in close collaboration with host governments and other partners. Within the framework of the RRP, partners work together to support host communities and host governments to protect refugees in large and complex refugee situations through international solidarity.

In line with the RCM and its mandated accountabilities in UNHCR’s Statute and subsequent General Assembly resolutions, UNHCR must ensure that PSEA is mainstreamed throughout the refugee response from the outset, that PSEA is coordinated amongst all actors engaged in the refugee response ¹, and that PSEA is effectively reflected and integrated in the RRP.

¹ UNHCR’s accountability for coordinating PSEA in a refugee response is also recognized at inter-agency level, including in the [IASC Vision and Strategy on PSEAH for 2022-2026](#).

2. Guidance for integration of PSEA in RRP

a. Engage PSEA Coordination Bodies in RRP development process

In a refugee response, it is highly recommended that an [inter-agency PSEA Network](#)² is established as a cross-sectoral forum in the RCM coordination structure, as the primary body for technical level coordination and oversight of PSEA activities in the refugee response, under the strategic level oversight of the Refugee Coordinator and Refugee Coordination Forum.

It is important that colleagues who are coordinating PSEA in the refugee response (e.g. [PSEA Coordinator](#), PSEA Network Co-chairs, as applicable), are fully engaged in and contribute to the RRP development process on behalf of the PSEA Network. The PSEA Coordinator / Network Co-Chairs are encouraged to ensure consultation with PSEA Network members regarding PSEA-related inputs and contributions to the RRP.

b. PSEA as a cross-cutting issue

PSEA is a **collective responsibility for all actors** in the refugee response. PSEA should be considered as part of “safe programming”, and actors in all sectors are expected to work to prevent it and mitigate risks of SEA, address incidents when they take place, and mainstream PSEA in sectoral responses. Therefore, all actors who are part of the RRP are expected to integrate PSEA into their activities in the RRP, in line with their respective sector/area of work. PSEA should be reflected in the RRP in a way that makes this clear.

PSEA is a **cross-cutting response priority in the RRP**. In Regional RRP, strategic approaches for PSEA should be articulated under the section on cross-cutting response priorities in the regional overview, including actions for SEA prevention and response, risk mitigation, and inter-agency coordination on PSEA. Each country chapter has a box to make reference to the section on PSEA in the regional chapter and where any country specific needs, initiatives, priorities, and approaches should be highlighted.

A RRP is based on the findings and evidence generated through needs assessments. Therefore, it is important to integrate PSEA in **multi-sectoral needs assessments** that will inform the RRP. Depending on the operational context, SEA risks should also be taken into account as relevant in the sections on protection needs, vulnerabilities and risks, and strategic objectives.

It is critical that the PSEA Coordinator / Network Co-Chairs engage with coordinators for protection, Accountability to Affected People (AAP), GBV, child protection as well as other sectors (e.g., shelter, public health and nutrition, education, etc.) to ensure coordinated approaches and to promote mainstreaming of PSEA across sectors and reflection in the relevant sections on cross-cutting and sectoral responses in the RRP as appropriate. Coordination with development actors on PSEA activities (where relevant) is also important, particularly in countries where a PSEA Network (with development actors) exists prior to the refugee response, to ensure coordinated planning, maximization of resources and ensuring complementarity and joined up approaches.

² This may be called differently depending on the operational context (e.g., PSEA Taskforce).

c. Include PSEA activities in the RRP budget and resource requirements

In addition to being an inter-agency planning and coordination tool, the RRP also serves as a tool for fund-raising for RRP partners. While the RRP is not itself a (pooled) fund and having activities in an RRP is not a guarantee of receiving funding, the advantage of having activities in an RRP is that donors favor these as they are part of a vetted single strategic response plan. It will be more challenging to mobilize funds for activities if they are not budgeted and reflected in the RRP. Therefore, resource requirements for PSEA-related activities are expected to be integrated in the budget and resource needs in the RRP under all the respective sectors where the activities and programmes are planned. These should include both agency-specific and collective / response-wide PSEA related activities. On the latter, the RRP is expected to include the resource requirements that are set out in the national PSEA Action Plan(s) (where available) or otherwise foreseen by the PSEA network(s). Please see section 3 for examples of how this was done in the RRP development process in Moldova and Poland.

d. Include PSEA in the RRP monitoring framework

At minimum one PSEA indicator must be included in the RRP monitoring framework, to help track and monitor progress. Some suggested indicators on PSEA are available, which regions / operations can choose from if relevant. If the PSEA Network has a country-level work plan in place, indicators in the monitoring framework of the work plan can also be considered for this purpose.

e. Management and Coordination of PSEA

Ensure that key coordination activities, such as the setting up of the Network, endorsement of the Network's workplan, coherence with Protection/GBV/Child Protection/AAP, work to strengthen RRP partners' capacities on PSEA, and engagement with national actors, are reflected in the RRP in the relevant sections. PSEA coordination should be reflected in explanations about the inter-agency coordination mechanism for the refugee response in the section on partnership and coordination in the RRP country chapters as appropriate.

3. Examples of Good Practices in Integrating PSEA in RRP

This section highlights a few good practice examples from existing RRP.

Ukraine Regional RRP

In order to mainstream PSEA across the RRP cycle, it is important to look at the full programming cycle. This was done in the Ukraine Regional RRP 2023 / 2024, including:

- **Needs assessment:** Questions related to PSEA were integrated in the tools for multi-sectoral needs assessment (MSNAs), the findings of which informed the RRP.
- **Engagement of partners:** During the RRP planning phase in Moldova, the guidance on project submission for the RRP shared with partners included a requirement to include PSEA and AAP activities with budgetary allocations within their project submission to ensure the operationalization of PSEA and AAP, particularly for UN agencies and international NGOs. This approach helped to promote RRP partners to view PSEA as a crucial and indispensable element of project implementation in the context of the refugee response. In Poland, RRP partners were required to provide budgets for cross-cutting activities for PSEA, AAP and MHPSS out of the total appeal budget.
- **Monitoring:** A PSEA indicator (*# of PSEA network members and partner personnel trained on SEA risk mitigation, prevention and response*) and targets were included in the monitoring framework. Guidance on the indicator was developed to ensure consistent understanding and reporting under the indicator across the countries covered under the RRP.

2023 Joint Response Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis in Bangladesh

All Joint Response Plan (JRP) partners, including UN organizations and NGOs, are required to be members of the PSEA Network and comply with PSEA standards, including through the PSEA Standard Operating Procedures, which are in line with global standards.

PSEA is integrated in sectoral response strategies in the RRP as relevant, such as under education which states that “*Partner staff and teachers will receive capacity building on cross-cutting issues such as Code of Conduct, PSEA, child safeguarding, gender mainstreaming, disability inclusion and Accountability to Affected Populations. All learning centres will have PSEA safeguarding and reporting mechanisms that are accessible to all children and emergency preparedness plans established together with communities*”.

4. Other reference materials

- UNHCR, 2023-2025 [Strategy and Action Plan: Tackling Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment](#)
- [UNHCR Policy on Addressing Sexual Misconduct](#), May 2024
- [UNHCR Policy on a Victim-Centred Approach in UNHCR’s response to Sexual Misconduct](#), December 2020
- [Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A Collective Responsibility](#)
- [UNHCR website: Tackling sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment](#)
- [IASC PSEA website](#) and [resource library](#)

For questions related to this Guidance Note, please contact the regional PSEA focal point of your Bureau, or the Office of the Principal Adviser (PSEA / SH) at hqpseash@unhcr.org.