

GUIDANCE NOTE

How to develop an Action Plan to Prevent Sexual Harassment (SH) in the Workplace and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

1. About this Guidance Note

UNDP is firmly committed to eradicate SEA and sexual harassment (SH) in the workplace through strengthening relevant policies and reporting mechanisms, fostering a culture of responsibility and awareness around the issue, ensuring personnel have clear information about conduct that is not tolerated, and providing both personnel and local populations¹ with a safe space to report any such misconduct.

All Heads of UNDP Offices² are required to fulfill their obligations under the revised Policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Discrimination and Abuse of Authority and the Policy on the Protection Against Retaliation. This includes putting in place an Action Plan on the Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace and SEA (hereafter Action Plan), and providing mandatory annual certificates of accomplishment to the Administrator.

This Note provides guidance on how to develop the Action Plan. It includes sample actions that can be implemented at the office/unit level and an Action Plan template. For more information refer to the new Intranet page on the prevention of sexual harassment as well as internal and external sites on SEA³.

2. Why an Action Plan, and who is responsible?

With prevention being at the core of the UNDP strategy to combat SH and SEA, the key objective of the Action Plan is to pro-actively prevent sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as build a safe and enabling working environment for all UNDP personnel and for the people UNDP works with and serves.

The purpose of the Action Plan is to enable long-lasting culture change in UNDP and, as such, should be co-created⁴ and implemented by personnel in a fully inclusive and transparent way. Heads of Offices are responsible for the development and implementation of the Plan. If a multidisciplinary Gender Focal Team⁵ is in place in an office, it could facilitate in the design of the Plan. Identifying actions to address SEA will also require the engagement of UNDP project partners and personnel.

¹ Local population includes “UNDP beneficiaries or other individuals among the public we serve”. Code of Ethics, UNDP, October 2017.

² Directors and Heads of offices include Regional and Central Bureaus, Regional Hubs, and Country Offices.

³ UNDP SEA website <https://intranet.undp.org/unit/ohr/psea/SitePages/Home.aspx> ; External SEA website: <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/>

⁴ UN Leadership Framework, 2017 <https://www.unsceb.org/CEBPublicFiles/Leadership.pdf>

⁵ Multidisciplinary Gender Focal Team is part of the UNDP gender architecture established in the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017. It is recommended to set up this team.

3. Actions to Prevent Sexual Harassment and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Country Offices/Units.

The Action Plan is expected to cover all personnel⁶ and should include concrete activities in the five mandatory results areas, as explained below. Other results areas can be added, as needed.

Result 1. UNDP personnel and partners are aware of corporate SH and SEA policies and response mechanisms.

As the first step, it is key to ensure that all the relevant policies and the SG Bulletin on SEA are known and understood by all personnel. One way to ensure this is to share these documents as part of an on-boarding package, with all new personnel being required to sign an acknowledgment of receipt and review. Other measures can include the following:

- The most senior manager (e.g. Director, RR or CD) should periodically re-circulate the policies and the Bulletin to all personnel with clarifications, as needed.
- Human Resources (HR) team should make sure that the policies and the Bulletin, including their relevant language versions, are easily accessible to all.
- The SG's Bulletin on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse should be shared with external partners (e.g. project partners at the community level) and whenever a new project or a new activity is launched on the ground.
- Senior managers should use every opportunity (e.g. retreats, informal chats, panels, written communications to personnel, meeting with partners and beneficiaries, etc.) to engage personnel in a dialogue on prevention and issues around harassment, improving the UNDP workplace culture, as well as on UNDP corporate positions and messaging on sexual harassment and SEA. Keep having the conversations about the issues.

Result 2. All UNDP personnel have completed mandatory online courses

Office leadership must ensure that all personnel complete the following mandatory online courses:

- Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority
- UNDP Legal Framework: What Every Staff Needs to Know
- Ethics and Integrity at UNDP
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of the Local Population (PSEA)

The successful completion of these and other mandatory courses should be reflected in the performance reviews of personnel (e.g. annual performance reviews for staff) and evaluations of Service Contract holders. Online courses need to be complemented with other discussions and learning sessions, as relevant in the specific country context.

⁶ UNDP personnel, as per the policy, includes staff, UNVs, interns, individual consultants and staff on a Reimbursable Loan Agreement or on a Non-Reimbursable Loan Agreement, all Service Contract holders who have a contract with UNDP.

Result 3. The culture of trust, mutual respect, and freedom from fear and discrimination strengthened

Organizational culture is the system of shared beliefs, values and assumptions that regulate how people behave in the workplace. Promoting gender equality and a culture of non-discrimination in the workplace is crucial to prevent sexual harassment and SEA. While online and other learning is helpful in changing the culture of silence and power imbalances, this learning needs to be supplemented with open meaningful conversations about core values and about how to promote sustained changes in behavior. Gender equality considerations should be given special consideration, as evidence shows that workplace sexual harassment overwhelmingly victimizes women and also members of the LGBTI community.

As part of the Action Plan, offices are, hence, encouraged to explore the following measures:

- Organize discussions on UN and UNDP values, on how to promote inclusiveness and create a safe working environment free from fear, discrimination and any forms of harassment. It could include film screenings, debates on issues that are currently in the public eye, or presentations by internal or external experts on the issue. For sessions on SEA, external partners and project implementers need to be on board; relevant activities can be organized in locations where projects are implemented.
- Design and implement communication events and broader communication and outreach campaigns with a view to changing attitudes and behaviours, and encourage personnel to call out others on abusive behaviors. Communication materials developed by the HQs Task Force on Prevention of Sexual Harassment (hereafter Task Force) are available if helpful. Local partnerships could also be explored.
- Ensure that managers and supervisors act as role models and make personal commitments to challenge and not tolerate inappropriate behaviors.

Result 4. UNDP and external personnel are aware of what to do when they experience or witness sexual harassment and SEA

With under reporting being one of the key challenges faced by the organization, it is critical to ensure that all personnel are fully aware of how and where to report sexual harassment as well as what support options are available to victims and how to access them. An even bigger challenge is making sure that people UNDP works with – partners, beneficiaries, members of the local communities UNDP delivers support to – are aware of the course of action they can take in case they become victims of SEA by UNDP personnel. It is therefore very important to make sure that the Action Plan includes measures to educate UNDP personnel as well as broader communities about appropriate complaint mechanisms, protocols, and available support.

One of the recommended measures is to appoint a trusted focal point (or several focal points) who is widely recognized as trustworthy and respected by personnel. The role of the focal point would essentially be to act as a ‘go-to’ person available to listen and provide immediate support to others with regards to information about SH and SEA policies and mechanisms, and available options. Focal points are not expected and should not try to (pre-)investigate cases or offer stress counselling, but rather provide a safe place for people to talk about their concerns and guide them on appropriate arrangements.

Note that once focal points are appointed, the Task Force will facilitate relevant training for them.

Result 5. Accountability ensured

Relevant policies spell out the obligations and concrete responsibilities of managers and personnel for effectively preventing and responding to sexual harassment and SEA. To ensure that these obligations are met, it is critical to ensure proper accountability for action (or inaction). Therefore the Action Plan should contain clear accountability measures (and remembering that Heads of HQ and Country Offices are now obliged to submit a certificate to the Administrator at the end of the year confirming that all elements of the policy have been met). These may include, among others, the following:

- Ensure that as part of the annual performance reviews the performance of all supervisors with regards to the mandatory people management goal and its criteria is properly assessed and recorded in the online PMD tool.
- Ensure that all managers and personnel at large understand their obligations, as per relevant policies, including for reporting incidents of prohibited conduct so that these are promptly addressed through appropriate channels.
- Create *voluntary compacts*⁷ with team leaders and other personnel.
- Collectively analyze the Global Staff Survey (GSS) results to identify ways to prevent sexual harassment and SEA. The 2018 GSS will include a series of useful questions to help this process.
- Ensure regular monitoring of the Action Plan implementation (quarterly is recommended) during senior management and broader personnel meetings.

⁷ *Voluntary Compact* is a written commitment that highlights zero tolerance to SH and SEA through specific actions, and holds individuals accountable for the committed actions. It can be signed by individuals and/or by teams.

Template for the Action Plan to Prevent Sexual Harassment in the Workplace and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

The five results categories are mandatory; others can be added, as needed. Activities and other elements of the Plan are to be co-created by personnel.

Results	Activity	Responsible	Budget	Time-frame	Monitoring
1. UNDP personnel and partners are aware of corporate SH and SEA policies and response mechanisms.					
2. All UNDP personnel have completed mandatory online courses					
3. The culture of trust, mutual respect, and freedom from fear and discrimination strengthened					
4. UNDP and external personnel are aware what to do when they experience or witness sexual harassment and SEA					
5. Accountability ensured					