



End-of-Year Management Letter on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Reporting of SEA Allegations

In accordance with Section 4.6 of the Secretary-General’s Bulletin on “Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse” (ST/SGB/2003/13) and in accordance with paragraph 10 of the UN Women Executive Board Decision 2018/3¹ which requests that UN Women management, as required by the Secretary-General, present its annual certification to the Executive Board at each annual session, I, Sima Bahous, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, hereby certify that UN Women has reported to the Secretary-General all allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse that have been brought to its attention and has taken all appropriate measures to address such allegations, in accordance with established rules and procedures for dealing with cases of staff misconduct.

Furthermore, UN Women has made available to all staff members and affiliated personnel training focused on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. UN Women has also raised awareness of its staff members, affiliated personnel and beneficiaries of assistance, insofar as applicable, through appropriate means, regarding the prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse and ways of reporting such acts. UN Women has also submitted the annual action plan on measures undertaken to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.

In the Secretary-General’s letter of 5 January 2022, he requested that I also provide information on how UN Women ensures that: (i) its implementing partners have minimum standards in place to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse; and (ii) the mechanisms are established to ensure a victim/survivor-centred approach.

I therefore note the following:

Ensuring that UN Women’s implementing partners have minimum standards in place to prevent and respond to SEA

UN Women ensures that its implementing partners have minimum standards in place to prevent and respond to SEA, *inter alia*, incorporating the requirements of the UN Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Involving Implementing Partners (the Protocol) into UN Women’s implementing partner policy framework. Specifically, the framework includes:

¹ [UNW/2018/8](#) (Decisions adopted by the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women at its 2018 sessions)

- (i) a procedure for selecting implementing partners (namely “Procedure for Selecting Programme Partners”) that requires that prospective implementing partners are assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Protocol, which is aligned with ST/SGB/2003/13. In doing so, UN Women is able to ensure that the capacity of prospective implementing partners to prevent and mitigate risks of SEA are assessed and considered, that prospective implementing partners can meet the minimum standards of conduct listed in section 3 of ST/SGB/2003/13, and to screen out those prospective partners who do not meet the minimum standards of conduct.
- (ii) a partner agreement template which is used to formalise the engagement of partners after they have been selected in accordance with the Procedure for Selecting Programme Partners. As outlined in detail in last year’s End-of-Year Management Letter, the partner agreement template includes a link and annex to ST/SGB/2003/13, a requirement that the partner acknowledge various prohibitions, standards and protocols related to SEA, as well as a requirement that the partner agrees to commit to specific undertakings that ensure the required minimum standards to prevent and respond to SEA are in place on their part.

In addition to the above, UN Women has continued to disseminate the Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s Learning Package on Protection from Sexual Misconduct for UN partner organizations, “Saying No to Sexual Misconduct”, through its regional and in-country prevention of SEA focal points, to UN Women’s partners in the focal point’s respective regions.

Mechanisms established to ensure a victim/survivor-centred approach

In light of the particularly high risks of SEA and experienced by women and girls, UN Women, in line with its mandate as the UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, strongly believes that placing their needs and priorities at the forefront of any response is of utmost importance. A victim/survivor-centred approach thus has been at the heart of all its efforts.

The scenario-based SEA training workshops piloted and implemented in 2021 include a module exploring what a victim/survivor-centred approach to SEA means. The capacity-building offered to UN Women’s prevention of SEA focal points covers a detailed exploration of how a victim/survivor-centred approach can be operationalized at the country level. All UN Women SEA awareness raising efforts are designed using a victim/survivor-centred approach. When an allegation of SEA is reported, UN Women’s investigative body, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), provides victims/survivors with a prompt and clear outline of its process and fact-finding mandate, and if an investigation takes place, advises the victims/survivors of the outcome of an investigation. Moreover, where a report of SEA is submitted by an individual who is not the alleged victim/survivor, where appropriate, OIOS will take into account any concerns of the alleged victim/survivor in the course of an investigation.

Furthermore, in 2021, UN Women included the United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse into its Policy, Procedure and Guidance repository, thus making it accessible to all UN Women personnel. To ensure implementation thereof across UN Women, the entity has been working through its regional and country prevention of SEA focal points, in close collaboration with its End Violence Against Women focal points, while ensuring maximum coordination with UN Country Team efforts in country locations.

Recognizing the importance of transparency and accountability in the United Nations system with respect to fighting sexual exploitation and abuse, this has been done in good faith.



Sima Bahous

Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director

25 January 2022