



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, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, hereby certify that UN Women has reported to the Secretary-General all allegations of SEA 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 SEA. 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 SEA and ways of reporting such acts.

In the Secretary-General's letter of 9 December 2020, he requested that I also provide information on: (i) how UN Women ensures that its implementing partners have minimum standards in place to prevent and respond to SEA; and (ii) the mechanisms established to ensure a victim-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:

- (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, that includes the following:

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)

- a) a link to ST/SGB/2003/13, of which is also included as an annex to the agreement;
- b) a written undertaking that the partner accepts the standards of conduct set out in section 3 of ST/SGB/2003/13;
- c) an acknowledgement by the partner that SEA is strictly prohibited and an agreement that the partner, its employees, personnel, sub-contractors and others engaged to perform the activities of the agreement shall not engage in SEA;
- d) an outline of the standard of care expected of implementing partners pursuant to section 3 of ST/SGB/2003/13, to which the partner must acknowledge;
- e) an acknowledgment by the partner that UN Women will apply a policy of “zero tolerance” with regard to SEA of anyone by the partner, its employees, agents or any other persons engaged by the partner to perform any services under the agreement;
- f) an agreement that the partner will promptly report to UN Women and investigate any allegation of SEA as such allegations arise in the context of the performance of the activities under the agreement. Further, it is agreed that any investigation conducted by the partner shall be without prejudice to the right of UN Women to conduct investigations; and
- g) an agreement that the partner’s employees, personnel, sub-contractors and others engaged to perform the activities under the agreement have undertaken training on prevention and response to SEA, including information on the definition and prohibition of SEA, the requirements for prompt reporting of SEA allegations to the partner and referral of victims to immediate assistance. A link to the UN SEA online training, via UNICEF, is provided to the partner.

In addition to the above, UN Women has disseminated the Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s Learning Package on Protection from Sexual Misconduct for UN partner organizations, “Saying No to Sexual Misconduct”, to all of its prevention of SEA focal points for forwarding to UN Women’s partners in the focal point’s respective regions. Moreover, UN Women is working in collaboration with other UN agencies to put in place common partner assessment tools to further enhance safeguards and appropriate action related to SEA.

Mechanisms established to ensure a victim-centred approach

Given that SEA falls within the continuum of violence against women and is an expression of gender inequality, a victim-centred approach is at the heart of UN Women’s prevention of and response to SEA.

In addition, UN Women’s investigative body, the Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), provides victims with a prompt and clear outline of its process and fact-finding mandate, and if an investigation takes place, advises the victims of the outcome of an investigation. Further, where a report of SEA is submitted by an individual who is not the alleged victim, where appropriate, OIOS will take into account any concerns of the alleged victim in the course of an investigation.

Furthermore, UN Women implements the United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse through its regional and country prevention of SEA focal points, while ensuring maximum coordination with UN Country Teams 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.



Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
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