



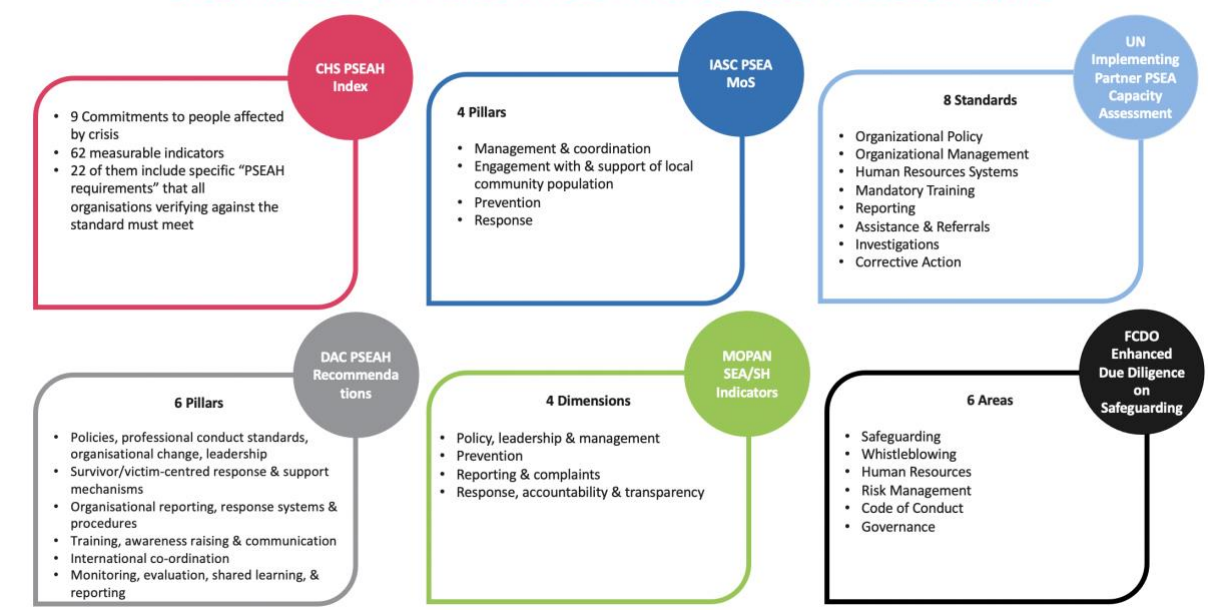
## Raising the Standard of PSEAH: How can different Standards work together to improve safeguarding

### What we heard at the 14 June 2021 webinar

As organisations commit to doing more to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH), a number of standards and assessments have been developed to help tackle this important issue.

CHS Alliance hosted a webinar to look at some of the most widely used PSEAH standards/assessments, explore how they differed and who they were intended for. The webinar also started a discussion on what more can be done to build on the complementarity of these standards to help organisations prevent and respond to instances of SEA.

### OVERVIEW OF DIFFERENT PSEAH STANDARDS / ASSESSMENTS



The webinar was chaired by the current Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) PSEAH Champion, UNFPA, represented by Eva Bolkart, UNFPA’s Coordinator for Protection from SEA.

Nearly 220 participants from UN agencies, INGOs, NNGOs and donors joined for the event.

### Grounding the discussion: Perspectives of users of the standards

Two voices from NGOs in Pakistan and West Africa helped ground the discussion in the reality of perspectives from the users. The speakers explained how the use of standards have helped their organisation improve PSEAH, and the main challenges they have encountered.



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**Palwashay Arbab, Head of Communication and Gender Justice Focal Point at the NNGO Community World Service Asia (CWSA)** talked about the impact of the CHS PSEAH Index. *“Before the new CHS PSEAH Index, we spent a lot of time and effort developing our own policy on PSEA from a very long list of standards; now it is much easier!”*

She stressed that there can be confusion for staff when it comes to navigating all the existing standards, in addition to the lack of resources (financial and human). Simplifying the message without losing their essence is another challenge that has been difficult to address in Pakistan. There is a need to be context-sensitive and to contextualise the guidance to communicate all messages on PSEAH. *“It is not just about a PSEAH policy, it is about changing people’s minds. The many standards out there need to be complemented with contextualised guidance on how to practically implement them.”*

**KEY TAKEAWAYS:** Practitioners need more resources, communication, leadership, culture, ownership, and coherence.

**Duvert Kilembe Kimok, Regional Safeguarding Advisor for West Africa at Oxfam**, continued to ground the discussion by sharing Oxfam’s experiences in implementing PSEAH standards.

Oxfam’s main PSEAH policies (including the Oxfam’s national offices joint Code of Conduct) were developed based on the main international and UN standards. But once again, *“a big challenge is the translation of expectations into practice and strong contextualised actions”*.

He called for continued research and innovative measures to tackle SEAH (particularly culture change), and to address the barriers to reporting misconducts, more advocacy with country authorities, including around the disclosure of misconduct scheme, and more funding for PSEAH activities in general, including contextualisation.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS:** Need more localisation, contextualisation, translation to make sure that HQ works in practice with the necessary resources.

## Overview of the different PSEAH standards

This session of the webinar addressed each standard’s purpose; its intended audience; how each one is raising the level of PSEAH. This sets up a broader conversation on what needs to be done to gain more complementarity between the various standards.

**Amit Sen, Senior Interagency Coordinator PSEAH at UNHCR** reiterated the need for more coherence and for locally relevant tools.

He introduced the *UN Implementing Partner PSEA Capacity Assessment* as being a *“tool about coherence, streamlining, strengthening, which is practical, reliable, systematic and consistent”*. It is a non-binding harmonised tool developed in one common process, meeting the minimum standards of PSEA but also the needs of those assessed. It is intended to simplify partners’ work as they will only need to be assessed once instead of duplicating different assessments. The entire UN will ideally use this assessment or rely on it; it is valid for 5 years. It is currently being piloted in various contexts and is aimed at continuously improving.



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*“Shared responsibility is at the heart of key PSEAH standards. This also means that shared commitment to jointly raise the standards equals accessibility for all capacities and as little duplication as possible”.*

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-accountability-affected-populations-and-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/un-implementing-partner-psea-capacity-assessment>

**Wendy Cue, OCHA Senior Coordinator for PSEA, at the IASC Secretariat** described the Minimum Operating Standards (MOS PSEA) as the *“foundation standards”*, which became a reference, among others, for the OECD-DAC Recommendation on PSEA and the UN Country-Level Action Plans.

She flagged that there was a willingness to have more coherence at the UN country level between development and humanitarian operations and to measure progress in the field in PSEAH, but that the MoS were not sufficient. Therefore, they developed a coherent guidance for country teams with specific country action plans using the MoS but also 24 minimum indicators to report.

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-accountability-affected-populations-and-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/minimum-operating-standards-mos-psea>

**Tanya Wood, Executive Director at CHS Alliance** explained that the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) is a broad accountability framework, which is set out as a series of Nine Commitments that all organisations working with people affected by crisis can use and apply.

PSEAH cannot stand on its own. It is mainstreamed through the CHS, and is linked with culture, HR processes, or organisational perspective as a whole. Of the 62 measurable indicators in the CHS, 22 specifically refer to PSEAH.

*“PSEAH is woven throughout the 62 indicators of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). To date, more than 116 organisations have already measured themselves against. To make these provisions more explicit, we updated the PSEAH Index in 2020.”*

The CHS PSEAH Index was updated in 2020, to explicitly clarify the PSEAH requirement for each indicator, which will be used for all organisations going through the CHS verification. It was developed through an extensive mapping against the standards on this webinar to ensure it covers the same areas/principles/pillars. Sexual harassment was also added to the 2020 update.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS:** *Adopting a holistic view is key as well as assessing impact on the ground with feedback from people to avoid any box checking exercise.*  
<https://www.chsalliance.org/get-support/resource/pseah-index/>

**Lisa Williams, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Team Lead, at OECD** explained the DAC Recommendation and its development.

Thirty governments agreed to improve policies and behaviour change by adopting the DAC Recommendation. The recommendation was developed considering other tools (IASC, FCDO, etc.) and after consulting many different actors (civil societies, field partners). Since its launch in 2019, UN entities have joined and it is envisaged that more will adopt it over time.



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Lisa stressed the necessity to be more proactive against PSEAH and to work more collectively by bringing together stakeholders from various fields and expertise (civil societies, governments, academics, experts worldwide) to share perspectives, learn from each other and discuss needed changes. *“The aid sector, including donors need to come together for system change.”* The OECD has created such a discussion forum where various actors can regularly exchange and strengthen relationships in a collective effort.

She closed her intervention by stating that PSEAH must be discussed and addressed across actors but also sectors (including development and diplomacy).

<https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-recommendation-on-ending-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment.htm#:~:text=The%20DAC%20Recommendation%20on%20Ending,harassment%20by%20setting%20and%20Implementing>

**Jolanda Profos, Policy Adviser for MOPAN** presented the SEAH-related work of MOPAN, a network of 19 donor countries. MOPAN is a joint mechanism through which donors assesses and monitor the performance of multilateral organisations against international norms and good practice standards. The approach covers many areas, and since 2020 also includes SEAH. The new SEAH component is based on existing norms such as UN standards and tools from IASC, OECD DAC, CHS and others. The assessment against those 16 SEAH indicators measures how well equipped multilateral organisations are in preventing and addressing SEA and SH, and identifies areas needing improvement and good practice.

MOPAN’s SEAH benchmarks are now a key reference for multilateral organisations. They complement existing frameworks: they are at *corporate* level, focus on *multilateral* organisations, and draw on more granular exercises (e.g., self-assessments or reporting against IASC MOS or Action Plans). In doing so, they provide a summary of SEAH performance. With *joint* benchmarks, MOPAN aims to diminish the burden of separate bilateral assessments. MOPAN aims to keep them up to date through continuous consultation and work with donors, experts and implementers and welcomes their collaboration.

MOPAN Note for Practitioners on PSEAH: <https://bit.ly/3x1YFv>  
MOPAN Brief on Measuring multilateral performance on PSEAH: <https://bit.ly/3w0oQ6K>

**Peter Taylor, Head of Safeguarding at FCDO** concluded this session by sharing FCDO’s experience on drawing on existing international PSEAH standards (notably IASC MOS and CHS) to create in 2018 a strong SEAH due diligence process. Any aid sector organisation must meet minimum requirements in the six areas in the diagram on page 1 to be financially supported. Central Assurance Assessments help to identify gaps.

He recalled the importance of contextualization and accessible guidance before emphasizing that FCDO would ideally like to not have their own requirements and instead rely on what exists in the sector (CHS, IASC MoS). However, to reach this stage will require: bringing CHS and IASC MoS closer together including verification regimes; updates of key UN documents; and better SEAH information sharing/reporting, particularly between UN/others and donors. Streamlining and harmonising in this way is likely to be most beneficial to field implementing partners who have less capacity to deal with different SEAH demands.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-enhanced-due-diligence-safeguarding-for-external-partners/enhanced-due-diligence-safeguarding-for-external-partners>



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### Conclusion and Take Away Points

This webinar was only the start of a much-needed conversation about the necessity to have more coherence and harmonisation between the main existing PSEAH standards/assessments.

The following points were raised several times by speakers during the session and should be followed-up:

- Continue the discussion on how to better coordinate our efforts to ensure these standards are easily used in the field and prevent duplication
- Learn/coordinate/exchange and work on systems change by bringing together regularly stakeholders from various fields and expertise but also sectors
- Complement the standards with contextualised and simplified guidance to assist practitioners with how to implement them in practice
- Adopt a holistic view when addressing SEAH which means including every aspect of the organisation and every department, regardless of expertise.

For more information, or to participate in future discussions on the use of PSEAH Standards, please contact Coline Rapneau at [crapneau@chsalliance.org](mailto:crapneau@chsalliance.org)