

How to Apply Global Standards on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment

For CSOs in humanitarian or development settings

This note complements the [RSH Summary Brief on Standards on Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Sexual Harassment \(SEAH\)](#). In this note the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Core Principles are not explained separately but as part of the IASC Minimum Operating Standards (MOS).

The checklist below outlines the safeguarding good practices which are reflected in current international standards. The list enables CSOs to check how they can apply the sets of standards that are relevant to them. Not all CSOs will need or want to apply all the sets of standards.

There are four sets of standards and recommendations which guide safeguarding or protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (PSEAH) measures when delivering development and humanitarian assistance:

- Inter-Agency Standing Committee Minimum Operating Standards: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Own Personnel ([IASC](#))
- Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability ([CHS](#))
- The International Child Safeguarding Standards by Keeping Children Safe ([KCS](#))
- Development Assistance Committee Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance. ([DAC](#)) (The primary audience is Governments, it is included here as some donors may refer to it).

IASC and CHS are used most often for safeguarding or PSEAH in development and humanitarian assistance. The KCS standards focus exclusively on safeguarding children.

	Sets of Standards and Recommendations			
	IASC	CHS	KCS	DAC
Safeguarding good practices reflected in the standards				
Policy and Code of Conduct				
Policy/policies in place to protect staff and any adult who interacts with the CSO from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by staff or the organisation	X	X		X
Policy/policies in place to protect staff from sexual harassment (can be integrated in the above policy)		X		X
Policy/policies in place that protect any adult who interacts with the CSO from sexual harassment (can be integrated in the above policies)		X		X

	IASC	CHS	KCS	DAC
Policy in place which protects children from abuse, exploitation, harassment and other harms (can be integrated in the above policies)			X	X
Code of conduct in place which outlines expected behaviour for all staff, representatives and volunteers	X	X	X	X
Prevention				
Staff training on SEAH or safeguarding so they understand and can deliver	X	X	X	X
Staff training specifically on child safeguarding (for CSOs which work or interact with children)			X	
System in place to track CSO safeguarding measures		X	X	X
Safe recruitment procedures in place (child safeguards in HR for KCS)	X	X	X	X
Procedures in place to identify and address SEAH risks within CSOs and their programmes activities		X	X	X
Communities informed of the CSO's work to prevent and respond to SEAH	X	X	X	X
Reporting				
Confidential and anonymous mechanism in place for staff to report or complain	X	X		X
Confidential and anonymous mechanism in place for anyone who interacts with the CSO (adult, child) to report or complain (concerns involving children only for KCS)	X	X	X	X
Response				
Reporting and investigation processes respond to reports received and prioritise the safety, needs and interests of victims and survivors	X	X	X	X
Communities and individuals / groups the CSO is working with can assume that the CSO will manage resources appropriately and ethically		X		

The practices listed above constitute minimum standards. For a more comprehensive approach, safeguarding should be integrated across all business and programme areas. See [the safeguarding journey](#) for more information.

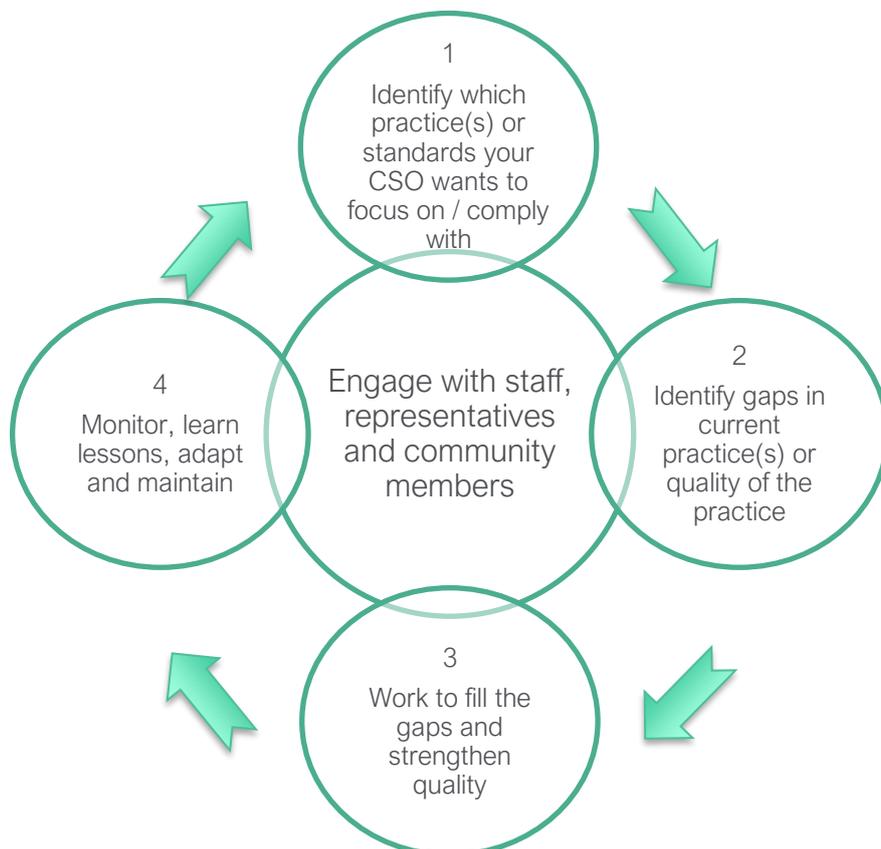
How you set up and maintain each practice will affect the quality and effectiveness of your safeguarding measures.

Design and apply each practice in a way that is 1) appropriate to your organisation and context, and 2) based on shared principles and agreed behaviours.

How to adapt the standards to your context:

1. This seems a lot for my organisation to do, where do I start?

- Start to assess the potential risks in your own organisation and find ways to address them. Think about risks your own staff may face, risks in how you recruit staff, risks to the people and wider communities you work with and risks to consider when designing programmes.
- You do not need to apply every set of standards. Identify which good practices to focus on, this may be based on gaps in your organisation or the need to strengthen the quality of existing practices. When setting priorities, consider the SEAH risks for staff and anyone who interacts with your CSO.
- Think about the work you already do to keep people safe. You might already have a statement in your organisation's values about how you keep people safe. Expand that into a simple code of conduct which includes the behaviours your organisation wants to encourage or discourage amongst staff. For example, you could refer to the IASC six core principles listed in the [RSH Summary Brief](#).
- You can develop one broad policy to safeguard staff, representatives and all other individuals who interact with the CSO from SEAH. Consider the diverse risks for different groups in this process. You can also review other organisations' policies when you are doing this.
- Once you have set up the priority practices, identify other processes and good practices that you will work towards achieving over time.
- Request support from your donors. Having policies and systems on SEAH in line with one or both of the CHS or IASC-MOS is a common requirement to receive funding from major bilateral donors. Donors may be able to offer training, opportunities to learn how they deliver work on SEAH or other types of support. For example, FCDO in the UK sets out its [SEAH due diligence requirements](#) (built around CHS and IASC-MOS) and related support on a [webpage](#), including an [independent assessment](#) of 31 CSOs against FCDO SEAH requirements which highlighted common challenges.



2. What should I do if some behaviours are legal in my country but constitute SEAH according to many definitions?

- In many countries SEAH is not fully covered under the law. Your organisation can still put in place measures to address SEAH. For example, a code of conduct can prohibit the behaviour which constitutes SEAH and be made a contractual requirement. You can also gather legal advice on what you can do if staff breach the code of conduct so you are ready to take any necessary action.

3. What if some international standards conflict with community values and beliefs?

- Your safeguarding measures are designed to safeguard communities (and staff) – they reflect commitments by your organisation. By raising awareness on what SEAH means and who it affects, your organisation will support communities to be able to identify it and report it.
- Staff and volunteers come from communities and carry their community values and beliefs. Be clear with staff and volunteers why it is important to have these organisational measures in place.
- If you want to encourage communities to report concerns or you are asking them to be involved in identifying safeguarding risks, raise awareness first on what SEAH means. Explain how it harms those who experience it. Ask communities to identify who is most at risk of SEAH.
- Ask community members to share why it is important for vulnerable groups to be protected and supported and to identify existing social norms and customs that they feel protect people.

4. Sexual harassment is mentioned but other forms of harassment aren't, how can I cover it all?

- Harassment is defined as “*a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, that result in or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm...*” ([ILO C190 Violence and Harassment Convention](#)). Harassment is underpinned by abuse of power and is experienced differently for people with different and intersecting identity characteristics. CSOs may want to include harassment in their policies because: 1) harassment caused by a CSO is a cause of harm on its own, and 2) harassment may lead to further abuse or exploitation.
- Having measures in place to protect staff – and others who interact with your organisation – from all forms of harassment is valuable. For staff, this may already be in your Human Resource policy – in some countries it is a legal requirement. It is not covered in the standards outlined above because the priority of the international aid and development sector is on preventing sexual harassment.

5. How does staff behaviour link to the standards?

- All staff should behave in a way that does not harm or increase the risks of SEAH for other staff or anyone who interacts with the organisation. This behaviour is detailed in a code of conduct and your organisation's response to harmful behaviour is detailed in the relevant policy.
- Each person's power and privilege changes based on the situation that they are in. For example, someone's gender, age, race, disability or sexuality affects whether they are in a privileged or disadvantaged position in one set of circumstances and not in another. This influences how staff work with each other and with the people receiving services or interacting with your organisation.
- All staff should be aware of their own power and privilege and behave accordingly. Consider:
 - Could I be in situations where I may have more power or privilege than others because of my age, race or gender (or combination of these)?
 - How could my physical appearance influence how others treat me?
 - How do I ensure that individuals are not discriminated against for any reason?