

# PREVENTING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (SEA) BY AGENCY PERSONNEL DURING THE HAITI EMERGENCY

## *First Steps for Humanitarian Agencies*

The Haiti emergency is a high-risk environment for SEA. During an emergency, local populations become more dependent on others for their survival and thus more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse.

### WHAT ARE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE?

- ❑ **Sexual exploitation** means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. For example: trading medical care, blankets, shelter or water for sex.
- ❑ **Sexual abuse** means actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. For example: NGO teacher inappropriately touching students.

### IMMEDIATE PRACTICAL STEPS TO PREVENT SEA:

The humanitarian community can undertake immediate steps:

#### **(1) Tell beneficiaries:**

- ❑ Humanitarian aid is free!  
*Beneficiaries should never need to exchange sexual favours to obtain assistance.*
- ❑ Beneficiaries have the right to complain.
- ❑ How and where to complain.  
*Humanitarian agencies in Haiti need to work together to identify how and where beneficiaries can report SEA and spread this information to beneficiaries.*

#### **HOW TO GET THE MESSAGE OUT:**

- RADIO
- FLYERS
- POSTERS AT DISTRIBUTION POINTS



#### **(2) Tell humanitarian workers:**

- ❑ Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) are strictly prohibited!  
*This can include reminders of the agency's code of conduct or, for UN entities, the Secretary-General's Bulletin on SEA.*
- ❑ Committing sexual exploitation or abuse can get you fired.
- ❑ You must report SEA!  
*The Secretary-General's Bulletin on SEA requires UN staff to report when they see or suspect SEA.*

- ❑ How and to whom to report.

*Report to any of the following: an SEA focal point, their agency's human resources section or executive office; MINUSTAH's Conduct and Discipline Team (3702 6486); OIOS (investigationsOIOS@un.org, fax: +1 212 963 7774, tel: +1 212 963 1111); or other appropriate person. Specific contacts should be identified by humanitarian agencies in Haiti.*

### **(3) Include SEA policy standards in all contracts:**

- ❑ Incorporate in all contracts with entities or individuals (such as partners, consultants and contractors) agreement to adhere to the agency's SEA policy standards.

*For the UN, this would be standards in the Secretary-General's Bulletin on SEA.*

### **REMEMBER:**

- ❑ **"Consent" is irrelevant.** True or "informed" consent requires an understanding of and ability to exercise the right to say "no." Beneficiaries may not know that they have the right to say no or that they will be able to obtain humanitarian assistance if they do.
- ❑ **Humanitarian personnel are often in a position of power over the local population.** Because of this power dynamic, sexual relationships between humanitarian personnel – both international and national – and the local population can constitute sexual exploitation.
- ❑ **There are no exceptions to the prohibition on sexual activity with children.** Sexual activity with persons under the age of 18, regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally, is prohibited. Mistaken belief in the age of the child does not constitute a defence.
- ❑ **All allegations should be taken seriously and investigated by trained personnel.** Anonymous complaints as well as complaints where the institutional affiliation of the alleged perpetrator is unidentified or unknown should be treated just as seriously as complaints where the identity is known.

### **ADDITIONAL PRACTICAL STEPS FOR HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES:**

- ❑ Designate a focal point and alternate within the agency to facilitate implementation of the agency's obligations to protect from SEA.  
*See [ToR for focal points on PSEA](#)*
- ❑ Cooperate with other agencies to establish an inter-agency focal point network tasked with advancing protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).  
*See [ToR for network on PSEA](#)*
- ❑ Ensure the network puts in place inter-agency complaints mechanisms for local communities to report SEA, as well as assistance mechanisms for victims.  
*See [UN victim assistance strategy](#) and [implementation guide](#)*
- ❑ Provide awareness raising to all personnel.  
*See [Facilitator's Guide](#) and [Film "To Serve with Pride"](#)*



### **RESOURCES (click for link):**

- ❑ [PSEA website and tools repository](http://www.un.org/pseataaskforce) (<http://www.un.org/pseataaskforce>)
- ❑ [Statement of Commitment on Eliminating SEA by UN and non-UN Personnel](#)
- ❑ [UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on special measures for protection from SEA](#)
- ❑ [OIOS reporting webpage and hotlines](#)
- ❑ **To request additional SEA resources, contact [seatf@un.org](mailto:seatf@un.org)**