

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Glossary¹

Accountability – a situation in which people who are affected by decisions (e.g. staff or people of concern) are able to influence the decisions and decision-makers through questions and complaints. Accountability implies one person's right to 'have a say' and another person's duty to consider and respond².

Agency – any non-governmental organization or international non-governmental organization or the United Nations.

Allegation – the formal complaint regarding a possible breach in the Agency's Code of Conduct by a member of staff.

Beneficiary – a person who receives assistance as part of either emergency relief or development aid through assistance programmes.

Child – any individual under the age of 18, irrespective of local country definitions of when a child reaches adulthood.

Code of conduct – a set of standards about behavior that staff of an organization are obliged to adhere to.

Complainant – the person making the complaint, including the alleged survivor of the sexual exploitation and abuse or another person who becomes aware of the wrongdoing and reports/brings forward the allegation.

Complaint mechanism or procedure – processes that allow individuals to report concerns such as breaches of organizational policies or codes of conduct. Examples of mechanisms include suggestion boxes, whistleblowing policies and designated focal points.

Evidence – information gathered during the investigation that proves or disproves an allegation.

Focal point – a person designated to receive complaints of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Gender – the social differences between men and women that are learned, changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures. Gender affects roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and needs of men and women in any context.

Incentive worker – an individual who receives non-monetary compensation for work or representation for an organization. Incentive workers are usually drawn from the beneficiary community.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) - The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance. It is a unique forum involving the key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners. The IASC was established in June 1992 in response to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182 on the strengthening of humanitarian assistance

Investigation procedures or protocol – a clear framework which assists organizations to conduct quality, confidential, safe and transparent investigations into allegations of staff misconduct.

¹ Sources: BSO Guidelines and IASC Model Complaints and Investigations Procedures and Guidance Related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

² Humanitarian Accountability Partnership – International,
<http://www.hapinternational.org/en/page.php?IDpage=64&IDcat=10>

Partner - agency or organization executing a project or undertaking any other work in the name of an agency or organization.

Risk – the possibility of loss or harm and/or the probability of an adverse occurrence.

Sexual abuse – an actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.³

Sexual abuse of children – the involvement of a child in sexual activity that s/he does not fully comprehend, give informed consent to, or for which s/he is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. It is evidenced by an activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. It may include, but is not limited to, the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other lawful sexual practices; the exploitative use of pornographic performances and materials.⁴

Sexual exploitation – 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.⁵

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) prevention strategy – plans and actions designed and implemented by organizations to reduce the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse of people of concern. Common measures include awareness-raising, staff training, improved recruitment policies, whistleblowing policies, complaint mechanisms, investigation procedures and codes of conduct.

Staff member – a person who works for or represents an organization, whether or not s/he is compensated monetarily for such work or representation.

Subject of the complaint (SOC) – the person alleged to have sexually exploited or abused the victim. complaint.

Victim – the person who is, or has been, sexually exploited or abused. This term implies strength, resilience and the capacity to survive.

Whistleblowing policy – an organizational policy which encourages staff members to report concerns or suspicions of misconduct by colleagues. The reports may concern people at other organizations and people at other levels in the organization's hierarchy.

Witness – any person who gives testimony or evidence in the investigation, including the survivor, the complainant, a person of concern, a staff member of a partner agency, the subject of the complaint or another staff member.

³ United Nations Secretariat. 9 October 2003. *Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation, 2003/13 (ST/SGB/2003/13)*. United Nations.

⁴ World Health Organization (WHO). 1999. *Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention (WHO/HSC/PVI/99.1)*. WHO, Geneva.

⁵ United Nations Secretariat. 9 October 2003. *Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation, 2003/13 (ST/SGB/2003/13)*. United Nations.