

# SCENARIO-BASED SEAH RECRUITMENT QUESTIONS AND GUIDANCE FOR INTERVIEWERS

A SERIES OF SCENARIO-BASED RECRUITMENT  
QUESTIONS AND GUIDANCE TO GAUGE  
CANDIDATES THEIR VALUES, ATTITUDES AND  
COMPETENCIES IN RELATION TO SEAH



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## ABOUT THIS SCENARIO BASED SEAH RECRUITMENT QUESTIONS GUIDE

It is in the context of the CEO Pledge that these Scenario based questions for SEAH (Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment) have been developed for use in recruitment and hiring so organizations may recruit strong candidates who are able to work with organizations in the way described in the pledge.

These are guiding questions and may be used as part of a larger interviewing process and incorporated into general recruitment interview guides.

This guide does not include screening as there are policies for reference checking practices like the **Hiring practices brief** and **Enhanced reference checks**; the **8 Actions on PSEAH at country level** which provides the critical actions needing to be taken with clear steps under each one and a personnel code of conduct with key PSEAH related areas that gives guidelines for recruitment on key actions.

### Additional documents:

Interagency scheme for the disclosure of safe-guarding related misconduct in recruitment process - legal and regulatory; statement of misconduct - The origin of this Scheme is a sector-wide need and collective willingness by humanitarian and development organizations to take concrete measures to allow them to access relevant information in the recruitment process about individuals who have committed misconduct that poses a safeguarding risk. Follow this link:

[https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/inter-agency\\_misconduct\\_disclosure\\_scheme\\_explanatory\\_notes\\_002.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/inter-agency_misconduct_disclosure_scheme_explanatory_notes_002.pdf)

## PURPOSE OF THE SEAH QUESTIONS

The purpose of these questions are to help recruiters be more discerning with their selection of job candidates and these questions should help interviewees see beyond the usual standard responses by digging much deeper into attitudes, values and competencies of candidates in this case particularly around SEAH. The guiding questions here are meant to compliment good recruitment practices; PSEAH (prevention of sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment) and thorough safeguarding practice.

Each organization will be able to use this guide alongside their usual interviewing questions.

The following sections outline more about the principles behind the design of questions and the guide 1. SEAH definitions; 2. Competency based questions 3. The value of behavioral interviewing

## SEAH DEFINITIONS

As you conduct the interviews have definitions ready so that you can bring clarity to the person's understanding should they at any point be confused or need explanation.

See below definitions extracted from UN SEA Glossary UN Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

<https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/UN%20Glossary%20on%20SEA.pdf>

### SECTION I : NORMATIVE

#### I.1. GENERAL TERMS – SEA AND MISCONDUCT

##### I. UN Standards of Conduct

Norms of conduct adopted by the United Nations for the conduct of its personnel, as defined in United Nations regulations, rules or other administrative issuances for its staff members, as well as other documents adopted by the United Nations to regulate the conduct of other categories of personnel than its staff members. The Standards of Conduct include the obligation to uphold and respect the principles set out in the Charter, and to be always guided by the following principles: fundamental human rights, social justice, the dignity and worth of the human person and respect for the equal rights of men and women and of nations great and small. The current UN Standards of Conduct were adopted by General Assembly resolution A/RES/76/257 and are contained in A/67/30.

## **2. Zero-tolerance policy**

The United Nations policy establishing that sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel is prohibited and that every transgression will be acted upon.

## **3. Misconduct**

For UN staff members, misconduct may arise through the failure by a staff member to comply with his or her obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules or other relevant administrative issuances or to observe the standards of conduct expected of an international civil servant. Sexual exploitation and abuse constitutes serious misconduct and may lead to the institution of a disciplinary process and the imposition of disciplinary measures. For UN military contingent personnel, misconduct means any act or omission that is a violation of United Nations Standards of Conduct, mission – specific rules and regulations or the obligations towards national and local laws and regulations in accordance with the status of forces agreement or status of mission agreement where the impact is outside the national contingent of military forces or UN mission. Misconduct is considered serious, when it includes criminal acts that result in or are likely to result in, serious loss, damage or injury to an individual or to a mission. Sexual exploitation and abuse constitutes serious misconduct.

For personnel other than those mentioned above, misconduct is defined as per the instruments that regulate their conduct.

## **4. Sexual abuse**

Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Comment: All sexual activity with a child is considered as sexual abuse. "Physical intrusion" is understood to mean "sexual activity". "Sexual abuse" is a broad term, which includes a number of acts described below, including "rape", "sexual assault", "sex with a minor", and "sexual activity with a minor".

## **5. Sexual activity**

Physical contact of a sexual nature.

## **6. Sexual exploitation**

Any actual or attempted abuse of 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.

Comment: "Sexual exploitation" is a broad term, which includes a number of acts described below, including "transactional sex", "solicitation of transactional sex" and "exploitative relationship".

## **7. Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)**

A breach of the provisions of ST/SGB/2003/13 (Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse), or the same definitions, as adopted for military, police and other United Nations personnel.

## 8. Sexual Harassment

As stated in: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osaginew/fpsexualharassment.htm>

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. While typically involving a pattern of behaviour, it can take the form of a single incident. Sexual harassment may occur between persons of the opposite or same sex. Both males and females can be either the victims or the offenders.

### COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

**Competency-based questions** are **interview questions that require candidates to provide real-life examples as the basis of their answers**. Candidates should explain why they made certain decisions, how they implemented these decisions and why certain outcomes took place. <https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/interview-advice/interview-questions/competency-based-questions>

### THE VALUE OF BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

Behavioral is another term for scenario based questions. The section below is extracted from a paper by the Society for Human Resource Management where this is outlined in great detail. In this document various competencies are highlighted and questions and a rating for each is given. One of these targeted competencies are Ethical Practice (The ability to integrate core values, integrity and accountability throughout all organizational and business practices). Under Ethical practice are a set of questions which interviewers may also find useful but have not been used in this particular set of SEAH focused scenario questions as outlined in this document.

Example questions and rating from the paper :

Question: Describe a time when you encountered a fellow employee behaving unethically. How did you respond?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected...

1 To ignore or fail to report unethical behavior. 2 To follow the organization's policy. 3 To report the behavior to the appropriate source (manager, confidential point of contact, etc.).

Question: Describe a time when you encountered a conflict of interest. What was the scenario? What did you do?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected...

Notes: 1 To ignore the conflict. 2 To attempt to mediate the conflict. 3 To report the incident to management.

<https://www.shrm.org/LearningAndCareer/learning/Documents/Behavioral%20Interviewing%20Guide%20for%20Early%20Career%20Candidates.pdf>

In implementing accurate and fair selection methods that include interviewing, employers can select from a variety of interviewing techniques.

It is important to choose the right kind of interviewing technique that matches the performance and retention needs of the organization and position as well as the culture of the organization/team. This guide focuses on behavioral interviewing, considered by many to be the most effective type of interviewing technique in nearly any type of organization.

Behavioral interviewing focuses on a candidate's past experiences by asking candidates to provide specific examples of how they have demonstrated certain behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities. Answers to behavioral interview questions should provide verifiable, concrete evidence as to how a candidate has dealt with issues in the past. This information often reveals a candidate's actual level of experience and his or her potential to handle similar situations in your organization.

Behavioral interview questions tend to be pointed, probing and specific. In addition, the behavioral interviewing method falls under the category of structured interviews. The main purpose of structured interviewing is to objectively match candidates to and compare candidates for positions by asking a specific set of job-relevant questions and using the same set of pre-determined rating scales to evaluate all candidates. This straightforward approach limits the amount of discretion for each individual interviewer, making it easier for the employer to evaluate and compare applicants fairly because all applicants are asked the same questions and evaluated using the same criteria. Thus, structured interviewing is not only effective for making a hiring decision, it can be crucial in defending against allegations of discrimination in hiring and selection. Beyond their structured approach, there are additional benefits to using behavioral interviews. Because behavioral interviews are based on an analysis of job duties and requirements of the job, bias and ambiguity are reduced because candidates are evaluated on job-related questions. In addition, job relatedness and consistency of the interview process may increase the perception of fairness among candidates. The job-related questions may also help candidates obtain a realistic perspective of the job. The following is an example of a behavioral interview question: · Describe a situation in which you used persuasion to convince someone to see things your way. If answers seem to be thin on detail, the interviewer can ask follow-up questions: · Can you tell me a little more about the situation? · What exactly did you do? · What was your specific role in this? · How did this turn out? · What other challenges did you come across? What did you do to address those? The premise behind behavioral interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in similar situations. To evaluate this most effectively and fairly, the main interview questions are delivered to every job candidate with the same wording, in the same order, and using the same scoring system. Because of this, the behavioral interviewing technique can take a great deal of effort and planning before an interview can ever take place.

## RECRUITMENT QUESTIONS ON SEAH AND SAFEGUARDING

### ETHICS AND VALUES

#### QUESTION 1

**Describe the ideal organization that you would like to work for and why ?**

**What are the characteristics of this ideal organization that you would want to be associated with?**

*Appropriate for all levels (field based, in direct contact with beneficiaries, different managerial levels)*

**Rationale:** This is a broad general question and allows you to break the ice into a conversation about ethics and gives you a window into how the interviewee understands an ideal organization which could provide insight into their ethics and values? We know that most employers want to hire employees with strong ethics. The problem, though, is that ethics aren't tangible. And candidates who are unethical will have no problem lying about their "strong moral compass" and "integrity." Obviously, if you ask a candidate if they consider themselves an honest person, most will say "yes" without batting an eyelash...whether true or not. So to really gauge ethical standards, you have to dig deeper and ask very specific questions.

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## QUESTION 2

**a) Have you ever suffered in your career for doing what was right – what were the circumstances and what did you do?**

**Do you have any regrets?**

*Appropriate for all levels (field based, in direct contact with beneficiaries)*

**b) How have you been pushed to deviate from best ethical practices and what was your response? (If any regrets, how would you handle those knowing what you know now?)**

*For management*

**Rationale:** Like question 1 above, this question also helps you uncover specific examples of the kind of behavior you're looking for. It also gives you some insight into the candidate's personal ethics and their ability to take a stand if necessary.

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## QUESTION 3

**Imagine that your manager/ person you report to does something that in your view is not correct or aligned with the values of the organization:**

**Choose from below appropriate for levels or role**

**a) Asks you to give incorrect information on a report and tells you its ok as it will help your organization to stay well funded. What would you do? How would you handle it? Who would you report it to?**

**b) Asks you to perform a personal task for them like running a personal errand to pick up their dry cleaning and tells you if anyone asks, to say it was work related.**

**What would you do? How would you handle it? Who would you report it to?**

**c) Uses office petty cash for personal needs and then tells you they will return the money at the end of the month and that you should not record it. / Uses office resources for personal and part-time business purposes and tells you not to share with anyone as it is not of their business.**

**What would you do? How would you handle it? Who would you report it to?**

**Rationale:** You would like to know how they would handle it. who would they report to, would they talk to that individual first before reporting it.

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## QUESTION 4

**Have you ever been in an organization where you found the organizational values went against your personal values, or where you used your own values to positively influence a negative or toxic culture in an organization – share an example of how you did this?**

*For a manager*

**Rationale:** This question could give insight into the kind of person you are hiring and whether they are answering genuinely or if its rehearsed. You are wanting to see whether they are aware of alignment of values and how this affects how we work.

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## QUESTION 5

**Did you see our Code of Conduct/Ethics Vision, Mission and Values statements on our website?**

**a) Which of our values made an impression on you and why?**

**(for a mid to high level management position)**

**b) Share some of the organizational values with the person and then ask them which one they feel most connected to and why? (The sharing of organizational values could also be done in an email before the interview so the person has had an opportunity to see it)**

*For field staff*

**Rationale:** This question tells you that the candidate did their homework and that ethics are important enough that they sought information about them on your website. The point of this question is to see whether the job seeker considers ethics and values important enough to include in his or her background research on your organization. It will give an indication of the values that the candidate is connected to.

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## QUESTION 6

**Choose one of these SEA scenarios a), b) or c):**

**a) A manager has been repeatedly asking a new young junior employee to work late and recently she confessed to you that he tried to kiss her and when she said no he told her he thought she was wanted it. Now she is too afraid to work late but is also scared she will lose her job if her manager feels she is not willing to work additional hours which she is being paid for from his personal budget. What would you do in this situation and with whom would you consult about it?**

**b) A colleague tells you that at a residential training she was accosted by a male senior colleague. They each had their own room, and on the last night of the training they had a party and some alcoholic drinks were had at the bar – she left early and fell asleep only to be awakened by the male colleague in her room trying to get into bed with her. he managed to push him away and he stumbled out of the room and she could lock the door – she realized she had forgotten to lock her door originally and now feels she is responsible and too afraid to speak out for fear of losing her job and also because he did not do anything other than try to get into her bed. What would you do in this situation and with whom would you consult about it?**

**c) You have heard from one of your field offices that refugee or vulnerable girls from the communities your organization works in have been approached for sexual favours in exchange for food parcels by certain male field staff. What would you do in this situation and with whom would you consult about it?**

**Rationale:** Here, you're looking for an answer that shows the candidate took action by talking to a coworker or manager about their concern, or that they sought out other company resources.



## INTEGRITY AND VALUES

### QUESTION 7

**Describe a time when you were asked to perform a task, lead an initiative or work in a way that went against your values. What did you do? What was the outcome?**

*Appropriate for all levels (field based, in direct contact with beneficiaries, different managerial levels)*

**Rationale:** Speaks to integrity and values and how the interviewee communicates their needs amid uncomfortable and uncertain situations. It also helps the hiring organizations to determine if there is a values fit with this candidate.

### QUESTION 8

**Think back to one of the most unhappy energy-depleting periods in your current or most recent position. What was going on? How did you respond to it?**

*Appropriate for all levels (field based, in direct contact with beneficiaries, different managerial levels)*

**Rationale:** If a depleting period of time was when the candidate was more office based, but they prefer working in the field or directly with communities, then this job — especially if it involves more administration — may not be a fit. Or if the person mentions something about reactions to PSEAH and Safeguarding watch but for nuances around whether the person saw it as something limiting engagement and relationships in the workplace or as an opportunity to become more authentic and build relationships on respect. Some highly patriarchal cultures may see safeguarding as an attack on men and putting men at risk in the workplace or something that could be used against them - watch out for these kind of statements as they will give clues to where a person really stands on these issues.

## SEAH AND SAFEGUARDING

### NOTES TO INTERVIEWER FOR SEAH QUESTIONS

- Before asking the questions and depending on the level of the person coming for the interview it may be necessary to explain the terms as not everyone will be on the same level of consciousness and exposure or English may not be first language – see guide for terms explained.
- Let the interviewee know they should not use names or identifying information for any specific cases. If they do wish to report an incident, provide them the appropriate resources to do so.
- If any topic or question is uncomfortable and you do not wish to answer or continue, please say so, and it will not be held against you. Inform interviewee you can provide resources for support.
- Here it may be necessary to observe cultural appropriateness and explain why the need to be clear and open and to ask the interviewee to please ask any questions for clarification.
- A broad open starting question allows the interviewer to get a sense of the person's understanding, awareness and consciousness about PSEAH.
- All of these questions will allow you to gain insight into the person's ability to be open and honest and gauge how they would act in such a situation. You should also be able to detect their levels of comfort with the topic and whether there may be underlying cognitive dissonance or cultural/religious discomfort around any of the issues needing to be discussed.

- It would be appropriate for someone to show discomfort as these are not topics which are discussed openly in many workplaces and they may not be expecting it in an interview. Your role as the interviewee would be to create a safe space for the person to share and to also watch out for whether the person may be triggered due to past sexual abuse. Be mindful and have a counsellor on standby or referral number ready should this be the case – it may be that the person is unable to share and would prefer to speak about it to someone outside.

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## QUESTION 9

**What do you understand about safeguarding/SEAH and why it is critical in any workplace to be open about these issues?**

*Ask above for mid to higher level management positions*

**Rationale:** You are wanting to establish what the person’s understanding is and why they think it is important to be open – this gives a window into their attitude toward Safeguarding.

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## QUESTION 10

**We know from scandals in the media about International NGOs and corporates accused of sexual abuse from people who were employed there and beneficiaries. We know that some of these scandals involved staff of INGOs abusing vulnerable beneficiaries in countries where they were recovering from a natural disaster.**

- a) What are your views on these happenings and how do you think they have impacted workplaces and relationships between staff and also staff and communities they serve?**
- b) Who do you think are most affected in these situations and who suffers the most as a result of what happened?**
- c) What would you personally do to prevent these abuses from occurring at home, in your community, at work or in the field with those with whom you work?**

*Appropriate for all levels (field based, in direct contact with beneficiaries, different managerial levels)*

**Rationale:** Here you are wanting to gauge the values that sit underneath what the person is saying and how they feel about it - their attitude toward it. You want to see if the person is able to acknowledge who is at risk. You want to see if this person is a genuine advocate and ally whom you would trust to employ or if the person is able to speak merely from an academic point of view. You want to hear what kind of action this person would take in such a situation.

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## QUESTION 11

**If you have or had observed or heard of any kind of SEAH/ Safeguarding situations in your previous workplaces - How had the organization and its leadership handled Safeguarding complaints? How were those decisions were communicated?**

**If you were in a position of power/influence or control what would you have done?**

*Appropriate for all levels (field based, in direct contact with beneficiaries, different managerial levels)*

**Rationale:** Taking the question deeper to hear how the person acted when they saw this happening and then what they thought about it, and what they would have done had they been in a position of influence.

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## QUESTION 12

**In a previous workplace where you have witnessed or heard of any safeguarding, bullying or other forms of harassment cases:**

**How did you handle the situation? Were there any interventions that helped the situation or made the situation worse? Looking back what could you have done differently if anything?**

*Appropriate for all levels (field based, in direct contact with beneficiaries, different managerial levels)*

**Rationale:** Again, you are wanting to see how discerning the person is about SEAH/ Safeguarding and how they handled it or what they thought of the interventions or steps taken to address it.

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## QUESTION 13

**If you are Manager or senior leader what should you do to create more awareness around Safeguarding/ SEAH in your workplace and with beneficiaries in the field to prevent this kind of situation from happening and escalating? What actions should be taken or processes implemented to address this kind of situation more effectively in a sustainable manner?**

**Rationale:** You are wanting to see what kind of leadership action this person would take and how assertive they would be. Also to hear the kind of strategies they know about already. You will be listening for whether they will be addressing this on an ongoing basis that takes it beyond managing by procedures and policies only or just jumping into fire fighting mode.

## FIVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO DELVE DEEPER

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## QUESTION 14

**Have you ever felt uncomfortable about a colleague's / friend/ community member's behavior, attitude and treatment of children or vulnerable people in a previous job or community role?**

**What happened ? How did it make you feel? What did you do? How was the issue addressed?**

**What would you do differently if this were to occur again?**

*Appropriate for all levels (field based, in direct contact with beneficiaries, different managerial levels)*

**Rationale:** This question helps you to gauge how a person is going to feel and act and whether they have a heightened level of consciousness.

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## QUESTION 15

**When tackling Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse (SHEA) prevention there is a fear that victims/ survivors face re-traumatization. Many survivors fear stigma from family and communities associated with sexual relationships or abuse and exploitation, face discrimination and marginalization, or are forced to**

relieve their experiences or name perpetrators, which can put them at risk for further emotional trauma and stress.

a) What should organizations do to protect victims/survivors

b) What would you do personally if a co-worker were to confide in you that they have been a victim/survivor?

*Appropriate for all levels (field based, in direct contact with beneficiaries, different managerial levels)*

**Rationale:** You would like to hear the person's response and thoughts about how organizations can protect victims and how they would deal with a situation when someone confides in them or if they were to be a victim of abuse.

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## QUESTION 16

**What role have you played as a manager in your previous workplace in promoting PSEAH and safeguarding consciousness ?**

a) What was the impact of it on your co-workers?

b) What else can you do to further promote safeguarding considerations within future teams you may be leading?

*For management*

**Rationale:** You want to hear about the previous experience of this person in a management capacity and the impact it had on the organization well as future ideas for promoting safeguarding.

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## QUESTION 17

**In your previous job were you exposed to any workshops or training on safeguarding or PSEAH? If yes - what did you learn there that you would implement in this new job if you were to be successful.**

*Appropriate for all levels (field based, in direct contact with beneficiaries, different managerial levels)*

**Rationale:** You want to establish prior learning in this area and how the learning landed for this person and how they would implement it.

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## QUESTION 18

**How do you feel about the fact that all staff should understand their responsibility in relation to safeguarding / PSEAH - to report inappropriate behaviors, including suggestive jokes or remarks on physical appearance to more shocking and serious behaviors such as sexual harassment (online bullying and sexual abuse through sharing naked pictures or pornography or sexual online communication with colleagues or beneficiaries) assault and abuse like rape, or trading goods or money for sex - even if they are not the target of the behavior?**

a) What is your view on this and what kind of behavior would you identify as serious

b) Where does one draw the line on what is appropriate and what is not appropriate?

*Appropriate for all levels (field based, in direct contact with beneficiaries, different managerial levels)*

**Rationale:** You want to gauge what the person sees as serious. The answer you are wanting is that all inappropriate behaviors are serious