# Getting real about your organization’s safeguarding culture

## A toolkit for safeguarding leads to use with CEOs and senior leaders

### session information

Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) occurs as a result of deeply entrenched power imbalances which also present themselves in the workplace. A healthy organizational culture[[1]](#footnote-2) is an important way to address these power imbalances and is integral in the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH) by and of NGO staff.

### CEOs and other Senior Leaders play a crucial role in setting the tone at the top by prioritizing and dedicating adequate resources to safeguarding. This tool is designed for safeguarding/PSEAH leads to use with CEOs and other Senior Leaders to stimulate conversations and promote sustained attention and action to improve your organization’s safeguarding culture.

#### **Target Audience**

CEOs and other Senior Leaders such as the Senior Management Team (SMT), Country Directors, Vice Presidents, etc. Any individual that plays a role in setting your organization’s strategic priorities will benefit from this tool.

#### **Facilitator**

Your organization’s safeguarding lead is the best suited to lead this discussion. If your organization does not have a safeguarding lead, any staff member with a knowledge of and passion for safeguarding can also step in.

#### **Logistics**

This tool comes with 20 pre-made PowerPoint slides. You are free to use and edit these PowerPoint slides freely to meet your needs. Each slide has an accompanying facilitation note to help you guide the session.

We recommend using MentiMeter for certain slides. If you do not have MentiMeter, [you can make a free account here.](https://www.mentimeter.com/) To use MentiMeter, do the following:

* Create your presentation in PowerPoint.
* Download your presentation as a PDF.
* Upload your PDF to MentiMeter.

### slide facilitation notes

Below are key points and guiding questions to help you facilitate the session.

**Slide 1: Introduction**

Facilitator: Introduce yourself and the session. If you are working with a group that doesn’t already know each other, take a moment to go around the room and allow everyone to introduce themselves. Let your participants know that you will be using MentiMeter, and that they should go to [www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com) and use the code displayed on your presentation.

**Slide 2: CEO Pledge Commitment**

*“Commit to sharing the learning which emerges, including uncomfortable insights, within a confidential learning space, so we can all benefit from each other’s experiences and identify how to tackle this issue together.” InterAction CEO PSEAH Pledge*

![Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated]()Facilitator: Read the CEO Pledge Commitment. If your organization is a Pledge signatory, take a moment to remind CEOs and Senior Leaders of [InterAction’s CEO Pledge](https://www.interaction.org/blog/ceo-pledge-on-preventing-sexual-abuse-exploitation-and-harassment-by-and-of-ngo-staff/) and the commitment your organization made to addressing SEAH. This provides a framework for a transparent and frank discussion.

**Slide 3: Safeguarding Journey Perception Poll**

*Technology note:* Use MentiMeter’s “Scales” question type. Create the question as demonstrated on the right.

Facilitator: Ask your participants to rank your organization’s safeguarding journey on a scale of one to ten; one being “just getting started” and ten being “has it under control.” Ask for volunteers to explain why they chose that ranking.

**Slide Four: Where are we as a sector?**

“*As opposed to ten years ago, pilots have been conducted, lessons have been collected, risks are understood, and implementation is now what is required. However, the sector is hesitating and will require to be pushed.” IASC PSEA Global Review*

“*Right at the epicenter of this tug for compliance and the need for systemic change.” Carolina Echegaray, IRC*

Facilitator: Read the quote from the IASC global review and Carolina’s quote from Forum. Key points include:

* As organizations, we are in different places. But as a sector, we are at a critical point. There has been progress, but as the about to be released IASC PSEAH Global Review tells us, there is concern that we are losing momentum or are distracted with other issues.
* Safeguarding is a long journey that must remain a priority.
* Without continued attention and focus on PSEAH, we are at risk of losing momentum and sliding backward.
* Carolina’s quote leads to the next slide: the tension between compliance and culture.

**Slides Five and Six: Approach to Safeguarding**

Compliance/Culture seesaw balance (or lack of)

Facilitator: Key points on slide five include:

* Right now, the sector’s safeguarding approach is largely weighed down by compliance.
* This makes sense, as many donors have created new regulations and standards to which our organization must comply.
* However, when we focus too much on the compliance side of things, safeguarding can become a checklist.

Key points on slide six include:

* We don’t want to lose compliance, but we do want to shift that balance to where culture is given more weight.
* Culture change takes time and is more difficult work, but ultimately is what is required to adequately address this issue.

**Slide 7: What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear there has been an SEAH incident?**

*Technology note:* Use MentiMeter’s “Word Cloud” question type. Users can submit their answers with the same code they used earlier.

Facilitator: Allow some time for the responses to populate the screen. Note if there are any recurrent themes.

**Slide 8: Approach To Safeguarding**

Organizational risk/Survivor-Centered seesaw/balance

Facilitator: Note if anyone on the previous slide listed “survivor” as the first thing that came to mind. Key points include:

* Here is another see-saw that highlights the inherent tension between organizational risk and reputation and being survivor-centered, people-centered, and community-centered.
* As leaders of your organization, it makes sense that you are thinking about the risk SEAH incidents pose to the organization’s reputation.
* However, we need to move to be more survivor-centered and people-centered.
* Facilitator asks: what does a people-centered and survivor-centered organization look like? (Allow for verbal discussion).
* Discussion about how this approach fits into your organizational values.
  + Facilitator: insert the organization’s mission and values onto the slide.
  + Facilitator: ask senior leaders to brainstorm how a people and survivor-centered organization is inherent to your organizational culture. Write down any particularly salient points to be shared with staff later.

**Slide 9: Why Does Culture Matter?**

“Sexual misconduct is rooted in imbalances of power. We need to reflect on how we use power and privilege and ensure that we create workplaces of respect and accountability, where misconduct is not tolerated, and where senior management communicates, embodies, and enforces ethical standards.” UNHCR

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Benjamin Franklin

Facilitator:

* Ask leadership: what do you think are the root causes of SEAH? Why does SEAH occur? What might be happening in an environment that allows for these behaviors?
* Read the two quotes
* We need to prioritize preventing SEAH as well as responding to it.

**Slide 10: Brainstorm**

*Technology note:* If using a paid MentiMeter account, use the “Speech bubble” question type. If using the free version, use the Q&A question type. For both types, set your question to “what does a safeguarding culture look like?”

Facilitator: allow participants to brainstorm what a safeguarding culture looks like. Ask if any participants would like to share their thoughts.

**Slide 11: Getting Real About Your Safeguarding Culture**

*Technology note:* If you are using MentiMeter for the presentation, you can insert the YouTube link to the “[Getting Real About Your Organization’s Safeguarding Culture Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fy-tQ6RnOSY)” directly into the presentation by clicking “Type” and “Video” and pasting the YouTube link.

Facilitator: [Play the Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fy-tQ6RnOSY)

**Slide 12: What was your initial reaction to the video?**

Facilitator: Open the question up to the group.

**Slide 13: IASC Global Review**

*“We are not ahead of the [PSEAH] problem. We are still just reacting. There is an obvious mismatch between Leaders who believe that we are addressing the issue and survivors and safeguarding staff who are clear that we are not [sectorally] doing ok.”* -Senior Agency Leader at Global Level, IASC Global Review

Facilitator: The IASC Global Review highlights the perception gap in how leaders vs. others feel that we are doing on PSEAH.

**Slides 14, 15 and 16**

Facilitator: Explain that each year, InterAction CEOs participate in its NGO Futures Survey. The survey asks CEOs about progress on several key measures, including safeguarding. InterAction also asked Safeguarding Leads at its PSEAH Working Group the same questions, and here are the results:

**Slide 14:** Responses to “my organization invests the staff and resources necessary to fully operationalize our commitments to InterAction’s CEO Pledge.”

Facilitator: ask leaders: “What does this look like?” “Where are we now on this, and where do we want to be?” “How can we come up with the funding?”

**Slide 15:** My organization has collective ownership, driven from the top-down, to prevent and respond to SEAH.

**Slide 16:** My organization’s leadership does everything it can to let staff at all levels know that safeguarding is an organizational priority.

**Slide 17: Accountability**

*“The Safeguarding Crisis was not about policy and procedure failings, but failings in culture. How did we allow people to behave like this and think they could be without consequences?” Sally Proudlove, Safeguarding Specialist, UNICEF*

*“Except for a few interviewees at the most senior leadership levels, trust in accountability remains as low as it was in 2010…  At all levels of the system, interviewees have concurred that we are not yet seeing evidence of the consequences of SEAH.” IASC PSEA Global Review*

Facilitator: Read the quotes that illustrate there is still a lack of trust and accountability in the system.

* Ask them how they define accountability.
* What doe accountability in SEAH cases looks like?
* Brainstorm how your organization can improve in this area.
* You can tie it to some of the Pledge commitments:
  + Will establish a reporting culture within our organizations that supports confidential reporting of all allegations of misconduct, with regular updates to the CEOs.
  + Will ensure our training is adaptive, flexible, and properly resourced so that it meets the needs of our staff, includes specialized training on bystander intervention, and empowers supervisors to prevent, respond to, and report incidents.
  + Will ensure a comprehensive review of our existing investigation procedures related to sexual abuse, exploitation, and harassment by and of NGO staff with attention to ensuring appropriate confidentiality, legality, and privacy, supporting due process while mitigating against “victim-blaming”
  + Recognize the immediate and long-term effects sexual abuse, exploitation, and harassment have on our staff and the people we serve, and we will ensure our organizations have robust policies and funded mechanisms to provide the necessary medical and psychosocial support.

**Slide 18: Transparency**

*“In addressing the Mercy Corps Board of Directors on Monday, I challenged them—all highly respected leaders and innovators in their fields—to continue to lead bravely and to take the lessons learned from the repeated failures of the past back to their own organizations.  I urged them to always remember what their board predecessors referred to as a ‘PR disaster’ grew greater and more fearsome in the dark and could only be addressed through* ***radical transparency and courage.****”  Tania Culver Humphrey*

Facilitator: Read the quote from Tania Culver Humphrey about accountability. Ask your leaders to brainstorm how you can be more transparent about safeguarding? Is your organization public with your incident data? Why/why not? How can you have more open conversations about safeguarding within your organization? Remind them that reports are good and sign that systems are working.

Facilitator: Choose from the following discussion prompts based upon your organization’s needs:

* When a concern is reported, do you see this as a systemic issue or a bad actor?
* What does a healthy reporting culture look like?
* What do leaders need to feel supported in their roles when it comes to PSEAH concerns?
* To what extent is leadership involved in the process now? What do we want that to look like in the future?

Pledge commitments:

* Will publicize a consolidated incident report on an annual basis, ensuring that this report includes the appropriate relevant data and maintains confidentiality.
* Will work together to develop practices that facilitate greater transparency regarding incidents in an effort to prevent perpetrators from re-employment within the sector.

**Slide 19: Safety/Trust**

*“If people can feel* ***safe*** *enough to talk about what’s happened to them and we can bring this out, it’s hard and it’s awful and it’s terrible, but that’s how things will eventually get better. It’s going to save people’s lives.” – Tania Culver Humphrey*

Facilitator: Read the quote from Tania Culver Humphrey. Ask your senior leaders:

* If you were a program participant, what would make you trust our organization and our systems?
* Do your own staff feel comfortable reporting an incident?
* If you were someone reporting a safeguarding incident, what would make you feel safe?
* What does a healthy, safe reporting process look like?

**Slide 20: Responsibility/Ownership**

Facilitator: With your leaders, brainstorm ways that you can model ownership over PSEAH from the top. Some examples include:

* Set up consistent meetings with your safeguarding lead.
* Send emails to all staff about safeguarding trainings and resources.
* Be consistent – every month bring safeguarding up at an all-staff meeting.
* Develop a 3,5-, and 10-year vision and strategic plan for safeguarding with your senior leadership team and safeguarding lead.
* Develop an engagement plan for staff and communities that is a part of the overall strategic plan/vision.
* With issues of anonymity in mind, discuss safeguarding issues at regular staff meetings (or have the safeguarding lead share with the CEO/leadership present and have talking points).
* Make it clear that operations/programming leads should be integrating safeguarding/PSEAH talking points into all presentations and information about program reach, quality, and metrics.
* Regularly meet with MEAL or the equivalent to discuss how quality measures are also assessing safety measures within program implementation
* Ensure that the senior leadership team prioritizes safeguarding as well.
* Include as a regular agenda item at Board meetings.
* Annual CEO report on Safeguarding/PSEAH.

**Slide 21: Looking Back**

Use this opportunity to reflect on the progress you have made on safeguarding in recent years. There are some discussion prompts on the slides, but feel free to edit them as you see fit for your organization.

**Slide 22: Looking forward**

Use this opportunity to brainstorm your next steps on safeguarding. You may want to consider scheduling a follow-up session with your CEO and SMT to brainstorm a collective vision on safeguarding. In this session you can discuss where you want to be on safeguarding in 5,10, 15 years?

1. UNHCR defines organizational culture as “a certain value system and set of principles that define how individuals use the authority and power they hold. These systems and principles vary from organization to organization, particularly since all organizations approach and define workplace culture differently.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)