

## 5) Supporting development of PSEA policies

### Why PSEA policies are important

It is essential for PSEA policy to be established so that organizations can address pertinent issues such as the behavior of staff and volunteers. Policies provide the basis for communications, compliance and consistent decision-making. They also enable organizations to hold staff and volunteers to account when they are in breach of a policy they have signed up to.

#### Good practice for PSEA policies and procedures

- be clear and accessible for everyone
- reflect the philosophy and values of the organization
- recognize gender specific vulnerabilities and promote gender equality
- establish standards of behavior which exceed the minimum standard required by law, where necessary
- respect the best interests of the child, if the organization interacts with children
- ensure that issues are dealt with in a consistent way
- provide continuity as members come and go
- sit with HR or a similar function (a requirement for any policy requiring access to sensitive information about personnel and others)
- be owned and directed by leadership to ensure implementation

### Actions

It is recommended that a working group is established for the development or strengthening of PSEA policies. A working group might include representation from National Society leadership, governance, human resources (“HR”), legal, security, operational and technical personnel. It is important that any PSEA, protection and/or gender staff are involved in the working group.

PSEA policies might include staff Code of Conduct, PSEA, child protection, anti-harassment, security and disciplinary policies.

Key principles and rules of conduct on which to base a PSEA policy include: zero tolerance towards SEA, principles of fair investigation, a survivor-centered approach and whistleblower protection.

**IFRC MANUAL ON PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE**  
Operationalizing practical actions to guide leadership, headquarters and field teams

A National Society's Code of Conduct, staff regulations and other instructions must be adapted to reflect the content of a PSEA policy and international (IASC) standards, including zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation and abuse. This means an updated version of the staff Code of Conduct is often necessary. Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations may either adopt **IFRC's staff Code of Conduct** or **ICRC's staff Code of Conduct** or develop their own Code, including zero tolerance to SEA. Similarly, National Societies may adopt **IFRC's PSEA Policy** or develop their own policy with reference to **IFRC's guidelines for a PSEA policy development process** (see **Tool 4**).

**HR and/or legal professionals can provide support for development of appropriate PSEA policies, in line with local legislation. In addition, IFRC can guide National Societies in developing PSEA policy and procedures, including providing briefings and training on PSEA.**

**An anti-harassment policy** (see **Tool 5**), with a commitment to providing a work environment that is free from workplace harassment and **sexual harassment**, and that promotes mutual respect, self-esteem and dignity, will be supportive to PSEA policy.