SEA Risk Identification and Mitigation Checklist Logistics

Sexual exploitation and abuse **(SEA) involves humanitarian and development workers committing unwanted acts of a sexual nature against beneficiaries and members of affected communities.** It is a serious abuse of power and trust. Everyone involved in logistics has a duty to protect affected communities from SEA. This includes ensuring assistance is delivered safely, respectfully, and without harm.

This checklist is designed for humanitarian aid workers to identify and address SEA risks in logistics programming. It is not exhaustive, and can be adapted to each context. For additional resources, consult the IASC PSEA guidelines, IASC SEA Risk Point Mapping methodology, and Empowered Aid materials linked below, all of which support further contextualisation.

KEY SEA RISK POINTS: LOGISTICS PROGRAMMES

Below are key risks points in logistics. In many contexts, community members are unaware of their rights or what constitutes SEA and/or have limited knowledge of how or where to report abuse confidentially. This heightens risks of SEA.

OVERALL RISKS

Gender imbalance and limited oversight

- **Logistics roles** (transport, warehouse, construction, security) **are male-dominated,** increasing the risk of harassment or abuse in the absence of strong safeguards.
- **Female staff and other vulnerable groups may face discrimination, isolation, or exploitation** in logistics settings.
- **Direct contact between teams or contractors/contractor workers (particularly males**) with children and teenage females.
- **Many logistics partners operate independently,** with minimal supervision or accountability mechanisms in place.
- **Monitoring is often weak, and existing complaints or feedback systems are unknown or inaccessible** to staff and communities.

Lack of awareness, oversight, and PSEA safeguards

- **Community members are often unaware of their rights or what SEA is**, and cultural norms or fear of retaliation - especially among women and children - discourage reporting.
- **Logistics staff & contractors** frequently interact with communities when delivering aid/setting up sites, but are rarely trained on SEA.
- **Drivers may exploit their perceived power,** especially where communities rely on passing trucks for income or goods, making transport corridors (e.g. borders, truck stops) hotspots for SEA.
- **Third-party actors - including drivers** - often lack SEA training, PSEA clauses in contracts, or enforcement of codes of conduct.

LOGISTICS CAPACITY ASSESSMENT (LCA)

- LCAs often involve engaging with communities, transporters, and informal labourers. **Assessors - often perceived as outsiders with authority or resources - may exploit power imbalances if not trained on SEA or guided by clear codes of conducts.**
- **Staff frequently travel to remote, insecure, or low-visibility areas** (e.g. ports, border crossings, truck stops, remote warehouses) where lack of oversight increases SEA risks.
- Consultations with **actors in transport, customs, warehousing, and security - often male-dominated & unregulated** - may take place without safeguards, increasing the risk of unchecked exploitation.
- **Temporary workers (e.g. porters, guides, drivers)** may be hired without proper vetting, contracts, or SEA training.
- **LCAs often focus on infrastructure & access, with little attention to protection.** Without a gender and safeguarding lens, SEA-prone environments may be overlooked and risks left unaddressed.

TRANSPORT OF GOODS & COMMODITIES

Lack of awareness, safeguards, and conduct standards

- **Transporters are often hired through informal or ad hoc processes,** without background checks, SEA training, or SEA clauses in contracts—raising the risk of hiring individuals with prior misconduct or no knowledge of expected conduct.
- **Subcontracted partners may also lack SEA clauses, and enforcement is weak,** increasing the likelihood of SEA by contractors or subcontractors who have direct contact with women, girls, and other at-risk groups.
- **Many transporters are unfamiliar with SEA standards** or existing reporting mechanisms.

Unsupervised access and limited oversight

- **Transporters may interact directly with affected populations** - such as during food or cash delivery or distribution - often **without supervision**, creating opportunities for SEA.
- **Communities along transport routes often face poverty, displacement, or weak legal protection, making them vulnerable -** especially female and child-headed households, who may face coercion in exchange for food, transport, or protection.
- **Logistics staff & contractors often work independently or outside regular oversight**, making it harder to detect or prevent abuse.

IDENTIFYING & ESTABLISHING WAREHOUSES

Limited vetting, weak oversight, and lack of reporting options

- **Contractors, casual labourers, construction workers, guards, and other short-term staff are often hired without proper screening**, standardised vetting, or SEA training - raising the risk of misconduct.
- **Warehouse staff, contractors, or guards may be unaware of expected behaviour**, SEA policies, or reporting obligations.
- **Victims or witnesses often lack safe, confidential ways to report SEA** - especially if staff are seen as powerful or external.
- **Warehousing operations rarely include community feedback mechanisms**, unlike other humanitarian services.
- **Fear of retaliation, job loss, or not being believed can prevent reporting** - particularly among women and temporary workers.

Gender imbalance and exploitative community interactions

- **Warehouses are typically male-dominated** (e.g. loaders, guards, drivers, supervisors), with limited infrastructure or support for female staff, who often hold subordinate roles.
- This **gender imbalance** - especially without strong oversight - **can heighten SEA risks and normalised misconduct.**
- **When warehouses are located near vulnerable communities, informal interactions with local residents** (e.g. unloading, casual labour, errands) **can become exploitative** if boundaries aren't clear.
- **Inappropriate locations, limited safeguards, and lack of community engagement** further increase exposure to SEA.

> **This is what the driver offered me. He asked if I needed money, I refused. Then he asked if I needed food, I told him that I could manage. Also, he offered to take me on a cruise, I refused. I had a strong enough personality to face him, but not all women are strong.**
>
> – Qualitative interview with Syrian refugee woman in Lebanon, Empowered Aid research

UNDERSTANDING AND CONTEXTUALISING SEA RISKS

WITH COMMUNITIES: RECOGNISING THEIR EXPERTISE

Women, girls, and other marginalised groups are experts in identifying the SEA risks they face when accessing aid. They know which people, places, and processes feel unsafe – and what helps reduce those risks. **Their meaningful participation to assess and monitor risks is essential for designing safer programmes**.

Consult them by using participatory methods (see Empowered Aid's Contextualisation Toolkit or M&E Tip Sheets). Ensure discussions are:

- Led by trained, same-sex facilitators in safe, confidential spaces
- Focused on community-level risks, not personal experiences

Examples of safe and unsafe questions:

- ✅ "Are there parts of the [activity or aid process] where women, girls, or other marginalised groups feel unsafe?"
- ✅ "What do they do to protect themselves?
- ❌ "Have you experienced SEA?" or "Who was the perpetrator?"

WITH PARTNERS: IDENTIFYING RISK POINTS IN ACTIVITIES

SEA risks also need to be identified within internal processes. The IASC SEA Risk Point Mapping exercise is designed for staff and partners, not community members. It provides a practical entry point for reflecting on SEA risks in day-to-day programming.

Facilitators (e.g. Cluster Coordinators) guide participants through:

- A short introduction on SEA risks and threats
- A group discussion to map potential risk points in at least two core activities they implement
- A focus on recognising risks – not yet mitigating them – to strengthen awareness and support mainstreaming of PSEA

This exercise can be done in person using flipcharts or online via Miro or PowerPoint. For full guidance, refer to the IASC SEA Risk Point Mapping Tool (Link to workshop package)

As risks evolve, continuous participatory monitoring ensures programmes remain responsive and community-centred.

Before consulting women and girls directly, consult the PSEA network and GBV sub cluster to obtain existing relevant information and coordinate around any consultations you plan to conduct (e.g. safety planning, sharing findings).

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Cluster Coordination Team

- Share SEA risk information across the sector and advocate for risk mitigation at every stage of programming.
- Support partners to apply SEA risk mitigation measures in line with this checklist.
- Liaise with the PSEA Network to ensure coordinated response and clear referral pathways.

All Logistics Partners

- Brief all staff, volunteers, & third-party providers on SEA & expected conduct.
- Inform communities about their rights & safe ways to report concerns.
- Act immediately & confidentially on SEA reports—use referral pathways & prioritise the survivor's needs.
- Monitor staff behaviour & regularly gather community feedback to identify and reduce risks.

PSEA Network, Focal Points, Advisory Groups, GBV AoR & Women's groups

- Train focal points & staff on how to receive disclosures & refer safely.
- Keep referral pathways updated & share them with cluster members.
- Provide guidance on safe, survivor-centred SEA reporting systems.
- Support awareness-raising & safe feedback mechanisms in communities.

RISK MITIGATION MEASURES

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Quality Assurance

- Connect with GBV coordination and women's civil society networks to **understand what makes women, girls, and marginalised groups feel unsafe,** and adapt your programme accordingly.
- Actively work toward gender balance by **hiring more women** as staff, drivers, and casual workers.
- **Coordinate with organisations offering skills training to encourage women to apply for roles typically seen as male** (e.g. drivers, construction, security). Set up employee resource groups (e.g. Women @Work) to provide peer support for women in logistics.

Raise awareness on SEA and share information on reporting

- Reach out to the GBV sub-cluster, AAP Working Group, PSEA network, or relevant ministry to **gather information on safe reporting channels** and key community messages on misconduct.
- **Ensure all staff and contractors are familiar with these PSEA messages.** Display them in warehouses and provide visual materials to transporters and other field personnel.

Ensure clear identification, conduct standards, and oversight

- **Ensure clear identification** for staff and contractors (e.g. names and company printed on shirts or jackets) and inform communities where to report misconduct.
- **Train all staff, casual workers, drivers, security, and third-party personnel on SEA and power dynamics.** Emphasise respectful behaviour toward women, girls, and at-risk groups. Ensure they sign a code of conduct and receive regular supervision. Examples are available from the GBV sub-cluster or PSEA network.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Prepare teams and establish safeguards

- **Ensure all assessment personnel are briefed on SEA reporting channels, procedures, and how to handle disclosures** before starting fieldwork.
- Train teams on PSEA, Do No Harm, and protection principles.
- **Establish clear, accessible codes of conduct for all involved** and confirm they are well understood.
- **Conduct background checks on local intermediaries,** verify references, and consult women's groups or female leaders as part of the vetting process.
- **Use female assessors and translators where possible,** especially when engaging with women and girls.

Coordinate and support safe reporting

- **Coordinate with Protection, GBV, and PSEA focal points** during assessment planning.
- **Ensure safe, confidential reporting mechanisms are available and accessible** to all groups throughout the assessment process.
- **Provide clear information to communities on what is SEA, how to report SEA** and what to expect when doing so.

TRANSPORT OF GOODS & COMMODITIES

Publicise SEA reporting channels and engage communities

- **Display information on rights and SEA reporting mechanisms in all locations.** Involve community members - especially women's groups - to ensure materials are inclusive and accessible.
- **Use resources** from the GBV sub-cluster, PSEA network, or tools like **PSEA at the Frontline – Together We Say No.**
- **Work closely with community members** (e.g. women leaders, refugee welfare committees) **to monitor interactions between transporters and the community,** and follow up on any concerns.
- **Make sure a transport supervisor is actively involved in monitoring driver behaviour** and following up on feedback.

IDENTIFYING & ESTABLISHING WAREHOUSES

Promote PSEA awareness and safe community engagement

- Train contractors, casual labourers, construction workers, guards, & other short-term staff on SEA, and sign codes of conduct.
- **Involve women's groups/leaders in selecting community volunteers** & casual workers and **clearly communicate selection criteria** and any incentives across the community.
- Adapt **warehouse infrastructure** to support women's participation (e.g. separate toilets, changing areas, lighting).
- Run regular community campaigns to raise awareness that **warehouse staff are aid workers,** explain expected conduct, and **share how to report misconduct.**
- **Set clear guidelines for how staff interact with communities.**

Train, vet, and supervise logistics personnel

- Support contracted service providers by requiring **mandatory SEA training for all staff interacting with affected populations.**
- Example: Empowered Aid's PSEA Training for Transport Drivers, with a PPT, and French and Arabic versions, available here.
- **Train all drivers and logistics staff** on codes of conduct, SEA prevention, and how to report misconduct.
- **Conduct spot checks during aid delivery** to assess staff knowledge of expected conduct and reporting channels.
- **Vet all third-party actors (e.g. vendors, financial service providers, engineers, technicians) and government partners. Include PSEA in contracts and support its integration into their activities.**

Monitor and enforce PSEA standards

- **Include SEA risk mitigation measures in contracts** with suppliers, contractors, and warehouse staff - making PSEA compliance a condition for partnership.
- **Where feasible, use remote monitoring tools** such as CCTV cameras to support oversight.
- **Conduct regular spot checks to confirm PSEA materials are visible in warehouse settings,** and engage staff in ongoing conversations about SEA and expected conduct.
- **Coordinate closely with PSEA Network, GBV actors, or relevant line ministries** to follow up on potential risks and mitigation measures, especially where no dedicated PSEA mechanism exists.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE, HEAR, OR SUSPECT SEA

If someone shares a concern with you, or you witness or suspect SEA, it's your responsibility to act – safely and appropriately. Here's how:

- Stay calm and listen. Don't pressure the person to share more. Never ask for details.
- Believe them. Don't question their story or make promises you can't keep.
- Keep it confidential. Only share the information with those who need to know to take action.
- Follow your organisation's reporting procedure. If you're not sure how, speak to your PSEA focal point, local PSEA network, or supervisor immediately.

Always put the survivor's safety, dignity, and wishes at the centre of your response. Do not try to investigate or intervene yourself.