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Report on the Implementation of the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and Response

DAC Meeting, 3 July 2024

This document presents the Report to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) on the Implementation of the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and Response [[OECD/LEGAL/5020](#)]. It was approved and declassified by the DAC at its meeting on 3 July 2024.

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1. This document presents, in its Annex, a Report by the DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) on the implementation of the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and Response [[OECD/LEGAL/5020](#)] (hereafter, the “DAC Recommendation”), including on the implementation of its substantive provisions, its dissemination and its continued relevance. The Report also includes conclusions on whether the DAC Recommendation requires revision or whether further actions to support its dissemination and implementation are necessary.
2. Delegates of the GENDERNET and the DAC Reference Group on Ending SEAH were invited to provide comments on a previous draft [DCD/DAC/GEN(2024)3] and their feedback has been reflected in this revised version. Once approved and declassified by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the Report will be published on the [online Compendium of OECD legal instruments](#).

Background

3. The DAC Recommendation was adopted by the DAC on 12 July 2019. The adoption of the DAC Recommendation was preceded by several commitments by DAC members in the DAC context, notably the 2018 [Tidewater Joint Statement](#) and an agreement supporting the development of a specific DAC instrument [DCD/DAC/M(2018)6/FINAL].
4. The DAC Recommendation, the first international standard of its kind, provides a six-pillar framework for developing an organisational architecture that safeguards individuals and institutions against the harm that sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) poses and for working in a victim/survivor-centred manner in all matters. These six pillars cut across:
 - a. Policies, professional conduct standards, organisational change, and leadership
 - b. Survivor/victim-centred response and support mechanisms
 - c. Organisational reporting, response systems, and procedures
 - d. Training, awareness raising, and communication
 - e. International coordination
 - f. Monitoring, evaluation, shared learning, and reporting
5. The DAC Recommendation has 36 Adherents (the DAC and non-DAC members having adhered to it): all 32 DAC members¹ and four UN entities, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) (hereafter, the UN entity Adherents).
6. Since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation in 2019, SEAH and other forms of gender-based violence remains endemic. SEAH is an abuse of power, and SEAH risks are prevalent in any contexts characterised by any degree of gender inequality and structural power imbalances. The global pushback against gender equality, a global increase in the number of

¹ Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic (Czechia), Denmark, the European Union, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

violent conflicts, an increase in humanitarian crises, and rising authoritarianism, all contribute to the production of elevated risk environments within which SEAH occurs. Accelerating collective action towards preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment is pertinent in safeguarding all actors, protecting the human rights of victim/survivors, as well as upholding the integrity of development co-operation and humanitarian assistance overall.

7. The DAC Recommendation instructs the GENDERNET to report to the DAC no later than five years following its adoption.

8. This Report also supports the evidence-base of projects and initiatives relevant to SEAH prevention and response, supports Adherents in identifying trends and priorities, as well as identifying areas for further work and collective action, and to develop a better understanding of how to bring about change.

Methodology

9. A survey was launched in July 2023 to allow for the collection of responses from Adherents, and to gather information and experiences from Adherents, based on their efforts to implement the DAC Recommendation [DCD/DAC(2023)42].

10. The survey was sent to DAC delegates, the GENDERNET and DAC member representatives of the DAC Reference Group on Ending SEAH, with the intent that it be shared with the relevant officer/department(s) of the development co-operation agency or the ministry responsible for development co-operation and/or humanitarian affairs. Respondents were encouraged to consolidate information across their organisation and provide one singular survey response. Responses were received from 35 Adherents (the Respondents).

11. To enable a trend analysis, the Report also draws on the baseline survey conducted to inform the development of the DAC Recommendation in 2018, as well as on the survey for the interim progress report developed in 2021 [DCD/DAC(2021)51]. There is significant overlap in the questions between these preliminary surveys, allowing for comparison over the years where relevant.

12. The Report was thus developed from the following primary sources: the responses to the Survey, and complementary information and documentation provided by Adherents. Other additional sources include the DAC Peer Reviews, and the 2021 Interim Progress Report (OECD, 2021^[11]).

Process

13. An initial draft of the Report was shared with the GENDERNET and the DAC Reference Group on Ending SEAH for comments, and with the four UN entity Adherents [DCD/DAC/GEN(2024)3]. The Report was then revised based on the feedback received and transmitted to the DAC for approval and declassification.

14. Following its approval and declassification, the Report will be publicly available and be included in the online compendium of [OECD Legal Instruments](#).

Summary

15. Five years following its adoption the DAC Recommendation has proved an important standard to steer policy change for ending sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment in

development co-operation and humanitarian assistance. The DAC Recommendation has served to mobilise changes across the pillars of the DAC Recommendation, with some pillars showing more progress than others.

16. The survey and Report underline that the DAC Recommendation remains an important, necessary, and useful tool, with many Adherents refer to how this standard has supported organisation of its systems, promoted action on this agenda internally and externally, and facilitated coordination among essential partners. This will remain important and support continued work on implementation.

Implementation

17. In terms of framing its ultimate objectives, the DAC Recommendation refers explicitly to “ending” SEAH. While an ambitious objective, it is important to recognise even incremental progress towards this goal. The evidence for such progress (as discussed in pillar 6) should not be linked to the number of cases reported. Progress should also not be defined *only* by policies or systems being established, but should also consider the extent of their implementation, efficacy, and impact. Progress also depends on broader shifts in norms and behaviours, which are specific to each context.

18. Since 2019, **progress** has been made across a number of pillars, including:

- a. **An increase in the establishment of SEAH policies and mechanisms.** In most Adherents, an “institutional architecture” for SEAH prevention and response has been put in place.
- b. **There has been a notable rise in coordination across stakeholders, and within the DAC membership specifically.** In order to sustain this coordination, and make further improvements across contexts, further efforts and dedicated resources will be required. Since 2019 and going forward, it has been shown that the DAC remains a critical venue for coordinating action and maintaining commitments in this area, including through the DAC Reference Group Ending SEAH, which continues to be an important setting for learning and exchange.
- c. **Efforts have been made in terms of improving work between DAC members and implementing partners.** Most commonly, this has taken the form of adapting partnership and funding agreements to include SEAH prevention and response, and related requirements. Other work around reinforcing dialogue between partners and building capacity will continue to be needed to strengthen partnerships.
- d. **Increased coordination across actors around holding perpetrators to account,** including avoiding re-hiring and circulation within the international development and humanitarian systems, has been noted. This also includes an increase in complementary efforts such as the adoption of anti-retaliation policies.
- e. **Many Adherents have also dedicated resources to capacity building, notably through training.** To further implementation, these efforts should continue to be further strengthened with the deepening of awareness raising efforts, and with a wider range of communities and partners. Several Adherents also specifically mention the need to learn and evaluate the impact of trainings, and adjust as needed.

- f. Across the system, and specifically with Adherents, **there is a raised awareness of the need for and importance of systematically applying a victim/survivor-centred approach across all systems.** There is also the recognition by many Adherents that more needs to be done to implement this approach and practically put it in place.
19. There are several areas of **more mixed progress**:
- a. It has been noted by many Adherents that **while institutional leadership has demonstrated increased support for the SEAH prevention and response agenda, there have been more mixed results in making sure that this support is sustained, and translated into concrete actions.** Prioritisation of this agenda by leadership still remains overly reliant on external pressures such as cases coming to public attention or gaining a higher profile.
 - b. **There has been some increase in acknowledgement of the responsibility of all actors to ensure adequate and comprehensive support for SEAH victim/survivors** (whether within organisations or externally). **However, service delivery still remains challenging in many contexts,** and could be strengthened by further coordination and dedicated resources. Specialised knowledge and capacity when supporting SEAH victim/survivors also remains challenging.
 - c. **Many institutions have brought together their sexual harassment (SH) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) approaches. However, further work to address the underlying causes and factors still remains a significant challenge,** and progress in implementing policies, processes, and systems for all relevant stakeholders remains varied across Adherents.
20. There are many areas where **progress has been minimal** and significant work remains to be done:
- a. **Establishing adequate and sustained financing and resourcing for SEAH prevention and response is one of the primary challenges** reported by Adherents. While there has been a minimal increase in dedicated resources internally for some DAC members since 2019, significant gaps remain, including across initiatives and programming.
 - b. **Acknowledgement of the need to understand the risk of SEAH across and within all institutions and in all development and humanitarian contexts remains limited.**
 - c. While efforts have been made at the headquarters level, **adaptation to country and local contexts remains challenging, and very limited in many areas.** This includes consultations with local communities and involvement of local stakeholders in processes and mechanisms. Coordination with specific local actors remains challenging, and an area for future learning (also specific to each context); especially in regard to collaboration and partnerships with partner governments.
 - d. Many Adherents report that creating stronger environments for prevention remains extremely hard to define and measure, and thus also difficult to implement. **Shifting underlying organisational culture and behaviours**

that are supportive of more equal and safe environments remains limited.

- e. As progress in implementing the DAC Recommendation continues and more evidence and experiences are gathered, **monitoring and evaluation** will remain important. Many Adherents have not yet engaged in such processes. The information gathered – through documentation, tracking cases, learning from others – will further underline the work in monitoring and evaluation. **The consideration of data, evidence, and how it is treated, is an area for greater learning.** This includes not only around information-sharing, but also the consideration of qualitative data, in addition to quantitative.

21. With this in mind, the following key topics have been identified as priorities of **areas for accelerated action to support progress on implementation of the DAC Recommendation:**

- a. **More efforts should be made to adapt all development programming across sectors to integrate SEAH prevention and response. The risk of SEAH needs to be taken into account across all contexts, including all development, humanitarian, and peace contexts.** This includes working through multiple channels and considering approaches to overall prevention, including risk management and mitigation.
- b. **Sustained and adequate financing and resources remain essential in order to support progress on ending SEAH.** Needs remain stark in relation to assistance and support services for victim/survivors; dedicated capacity in institutions; capacity of implementing partners to ensure prevention of SEAH (PSEAH) measures; and contributions to coordination mechanisms and joint initiatives. This includes dedicating resources, including through development finance, to gender equality and SEAH prevention and response, and supporting programs across development sectors that contribute to ensuring safer environments more broadly. More work should be done to identify priority areas.
- c. **Strengthening localisation of the SEAH prevention and response agenda is crucial.** This includes improving adaptation to specific contexts, collaborating and co-operating with local stakeholders, and improving our efforts on better governance systems formal and informal, and including partner governments where safe and appropriate. Improving the accessibility of existing mechanisms, and the tools used to communicate and raise awareness should also be considered.
- d. **More coherent efforts across SH and SEA are critical to support the promotion of safe environments everywhere, across and within all institutions.** Institutions should “walk the talk” and improve their own internal systems, practices, and organisational culture, including stronger coordination within institutions, which supports greater policy coherence across teams, departments, and ministries. A holistic approach is important, and efforts extending to other areas - such as gender equality, and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV) - should also be considered.
- e. **Strengthening prevention efforts will remain critical to stop SEAH from happening in the first place.** Many efforts since 2019 have focused

on response; although this work remains essential, more efforts should be made to create safer environments. There is a need to intervene along the continuum of violence, and consider work to address perpetrators of SEAH. This will include a focus on transforming norms and behaviours for a more supportive environment to address gender inequality, harmful power imbalances, and other forms of inequalities². There is also a need to build the evidence-base around effective prevention efforts. .

- f. **More should be done to measure the quality and impact of existing systems.** Recognising that progress has been made to establish institutional frameworks for SEAH prevention and response, more needs to be done to consider their implementation and how to revise and improve, as needed. This necessitates examining sources of evidence and data, including qualitative- and quantitative data. Improvements in mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting - including on financing³ - will strengthen the overall effectiveness of SEAH prevention and response.

Dissemination

22. Overall, Adherents have undertaken steps to disseminate the DAC Recommendation at various levels and through diverse channels. This includes dedicated policy dialogues and peer-learning exchanges, conducting trainings, and translating the DAC Recommendation.

Continued relevance

23. All Adherents report that the DAC Recommendation serves its purpose as stated in the DAC Recommendation, and that it incentivises change in their systems. A majority of Adherents report that there has been noticeable improvement of approach to SEAH prevention and response through the development of new policies since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation in 2019. Adherents also report an increased emphasis on SEAH prevention and response in areas of development policy and programming, a noticeable improvement of work on SEAH prevention and response through structural and organisational changes.

Next steps

24. In light of the above, in order to further support implementation and dissemination of the DAC Recommendation, the DAC is invited to:

- a. encourage Adherents to:
 - i. continue to disseminate this DAC Recommendation, particularly throughout their development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding agencies and partners, and across government;
 - ii. continue to learn from the implementation of this DAC Recommendation, mindful of other relevant OECD and DAC

² This should include through implementation of the DAC Recommendation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance [[OECD/LEGAL/5022](#)].

³ This should include reporting through the OECD [Creditor Reporting System](#) and the [DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker](#) and related VAWG code.

standards, including the DAC Recommendation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance [[OECD/LEGAL/5022](#)], and other the OECD Gender Recommendations;

- iii. address the underlying norms, behaviours, and factors that contribute to the continuing perpetration of SEAH within their institutions and in development, humanitarian, and peace contexts, including working on transformative approaches to shift power imbalances and addressing root causes of gender inequalities;
 - iv. strengthen efforts across the areas for accelerated action, as identified in the Summary and conclusions section of the Report, to guide further learning and progress in implementing the DAC Recommendation.
- b. invite GENDERNET to:
- i. continue to support Adherents in addressing the main challenges set out in the Summary and conclusions section of the Report, including through continued analysis, and sharing of good practices including in the context of the DAC Reference Group on Ending SEAH; and contribute to the DAC peer review mechanism, including through the development of options for more frequent review of the implementation of this DAC Recommendation;
 - ii. continue to disseminate this DAC Recommendation, including in relevant discussions in other international fora and in relation to applicable international agreements, such as on women, peace and security;
 - iii. report back to the DAC on the implementation, dissemination and continued relevance of the DAC Recommendation in five years.

**Annex. Report on the implementation
of the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual
Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment in
Development Co-operation and Humanitarian
Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and
Response**

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Background

History and Context

1. Violence – and specifically gender-based violence (GBV) – is perpetuated across societies and contexts. Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) is an abuse of power and often a form of gender-based violence. SEAH persists globally – including in all development and humanitarian settings and institutions, often perpetrated by those working in the aid sector against individuals in a relative position of vulnerability. All SEAH is detrimental to victim/survivors, regardless of the context and protecting those who are at risk of SEAH and people experiencing vulnerability is of utmost importance.
2. Ending SEAH is also central to both the legitimacy and effectiveness of development co-operation and humanitarian assistance. Development and humanitarian organisations have a particular responsibility to prevent and respond to SEAH. Outwardly, organisations are trusted by local communities to provide assistance in ways that do not cause harm. Internally, organisations are trusted, and often obligated by law, to provide a safe work environment free of violence or discrimination of any kind. The persistence of cases of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment also erodes legitimacy and positive impact of development assistance. It also undermines global efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.
3. Certain cases of sexual exploitation and abuse have gained higher profile attention, including through reporting making its way to public attention. In 2002, the extensive sexual abuse and exploitation of refugee children by aid workers in West Africa was detailed in a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Save The Children UK (UNHCR & Save The Children UK, 2002^[2]). These cases initially triggered a large response within the aid sector, and the UN Secretary General issued the bulletin on Special Measures for the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), which in turn led to the establishment of the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) PSEA Task Force (IASC, 2011^[3]).
4. In early 2018, another acute crisis was brought to public attention, with several high-profile cases of SEAH within the development co-operation and humanitarian assistance sector, which were brought forward (Oxfam, 2018^[4]). These cases stretch across geographies, contexts, implicated organisations, and nature of the abuse – yet they underscore the systemic nature of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment within development co-operation and humanitarian assistance.
5. On the heels of this crisis, a number of initiatives commenced in 2018, and the members in the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) took clear steps with the standard on this issue when they adopted the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and Response [[OECD/LEGAL/5020](#)] on 12 July 2019 (hereafter “DAC Recommendation” or “DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH”).
6. The adoption of the DAC Recommendation was preceded by several commitments by DAC members in the DAC context, notably the 2018 [Tidewater Joint Statement](#) and an agreement supporting the development of a specific DAC standard [DCD/DAC(2018)22]. Sub-sets of DAC members also made commitments in other international venues, such as the 2018 [G7 Whistler Declaration on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in International Assistance](#) at the [2018 London Summit](#). DAC members were motivated to quickly pull together the first international standard of its kind, recognising their individual and collective responsibility.

7. The development of the DAC Recommendation aligned with, and drew from other DAC and OECD standards, including the DAC Recommendation for Development Co-operation Actors on Managing the Risk of Corruption [[OECD/LEGAL/0431](#)]; the Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship [[OECD/LEGAL/0398](#)]; the Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life [[OECD/LEGAL/0418](#)]; and the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus [[OECD/LEGAL/5019](#)].

8. Important international standards⁴ related to preventing and responding to SEAH also informed the development of the DAC Recommendation, including, but not limited to UN guidelines⁵, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Principles and Minimum Operating Standards on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (MOS-PSEA), and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS).

9. There are currently 36 Adherents to the DAC Recommendation (the DAC and non-DAC members having adhered to it):, the 32 DAC members (hereafter "DAC members") as well as four UN entities, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)⁶ (hereafter, the "UN entity Adherents"). At the time of adoption in 2019, there were 30 members of the DAC. Lithuania became a DAC member, and thus an Adherent to the DAC Recommendation on 16 November 2022, and Estonia on 4 July 2023.

10. The DAC Reference Group on Ending SEAH was created in 2018 originally to inform the development of the DAC Recommendation [DCD/DAC(2018)46/REV1] (hereafter "DAC Reference Group"). The DAC Recommendation also instructs the DAC Network on Gender Equality ("GENDERNET") to "...a. Support a multi-stakeholder forum in which Adherents, through a consultative process, share policies, best practices, and innovative approaches to SEA and SH prevention and response in order to support mutual learning and adaptation, and develop tools for the implementation of this DAC Recommendation," and the DAC Reference Group fills the role of this multi-stakeholder forum. The DAC Reference Group has met regularly since 2018 in both its multi-stakeholder and DAC member-only format. The DAC Reference Group has facilitated peer learning and information sharing; as well as multiple high-level events to mark important moments of collaboration and mobilise political leadership. All Adherents, as well as additional experts from civil society organisations, international organisations, international financial institutions (IFIs), and academia participate regularly.

Purpose and scope of the DAC Recommendation

11. The DAC Recommendation provides a six-pillar framework for developing an organisational architecture that safeguards individuals and institutions against the harm that SEAH poses. It also projects a victim/survivor-centred approach in all matters. Its six pillars are:

1. Policies, professional conduct standards, organisational change, and leadership

⁴ For a list of international standards that have informed the development of the DAC Recommendation, please refer to the full text of the DAC Recommendation: [[OECD/LEGAL/5020](#)]

⁵ Notably, but not limited to, UN Secretary-General *Special Measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse* (ST/SGB/2003/13) (2003), *Prohibition of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority* (2008) and *Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigation* (2017).

⁶ UNICEF [adhered](#) on 18 December 2020; UNHCR [adhered](#) on 5 February 2021; UNFPA [adhered](#) on 18 October 2021; and UNOPS [adhered](#) on 30 August 2022.

2. Survivor/victim-centred response and support mechanisms
3. Organisational reporting, response systems, and procedures
4. Training, awareness raising, and communication
5. International coordination
6. Monitoring, evaluation, shared learning, and reporting

12. Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) describes varying forms of sexual misconduct⁷ perpetrated by an individual leveraging their comparative power or trust over someone else for sexual purposes. The difference between ‘exploitation’ and ‘abuse’ tends to be interpreted based on the nature of the misconduct but may also depend on the classification of the victim/survivor. For example, if a child is the victim/survivor, this is de facto sexual abuse. In many organisations, SEA is often defined based on the profile of the perpetrator and the victim/survivor – SEA is often interpreted as abuse or exploitation that is carried out in a development or humanitarian context, between someone who is working in development or humanitarian capacity and perpetrates SEA against someone external to that organisation, such as a member of the local population or an aid beneficiary.

13. Sexual harassment (SH) is unwanted sexual behaviour in a work environment. For example, where the victim/survivor and the alleged perpetrator belong to or operate in the same professional community. In many cases, regardless of the level of severity or form of the sexual misconduct, SH is interpreted to be cases within an institution, whereas SEA is perpetrated in development or humanitarian contexts.

14. Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) thus encompasses different types of sexual misconduct, perpetrated by different actors, towards victim/survivors, in a variety of contexts. Considering SEAH as a whole enables a better understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding SEA and SH in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance, acknowledging that both SEA and SH can be perpetrated in the workplace and also beyond.

15. In addition, SEAH can be seen as existing as part of a continuum of gender-based violence (InterAction, 2022^[5]; Scottish Women's Aid, 2022^[6]; InterAction, 2022^[7]; UNESCO, 2023^[8]). Understanding SEAH as existing on a continuum of violence allows for the identification and application of appropriate prevention and response efforts throughout different points on the continuum. As an example, small-sample research has shown that perpetrators of sexual harassment are likely perpetrators of sexual assault (InterAction, 2022^[5]). While there is a need for additional research, understanding any potential correlations in patterns of behaviour will further support SEAH prevention and response efforts.

16. While cases of SEA and SH can have different implications, including but not limited to, the kind of support and assistance to the victim/survivor, the responsibilities of implicated institutions, the accountability measures against the perpetrator, etc.; in many circumstances, there are common underlying factors that contribute to enabling environments that heighten risk and allow for the perpetuation of different forms of SEAH. How an institution addresses SH should thus not be separated from its approach on SEA; an institution’s response to how it addresses any form of sexual misconduct internally is an indication of how it also responds to and aims to prevent any form of sexual misconduct “externally”.

⁷ Sexual misconduct is defined or interpreted as an umbrella term encapsulating all forms of SEAH. Depending on the institution, the term is not always interpreted in the same way or is even accepted as suitable description for SEAH. For the purposes of this Report, the term SEAH is used, but the use of “sexual misconduct” in a limited number of instances is to reflect the variety of practice within Adherents.

17. “Ending” SEAH (as explicitly in the title of the DAC Recommendation) will depend on shifts in culture and norms and behaviours, other longer-term work including addressing gender inequalities, power imbalances, other forms of violence and harassment, many forms of discrimination, and other factors that create and exacerbate risks of SEAH. These changes can often be incremental and require long-term timelines; however, measuring shorter-term advances towards shifting culture and change underlying norms, in order to create preventive environments to stop SEAH from being perpetrated are also important. See paragraphs 64-69 for a further elaboration of the ecosystem of SEAH.

18. The DAC Recommendation is the first international standard on SEAH that applies to development co-operation and humanitarian assistance, and aims to primarily support governments. It is intended to incentivise and help governments to implement more coherent and aligned measures to prevent and respond to SEAH in their activities. At its core, SEAH prevention and response is about protecting individuals and communities from harm, empowering victim/survivors in achieving meaningful redress, and upholding the integrity of development co-operation and humanitarian assistance in any context.

19. The scope of the DAC Recommendation is most immediately applicable to development co-operation and humanitarian assistance contexts and specifically development and humanitarian actors, but SEAH pervades all spheres of society and the pillars of the DAC Recommendation provide valuable guidelines for a broader variety of contexts. Equally, the DAC Recommendation was designed primarily to support governments, notably DAC members, but its principles can be applied to many institutions.

20. The DAC Recommendation can also support governments in improving their efforts to address all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Synergy between DAC members’ domestic and international efforts on SEAH and GBV support greater accelerated action in this field.

Developments in the field

21. Since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation in 2019, SEAH and other forms of gender-based violence continues to be perpetuated globally. GBV can impact people regardless of “disability, gender identity and sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age or religion”⁸. 86% of all women and girls are living in countries without robust legal protection from, or without readily available data for, violence against women and girls (VAWG) (Generation Equality & UN Women, 2023^[9]). The lack of strong legal frameworks and policies that address all forms of GBV and protect women and girls, in all spheres of their lives is a key challenge facing OECD members as well, when it comes to the prevention and protection against GBV (OECD, 2023^[10]).

22. There is also an increase in GBV across many contexts and through different venues, including both online and offline. For example, technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) is highly prevalent globally, with research showing that 85% of women, in the 51 countries surveyed, have either experienced or witnessed online violence being committed against women (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021^[11]). TFGBV includes video- and image-based sexual abuse, cyberharassment and cyberstalking, etc.

23. Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) is a form of GBV. It is an abuse of power, fuelled by pre-existing gender inequalities and structural power imbalances (OECD, 2022^[12]). In the majority of cases, women and girls are the victims/survivors of SEAH and other

⁸ DAC Recommendation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance [[OECD/LEGAL/5022](https://www.oecd.org/legal/5022)]

types of GBV, with almost one in three women having been victims of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both, at least once in their life (UN Women, 2023^[13]). SEAH disproportionately affects individuals facing systemic discrimination and barriers to inclusion based on, but not limited to disability, gender identity and sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age or religion, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The majority of, but not all, intimate partner and sexual violence is perpetrated by men against women (WHO, 2024^[14]). Emerging findings from the aid sector also shows that men make up the majority of perpetrators of SEAH at 68% of all incidents recorded by the reporting organisations – with the caveat that the perpetrator(s) were unknown in an additional 25% of all cases (CHS Alliance, 2023^[15]).

24. Sexual harassment in the workplace also remains high. More than 1 in 5 people – almost 23% - report to have experienced violence and harassment at work; and one in 15 people in employment has experienced sexual violence and harassment at work in their working life (ILO, 2022^[16]) – not accounting for the significant levels of underreporting that is prevalent across SEAH cases and data collection. Within international development and humanitarian institutions, including the United Nations, surveys and analysis show that sexual harassment continues to be perpetuated, and more can be done to identify trends and risk factors (UN CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment, 2023^[17]).

25. The global rise of conflicts, humanitarian crises, rising authoritarianism, and a pushback on gender equality, all contribute to an increase in elevated risk environments where SEAH is more likely to occur. This includes international conflicts such as Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; or the evolving conflicts in the Middle East. Global phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic; climate change and environmental degradation, and its disproportionate impact on women and girls; and rising rates of poverty and food insecurity contribute to elevated risk factors. Conflict, mass displacement events, and increased needs for humanitarian aid can all be contributing factors to the existence of extensive sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. Two contemporary and particularly extensive examples of reported cases and/or allegations of SEAH in contexts include the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti where widespread SEAH cases were brought to public attention (The New Humanitarian, 2020^[18]) – there are, however, many more such cases and allegations across many other contexts.

26. There are also certain contexts there is higher risks of GBV and SEAH⁹, including in fragile contexts¹⁰ and those affected by conflict. In conflict contexts, sexual violence is extensive and is used as a tool of war. Sexual violence plays a significant role in the political economy of war, including as trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and as kidnapping and extorting victim/survivors for the purpose of generating revenue (UN Security Council, 2024^[19]). The latest UN Secretary General's Report on Conflict-related Sexual Violence (CRSV) in 2023, found that more than 3,688 UN-verified cases of CRSV across 21 conflict settings – a more than 50% increase from the previous reporting cycle (UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2024^[20]; UN Security Council, 2024^[19]). These conflict settings and settings of concern include areas where UN peacekeeping missions are currently active, with 27 DAC members having seconded nationals to at least one peacekeeping operation (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2024^[21]). Of the 11

⁹ A further analysis can be found in the Gender equality across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus paper (OECD, 2021^[125]).

¹⁰ Fragility, according to the OECD, is the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacities of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. It occurs in a spectrum of intensity across six dimensions: economic, environmental, political, security, societal and human (OECD, 2022) [States of Fragility](#).

peacekeeping operations which DAC members support, 9 take place in conflict-settings listed in the UN Secretary-Generals report as having documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2023.¹¹ When analysing conflict-affected and other fragile contexts, it is also important to take into consideration the evolution of UN peacekeeping missions (including changes in structure and closures), the volatile nature of the security architecture (both formal and informal) in certain countries and regions, and the influence of regional frameworks and bodies.

27. Crisis settings may be viewed as operating with an urgency that may diminish actors' capacity for upholding certain standards, which are deemed as less critical (Westendorf, J.-K.; Dolan-Evans, E., Forthcoming^[22]). However, crisis settings are not immune to risks of SEAH; contrarily, crisis settings may be considered as particularly 'permissive environments' for SEAH because of the exceptional, urgent nature of crises and the need to act quickly (Daigle, 2022^[23]). The compounding factors of vulnerability, fragility, and the urgent nature of humanitarian responses, necessitates that actors have well-established mechanisms in place to prevent and respond to SEAH in these complex settings.

28. In surveys of OECD governments both before and after COVID-19, violence against women has been reported as the top gender equality challenge governments say they face. Yet, in the face of this challenge, public policy responses have been inconsistent over time, disjointed across relevant actors, and insufficiently funded to meet needs on the ground (OECD, 2023^[24]). As of 2023, only five OECD Member countries, and 1 DAC member, provide comprehensive legal protection¹² for girls and women when it comes to sexual violence, without any exceptions such as marital rape or honour crimes (OECD, 2023^[25]).

29. Since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation, DAC members have also made further relevant commitments to all forms of GBV through venues such as the G7. In 2021, G7 members re-affirmed their commitment to the DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH in the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting communiqué, through urging adherence to the DAC Recommendation by all actors involved in the delivery of aid (G7, 2021^[26]). G7 members have reiterated commitments to address gender-based violence more broadly across commitments made at the Elmau Summit (2022^[27]), the Carbis Bay Summit (2021^[28]), and the Biarritz Summit (2019^[29]). Multiple commitments relating to prioritising gender equality in their development co-operation in the G7 context also reinforce commitments to tackle GBV and SEAH; this includes the 2022 G7 Development Ministers' Meeting Communiqué where G7 countries set out their intention to enhance the gender equality impact of aid activities by "...increasingly implementing gender transformative approaches" (G7, 2022^[30]); and also recognises the DAC Guidance for Development Partners on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (hereafter, the "DAC Guidance on GEWE" (OECD, 2022^[12]).

¹¹ See Table 6.2, which cites the number of allegations in 2023 involving UN staff and related personnel or involving implementing partners and non-UN military forces, as well as those related to special political- or peacekeeping missions.

¹² In line with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (United Nations, 1993^[28]), the General recommendation No. 35 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 2017^[37]), and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, better known as the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe, 2011^[38]), *comprehensive legal frameworks* imply that girls and women are protected from all forms of violence including domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV), rape and marital rape, honour crimes, and sexual harassment – without any exceptions or legal loopholes. A comprehensive approach also includes legally codified provisions for the investigation, prosecution and punishment of these crimes, as well as protection and support services for victims/survivors (OECD, 2019^[39]). Worldwide, according to the SIGI methodology, only 12 countries out of 178 have such comprehensive laws that address all types and forms of violence against women (OECD, 2023^[25]).

30. Commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH reinforce work in this area. The DAC Guidance on GEWE was adopted in 2023 (OECD, 2022^[12]). DAC members have also made commitments to further implementation in the 2023 High-Level Communiqué (OECD DAC, 2023^[31]).

31. On 14 May 2024, DAC members adopted the DAC Recommendation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance [OECD/LEGAL/5022]. This important standard reinforces key pillars of action necessary to progress on SEAH prevention and response; including through the promotion of enhanced work on transformative approaches to shift power imbalances and address root causes of gender inequalities; and by striving to increase financing for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls through official development assistance (ODA) and other forms of finance. It recognises and reinforces the DAC Recommendation on SEAH, including in several additional specific ways with recommendations to Adherents to:

- a. "1.v. Uphold and advocate for gender equality and the protection, including against sexual and gender-based violence, and participation of all women and girls when responding to crises and conflicts, and in fragile and humanitarian contexts..."
- b. "2.iii. Ensure the development and implementation of policy frameworks that address different types of systemic discrimination and inequalities, including sexual and gender-based violence, faced by many individuals that intersect with and compound gender inequalities..."
- c. "3.iv. Identify, assess and monitor the risks for gender equality across programming and contexts with local actors, including risks specific to different groups or organisations, especially individuals in vulnerable situations, activists and human rights defenders, and the risk of sexual and gender-based violence and SEAH in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance; and decide on measures to strengthen prevention, and address and mitigate those risks."

32. Other relevant efforts include prioritisation of GEWE in members' development co-operation and diplomacy efforts, demonstrated by political and technical leadership, and the adoption of Feminist Foreign Policies and GEWE strategies across government and/or specifically on development.

33. At the broader OECD level, OECD Members have stressed that GBV and VAWG remains a priority – also beyond development- and humanitarian contexts. In recent years, OECD Members have demonstrated their commitments to working to end GBV more broadly, including prioritising efforts to prevent intimate partner violence, or other forms of violence against women; and better mainstreaming the eradication of violence against women in *all* public policies (OECD, 2020^[32]; OECD, 2023^[24]). OECD members have also highlighted their commitment to gender equality through the *OECD's Contribution to Promoting Gender Equality*, approved by the OECD Council and welcomed by Ministers at the 2023 Ministerial Council Meeting (OECD, 2023^[33]), and progress further welcomed at the 2024 Ministerial Council Meeting (OECD, 2024^[34]).

34. The OECD and many OECD Members have also demonstrated their commitment to international fora and initiatives related to GBV, including through the Call to Action on GBV (OECD, 2020^[32]), and the Generation Equality Forum including action coalitions on ending violence against women (Generation Equality & UN Women, 2023^[9]).

35. Progress on the implementation of other OECD standards and their respective learning efforts reinforce implementation of this DAC Recommendation as SEAH prevention and response

requires improved environments across government, sectors, and different partners. This includes, but is not limited to, the reports on the implementation of the Recommendation for Development Co-operation Actors on Managing the Risk of Corruption [C(2022)175]; the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus [DCD/DAC/INCAF(2023)1/FINAL]; DCD/DAC/INCAF(2023)1/FINAL; ; and the Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship and the Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life [C/MIN(2022)7]. Learning and exchange around these standards within and across OECD bodies and policy committees' bodies also contribute to reinforcing efforts in this area; one example of ongoing learning is the DAC-CSO Dialogue around the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance [[OECD/LEGAL/5021](#)].

36. The DAC Reference Group remains an important venue for mobilising co-ordinated DAC action on SEAH, and with other actors and the international community more broadly. The Secretariat also works to help support progress through analytical research, strengthening the overall evidence base on SEAH prevention and response internationally. This includes the development of a Toolkit for Ending SEAH, support to regular meetings, maintaining communications, and outreach efforts (OECD, 2024^[35]).

37. More broadly, since 2019, efforts by other important development actors have demonstrated marked commitment from other important entities. This includes, but is not limited to, IASC efforts including through the IASC Champions on Prevention of SEAH; continued reports by the UN Secretary General on efforts across the UN system, and further tools to help support related UN instruments such as the Technical Note on the Implementation of the UN Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of SEA, and the continued work of the UN Victims' Rights Advocate, and the Office of the Special Coordinator on UN response to PSEA (IASC, 2024^[36]; UN Secretary-General, 2024^[37]; UNICEF, 2021^[38]; UN PSEA, 2024^[39]).

38. Despite evidence by some actors of an increase in political commitments and initiatives in SEAH prevention and response globally, there remains critical challenges and areas of stagnating progress. Certain stakeholders have also noted that there is a risk of slowing progress, lack of momentum, or even reduced or un-sustained resources now that five years have passed since the peak in visible commitments to this agenda (2018-2019, with the highly circulated and publicised cases of SEAH allegations, and a number of high-level political responses). It is important that all entities keep this in mind when assessing priority areas of work going forward and structuring commitments and resources to this important agenda.

Purpose of the Report

39. The DAC Recommendation instructs the DAC Network on Gender Equality ("GENDERNET") to "b. Monitor and learn in the implementation of this DAC Recommendation, including through the existing DAC peer-review mechanism, and applicable international agreements, such as those on women, peace and security, and develop options for more frequent monitoring and review, within the first five years to enable and support lesson-learning, adaptation, and sharing of best practices to build understanding and capability; c. Report thereon to the DAC no later than five years following the adoption of this DAC Recommendation and at least every ten years thereafter."

40. This Report also supports building evidence of projects and initiatives relevant to ending SEAH, and helps DAC members to identify trends and priorities, areas for further work and collective action, and to develop a better understanding of how to bring about change.

41. The Report also aims to support the identification of trends over time in terms of implementation, providing context to the changes in the SEAH landscape since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation as the first international standard for preventing SEAH in development co-operation and assistance.

42. The Report also aims to support Adherents to further implement the DAC Recommendation in the context of the acknowledgement that the DAC Recommendation is a useful standard and tool; and its continued use as a framework for institutional changes and international coordination. Almost all Adherents have reported that for their institutions, the DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH is included as a policy basis for action; also, that it serves as the basis for the organisation of work on SEAH prevention and response more broadly; and that the DAC, its Reference Group on Ending SEAH, and GENDERNET, continue to be important venues for collaboration, learning, and strategic collective action.

43. The information gathered in the survey and in this Report will also inform peer learning and discussions within the DAC Reference Group on Ending SEAH, and the work of the GENDERNET.

Methodology

44. In the phase of developing the DAC Recommendation, an initial baseline survey was completed in 2018 relating to DAC members' efforts around SEAH prevention and response.

45. Implementation review activities have been ongoing since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation, including through DAC peer reviews (for those DAC members having undergone a peer review since adoption of the DAC Recommendation in 2019), peer learning sessions, and meetings of the Reference Group and GENDERNET.

46. An informal information-gathering exercise around implementation of the DAC Recommendation was also carried out in 2020 (at the one-year mark of adoption), and a review of activities by other organisations also developed as a backdrop to the work of the Reference Group. In addition to these efforts, DAC members and other relevant partners regularly provide information around their work and relevant activities through the Reference Group.

47. In addition, an Interim Progress Report was produced in 2021 based on an Interim Progress Survey and other information provided by Reference Group members (OECD, 2021^[1]). This report identified areas for accelerated action and trends; informed focused learning in the Reference Group; and provided a foundation for further peer-learning through workshops and through the annual convening of the GENDERNET (See Box 1.1).

Box 1.1. Areas for accelerated action on implementation of the DAC Recommendation (2021)

Priority areas identified in the Interim Progress Report

In 2021, progress still clearly needed to be made on implementation of all six pillars of the DAC Recommendation. However, certain areas were identified that would benefit particularly from accelerated action:

- Increase communication with implementing partners and local populations, including in the design of SEAH response and prevention programmes; and develop joint capacity building with implementing partners;
- Improve understanding of models of, and ways to build, victim-led and victim and survivor-centred approaches – including within reporting measures and investigative/response systems; and by improving modalities around providing comprehensive support to victims/survivors. This should include work on country-level coordination with partner country systems and by shoring up development programmes, e.g. on GBV, and in conflict and humanitarian settings.
- Improve reporting and complaints mechanisms, especially in the context of under-reporting of cases during COVID-19 pandemic; and ensure consistent accountability in cases of misconduct (by staff in headquarters and by actors in other countries).
- Increase the inclusion of ending SEAH within development and humanitarian programming more broadly, including in relation to existing ending GBV and other relevant projects;
- Improve internal coordination and outreach – whether across teams, departments, or ministries, beyond traditional development and humanitarian experts; and work towards a stronger, more transparent and trustworthy institutional organisational culture supportive of gender equality and ending SEAH;
- Pursue efforts around international coordination by crowding in more of the community of experts to promote deeper learning around ending SEAH with the DAC Reference Group on Ending SEAH (and reaching to members that need to engage more), through the DAC GENDERNET and with enhanced engagement, as well with multilateral organisations and partner countries interested in adhering to the DAC Recommendation.

Source: OECD (2021^[11]), Interim Progress Report: Implementation of the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance

48. A survey was launched in July 2023 to allow for the collection of responses from Adherents, and to gather information and experiences from Adherents, based on their efforts to implement the DAC Recommendation. (OECD, 2023^[40]). Responses were received from 35 Adherents (the Respondents), out of 36 possible responses.

49. This Report was developed primarily from answers received through the Survey and complementary information and documentation provided by Adherents (some only available internally, some made available publicly).

50. The survey was sent to DAC delegates and DAC member representatives of the DAC Reference Group on Ending SEAH, with the intent that it then be shared with the relevant officer/department(s) of the development co-operation agency or the ministry responsible for development co-operation and/or humanitarian affairs. Due to the complexity of ending SEAH, it is often relevant to receive input from experts in other ministries and departments (for example: experts in the fields of gender equality, health, legal affairs, human resources, risk management,

investigations/case management, etc.). Respondents were encouraged to consolidate information across their organisation and provide one singular survey response.

51. The survey results are presented throughout the Report in narrative form and figures, as relevant. The survey included both closed questions where Adherents were invited to select one or more relevant choices and open questions filled in directly by Adherents. Responses were then analysed and compiled by the OECD Secretariat to extract key learnings and relevant messages. As a limited number of questions were not answered by all Respondents, totals (indicated as number of Adherents) may add up to less than the 35 Respondents throughout the Report.

52. The Survey also draws on the initial survey conducted in 2018 to inform the development of the DAC Recommendation, as well as on the informal Interim Progress Survey. Many questions in these preliminary surveys re-appear in the 2023 Survey, and thus allow for comparison between years, where relevant.

Table 1.1 Coverage by survey tools 2018-2023

Adherent	Initial survey to inform development of the DAC Recommendation (2018)	Interim Progress Survey (2021)	Survey for the Report on implementation (2023)
DAC members			
Australia	YES	YES	YES
Austria	YES	YES	YES
Belgium	YES	YES	YES
Canada	YES	YES	YES
Czechia	YES	YES	YES
Denmark	YES	YES	YES
European Union	YES	YES	YES
Estonia*	YES	YES	YES
Finland	YES	YES	YES
France	YES	YES	YES
Germany	YES	YES	YES
Greece	YES	YES	YES
Hungary	YES	YES	YES
Iceland	NO	NO	YES
Ireland	YES	YES	YES
Italy	YES	YES	YES
Japan	YES	YES	YES
Korea	NO	YES	YES
Lithuania**	YES	N/A	YES
Luxembourg	YES	NO	YES
The Netherlands	YES	YES	YES
New Zealand	NO	YES	YES
Norway	YES	YES	YES
Poland***	NO	NO	NO
Portugal	NO	YES	YES
Slovak Republic	YES	YES	YES
Slovenia	YES	YES	YES
Spain	YES	YES	YES
Sweden	YES	YES	YES
Switzerland	YES	YES	YES
United Kingdom	YES	YES	YES

United States	YES	YES	YES
UN entity Adherents****			
UNICEF	N/A	N/A	YES
UNHCR	N/A	N/A	YES
UNOPS	N/A	N/A	YES
UNFPA	N/A	N/A	YES
Total respondents	27	28	35

*Estonia joined the DAC on 4 July 2023.

**Lithuania was not a DAC member during the surveys of 2018 and 2021 but responded to the survey in 2018 and joined the DAC on 16 November 2022.

***Poland provided some information in the form of its 2023 contribution to the peer review exercise (i.e., self-assessment, annex, etc.). While the DAC peer review exercise provides the opportunity for reporting on implementation of all DAC standards and provides some baseline information, this is much more limited in scope (see paragraph 42 on using peer reviews). As such, the information provided through the Peer Review has informed the data collected for this Report survey only where explicitly applicable.

****While a range of stakeholders were consulted in 2018-2019 during the development of the DAC Recommendation, only DAC members were consulted through a dedicated survey. In 2021, although UNICEF and UNHCR had already adhered to the DAC Recommendation at this point, only DAC members were informally surveyed on their progress.

Source: Secretariat's analysis

53. Other sources used for the Report include:

- DAC Peer reviews: The Report utilises information collected in recent DAC peer reviews. Following the adoption of the DAC Recommendation in 2019, peer reviews have included an annex component on DAC members' progress against the DAC Recommendation¹³.
- DAC Accession processes for Lithuania and Estonia including information provided by DAC members in their pre-accession review in relation to their readiness for accession to the DAC. Following the adoption of the DAC Recommendation in 2019, this review includes an annex on the accession candidate's alignment with, and commitment to adhere to, DAC Recommendations, including the DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH¹⁴.
- The DAC Reference Group on Ending SEAH holds quarterly DAC member-only calls, where DAC members share information on recent updates and activities and discuss issues of strategic importance across the DAC Recommendation. Peer learning sessions of the Reference Group (both virtually and online), held regularly since 2018, continue to provide information and points of discussion across the DAC Recommendation's six pillars. The DAC GENDERNET has also held regular discussions on SEAH within its annual meetings, and in other settings. These exchanges have provided learning and input into this Report. Support to the Reference Group, GENDERNET, and DAC by the OECD Secretariat has allowed for further analysis and regular tracking progress across the international community.
- A Toolkit to support implementation of the DAC Recommendation was developed through multiple years of thematic peer learning sessions of the Reference Group, consultation on drafts with the multi-stakeholder group and in-depth analysis and research. This development and feedback

¹³ Fourteen DAC members have undergone Peer Reviews with a component reporting on implementation efforts for the DAC Recommendation: Korea (2024), Poland (2023), Czechia (2023), Netherlands (2023), Iceland (2023), New Zealand (2023), Hungary (2023), USA (2022), Portugal (2022), Spain (2022), Denmark (2021), Germany (2021), Belgium (2020), and the UK (2020).

¹⁴ Accession processes that begun and were completed after the adoption of the DAC Recommendation include Estonia (2023) and Lithuania (2022). These processes culminated in Lithuania becoming a DAC member (and thus adhering to the DAC Recommendation) on 16 November 2022, and Estonia on 4 July 2023.

provided additional sources of information and reflections that have aided in reflections and assessments included in this Report.

- Where relevant, complementary sources of data have been used and referenced appropriately.

54. While DAC members have replied based on their expert assessment of their government efforts, there may sometimes be discrepancies within the government, for instance when certain policies or processes apply only to the development agency, and not to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Throughout the report, the term “institution” and “organisation” are used inter-changeably. “Institution” is an all-encompassing or general term that refers to the entire government (in the case of DAC members) or organisation (in the case of UN entity Adherents) in question. Some DAC members noted that there are differences between different agencies or ministries within their governments; however, this Report aims to assess progress across institutions as a whole.

55. Because DAC and UN entity Adherents occupy distinct, yet complementary, roles in the implementation of the DAC Recommendation, their responses will be analysed either jointly as “Adherents”, or separately as “DAC members” or “UN entity Adherents” as relevant, throughout the Report. Where a distinction is made, this will be highlighted by utilising the terminology above.

56. The UN entity Adherents that have participated in the development of this Report as Adherents to the DAC Recommendation should not be interpreted as representative of efforts across the entire UN system. Given the relatively small number of UN entity Adherents and thus the small sample size of UN entity Respondents in the analysis, findings must be read with caution and inference cannot be extrapolated to the UN system at large at global or country level.

57. Outside of reporting by Adherents and the sources cited above, additional sources of information and analysis from relevant stakeholders have been cited throughout the Report. These include other evaluation mechanisms and monitoring tools, which illustrate the broader context impacting the work of implementation of the DAC Recommendation and provide insight into progress by related institutions and other important actors in SEAH prevention and response, especially over the same time period focused on in this Report (2018-2024). This includes but is not limited to, MOPAN assessments¹⁵, which use indicators based on the DAC Recommendation; reports of the UN Secretary-General on progress across the UN system and other related UN tools; and IASC assessments and other related tools¹⁶.

Implementation across the six pillars of the DAC Recommendation

Considerations when assessing progress on implementation

58. When considering how to assess the implementation of the DAC Recommendation, it is important to consider certain elements or cross-cutting criteria that can impact the level of progress

¹⁵ The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assesses the effectiveness of multilateral organisations, across organisations’ strategic, operational, relationship and performance management, and results. Since April 2018, MOPAN has integrated aspects related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, in its assessments, and in 2020 it adopted an updated methodology, containing new indicators based on PSEAH standards including the DAC Recommendation. MOPAN has used these PSEAH benchmarks for all subsequent reviews. Lessons can be drawn from each of these individual assessments and have also been aggregated twice in synthesis reports (MOPAN, 2022^[83]; 2024 forthcoming^[122]).

¹⁶ Examples of relevant research and work by IASC are cited throughout the report; in addition, it is also relevant to refer to findings of the 2021 IASC External Review of Protection from SEAH. The purpose of the review (whose scope was global) was to provide an independent assessment of the progress since the IASC review of PSEA in 2010 and to consider the impact and effectiveness of the IASC approach to PSEAH (IASC, 2022^[121]).

made on implementation, and specifically how this compares to progress before the adoption of the DAC Recommendation.

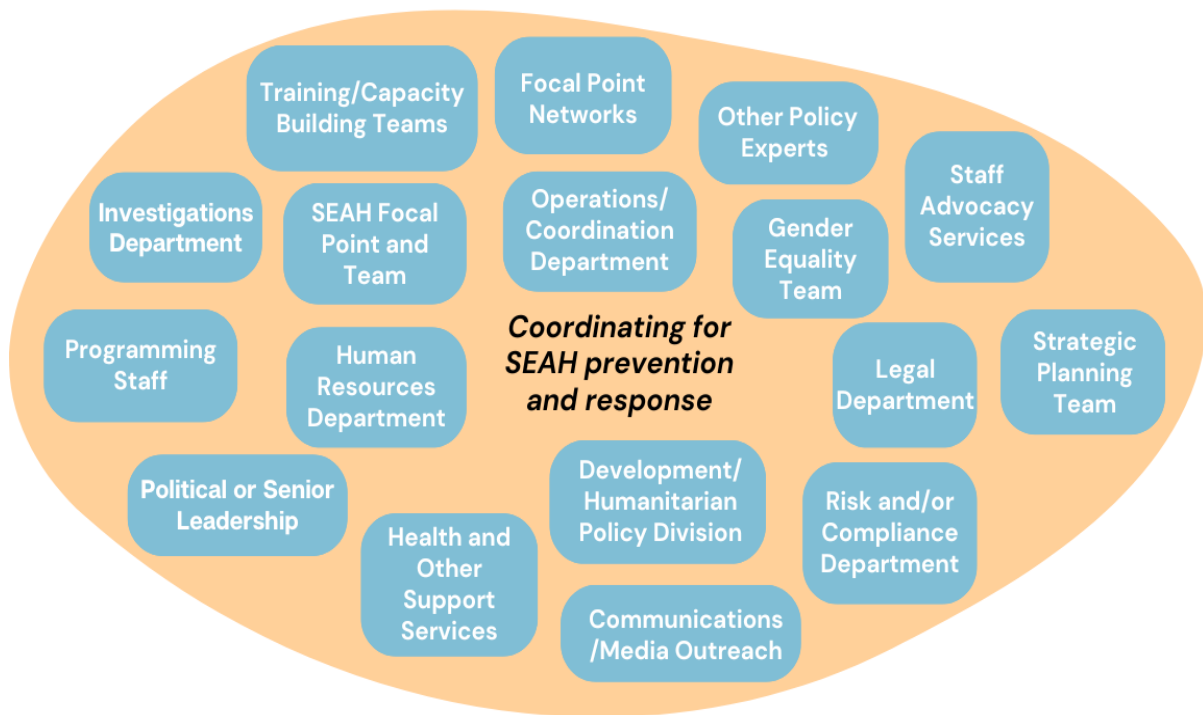
59. DAC members' development co-operation and humanitarian assistance portfolios can vary vastly, covering a wide range of topics and representing a range of approaches. Differences can include the nature of programmes and activities, capacities of DAC members and respective budgets and resources (in headquarters and through their representations in development or humanitarian contexts), and range of countries or contexts within which they operate. In recent years, many DAC members are seeing increasing restriction to budgets, impacting official development assistance (ODA) portfolios, and inevitably impacting the state of play of development and humanitarian efforts overall. Preliminary ODA data for 2023 shows that ODA has decreased in 17 DAC countries (OECD, 2024^[41]), and ODA integrating gender equality objectives is also decreasing, dropping to 43% of bilateral allocable aid in 2021-22 (OECD, 2024^[42]). See *Financing and resources* for more on ODA for ending violence against women and girls, SEAH, and gender equality.

60. While these differences apply to DAC efforts across all sectors, it is important to recognise the specific impact they have in terms of SEAH prevention and response. Each DAC member or organisation faces different levels of risk of SEAH being perpetuated both within their own organisations, or in the development/humanitarian contexts within which they operate. However, regardless of a heightened or lower level of risk, this risk exists to some degree everywhere and within all institutions. The commitment to the DAC Recommendation itself is a recognition of the ubiquity of such risks.

61. In addition, SEAH prevention and response almost always requires some element of coordination; and the perpetuation of SEAH, regardless of the context, almost always requires multiple system responses. SEAH not only requires complex coordination in order to be effectively responded to, and also in order to set up comprehensive prevention measures. SEAH is also perpetuated in different contexts and within and by different organisations, at many different levels. It is important that the specific context and the profile of the implicated institutions is considered when assessing the level of progress on SEAH prevention and response.

62. There is a broad range in capacity and resources dedicated to SEAH between DAC members. Despite differences, it is interesting to consider the different experts or other responsible staff, and institutional mechanisms that are brought into play in regard to SEAH prevention and response. SEAH prevention and response requires coordination internally across institutions and externally with other partners, stretching across different experts and teams; examples of relevant experts and responsible teams are illustrated in Figure 1.1. Involved actors and institutional arrangements for coordination of SEAH prevention and response.

Figure 1.1. Involved actors and institutional arrangements for coordination of SEAH prevention and response



Source: Secretariat adaptation using information from the survey, 2023

63. The strategic policies (in the fields of development co-operation and foreign affairs) of DAC members also showcase varying degrees of emphasis on preventing and responding to SEAH. Some members have little to no focus on SEAH specifically, others have extensive focus on SEAH as part of their development or humanitarian strategy. SEAH may be integrated in as part of a broader strategic objective, preventing violence against women and girls, or as part of an overall gender equality focus. Certain DAC members have also integrated SEAH into their approaches on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights¹⁷. In some instances, SEAH can also be integrated into broader strategies or policies on integrity, or in many instances, included in an institutional approach to compliance.

64. Progress towards better SEAH prevention and response relies on changes in areas relating to social norms and behaviours, and underlying factors related to intersecting inequalities. Measuring these changes – including gender equality change, and especially transformative change for gender equality – requires flexibility and adaptation to reflect the nature and timescales of gender equality results. As with other complex social change, changes in norms in relation to gender equality can often be nonlinear and unpredictable; and changes that seem positive at first may quickly erode. Implementation and monitoring of results relating to progress needs flexibility to track positive and sustainable developments, and to capture negative impacts, resistance, reaction, and unexpected outcomes (Batiwala and Pittman, 2010^[43]; OECD, 2022^[12]).

¹⁷ In accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

65. The DAC Recommendation itself refers to *ending* SEAH, to stopping the perpetuation of SEAH in all its forms, everywhere. However, given the systemic nature of abuse, there are realistic intermediary steps or prerequisites that will likely be reached before achieving this ultimate objective (OECD, 2024^[35]). The complexity of certain environments within which SEAH occurs also adds an additional layer. Progress, even if only incremental, should still be measured; and is one of the objectives of this Report.

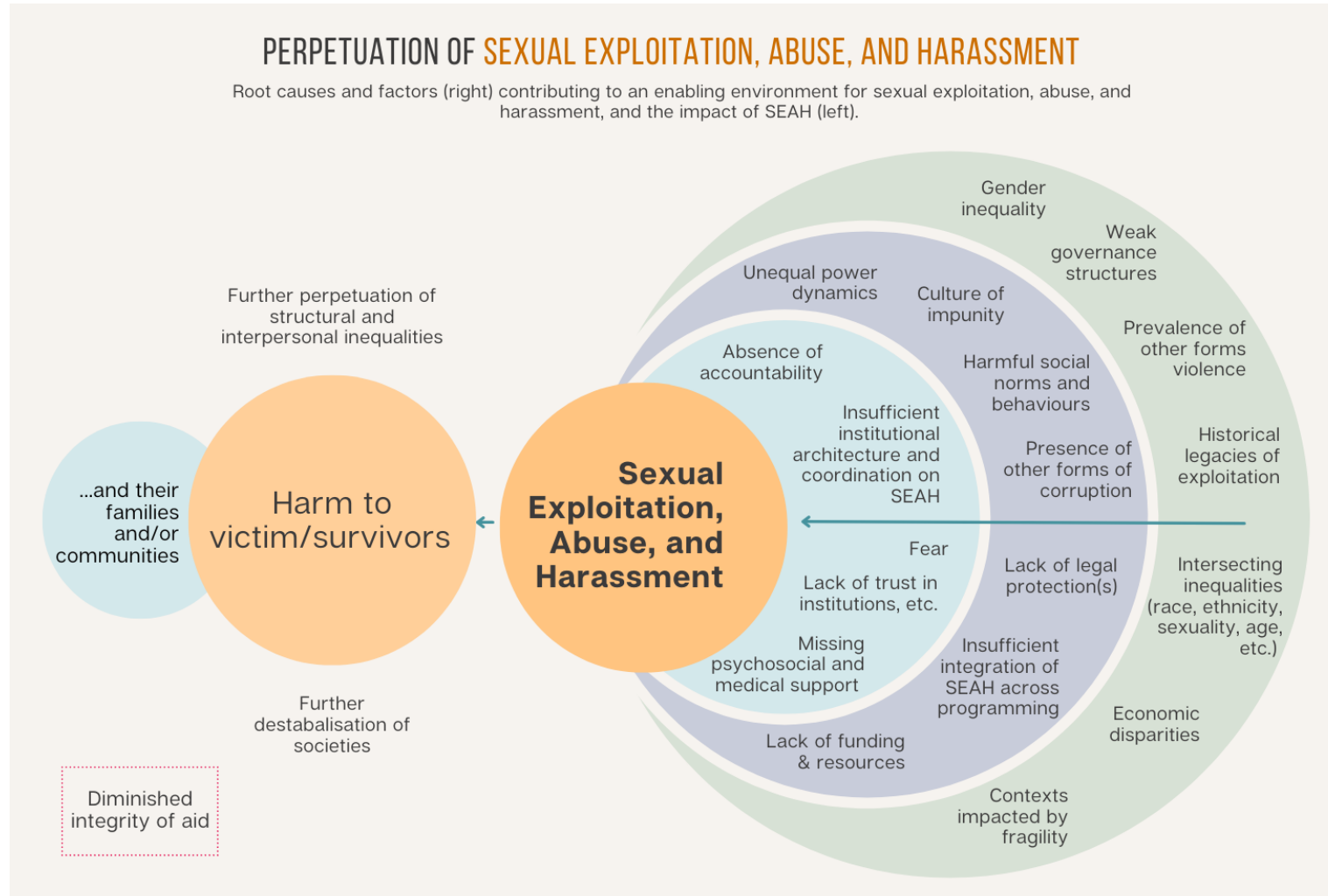
66. In addition, as Adherents have reported that the DAC Recommendation is an important tool to incentivise change within their systems and to organise their work in this area, this Report aims to support further operationalisation and more in-depth implementation of the DAC Recommendation's six pillars.

67. To be able to comprehensively assess progress and identify areas to support further progress, it is critically important to have a comprehensive understanding of the complex nature of SEAH. The underlying root causes of the perpetration of SEAH involve individual-, social-, and structural factors (Figure 1.2. Ecosystem of SEAH).

68. The figure illustrates a range of factors that contribute towards the perpetration of SEAH. These range from structural factors (e.g., gender inequality, economic disparities, weak governance structures, etc.); to social factors (e.g., unequal power dynamics, harmful social norms and behaviours, presence of other forms of corruption, etc.); to factors that impact individuals and their choices (e.g., missing psychosocial- and medical support, lack of trust in institutions, fear, etc.). These factors, and more, all interact with one another and may exacerbate the risk of SEAH and should not be viewed in isolation.

69. The impact of the continued perpetration of such abuse should also be taken into account. Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment causes harm to victim/survivors, and to their families and communities. The prevalence of SEAH further perpetuates preexisting inequalities; causes further destabilisation of societies; and harms the integrity of any development-, humanitarian, or peace efforts.

Figure 1.2. Ecosystem of SEAH

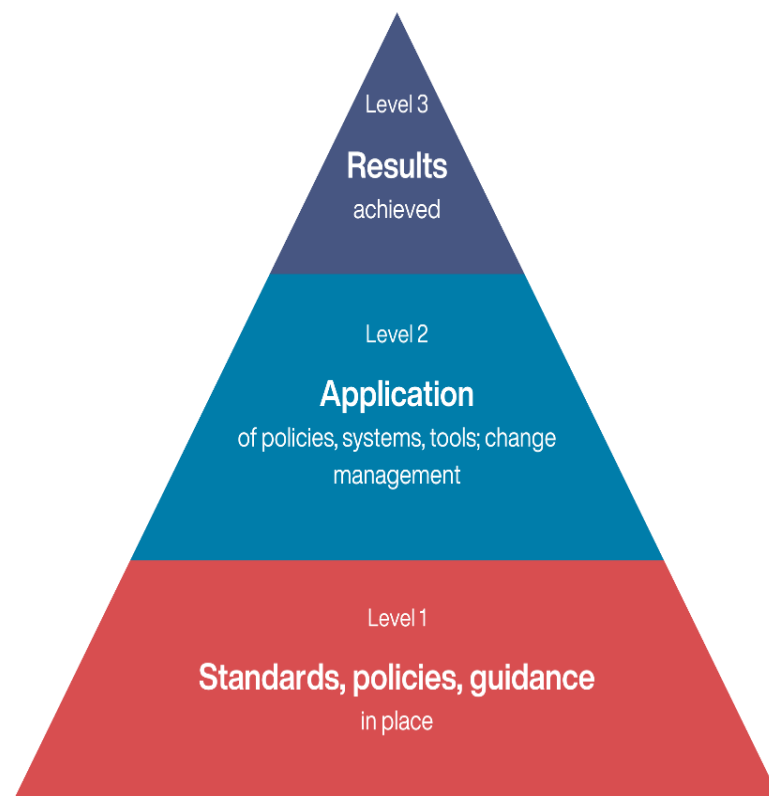


70. This Report assesses progress on implementation across the six pillars of the DAC Recommendation. However, it is important to note that across the six pillars, more granular analysis into the quality and impact would be useful to better support Adherents and monitor the impact of their systems.

71. For instance, when considering the existence of adequate policies or other institutional mechanisms, it is important to look more deeply at the qualities of said policies, their accessibility, how they are disseminated and applied, and whether they lead to positive results. This notion is also used in MOPAN's three-step note on measuring organisational performance on a given issue by asking three questions: (i) Is a policy in place?; (ii) Are there systems, tools, guidance and capacity to apply it?; (iii) Is all of this leading to positive results? (See Figure 1.3). Going forward to support further implementation of the DAC Recommendation, it would be useful to dive deeper and provide more detailed analysis related to levels 2 (application) and 3 (results) of the pyramid below.

72. While measuring results in this sphere is challenging, this Report aims to provide insights and assess both quantitative and qualitative improvements amongst Adherents, assess challenges, and point to areas where more efforts are needed.

Figure 1.3. SEAH Results Pyramid



Source: Secretariat's adaptation from MOPAN's practitioners' note (2021^[44])

Pillar 1 – Develop Policies and Professional Conduct Standards and Seek to Foster Organisational Change and Leadership on SEAH and SH in the Provision of International Aid

73. Pillar one of the DAC Recommendation highlights the importance of leadership, integrity, and clear institutional mechanisms addressing SEAH, including policies, ethical operational standards, codes of conduct, and explicit communication with staff and management. Pillar one also recognises how an organisation’s culture is defined in part by these elements, and contributes to the prevention of, and response to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.

74. Several DAC members have expressed a wish to work more on addressing behaviour change and underlying norms and values. There is a clear recognition that change in this space may be slow, particularly as related to organisational culture change, however, advancing on this is key to engendering lasting, sustainable change towards ending SEAH.

Do policies and mechanisms exist?

75. Most DAC members have put in place necessary elements related to a strong institutional architecture on SEAH prevention and response (See Figure 1.4). This includes the establishment of codes of conduct or ethical standards (30 DAC members); specific policies, strategies and/or work plans (26 DAC members); clear guidelines for staff on reporting and how to respond (26 DAC members); specific reporting and response protocols for SEAH (25 DAC members); dedicated organisational capacity (25 DAC members); management and leadership demonstrating a commitment to positive organisational culture and norms (25 DAC members), and including SEAH standards in cooperation agreements and funding instruments with partners (20 DAC members).

Figure 1.4. Institutional architecture to support SEAH prevention and response

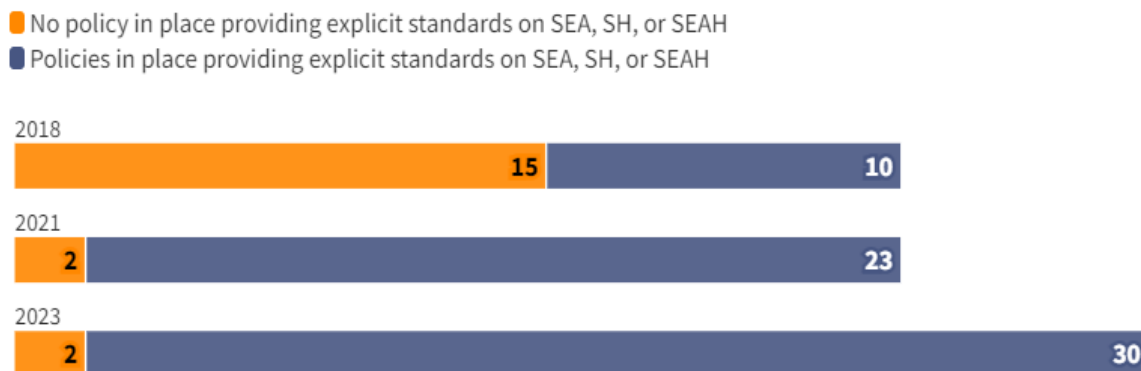


Note: *The full statement reads: "Inclusion of SEAH standards, procedures, requirements and/or binding commitments in co-operation agreements and funding instruments"

Source: Survey (2023)

76. This is an overall positive trend since adoption of the DAC Recommendation. The number of DAC members that report having specific policies strategies, and/or work plans with set goals for SEA and SH prevention and response has more than doubled since 2018; from 10 DAC members in 2018, to 26 DAC members in 2023. Crucially, the number of DAC members without explicit policies has decreased from 15 in 2018, to 3 DAC members in 2021, and 2 DAC members in 2023 (Figure 1.5).

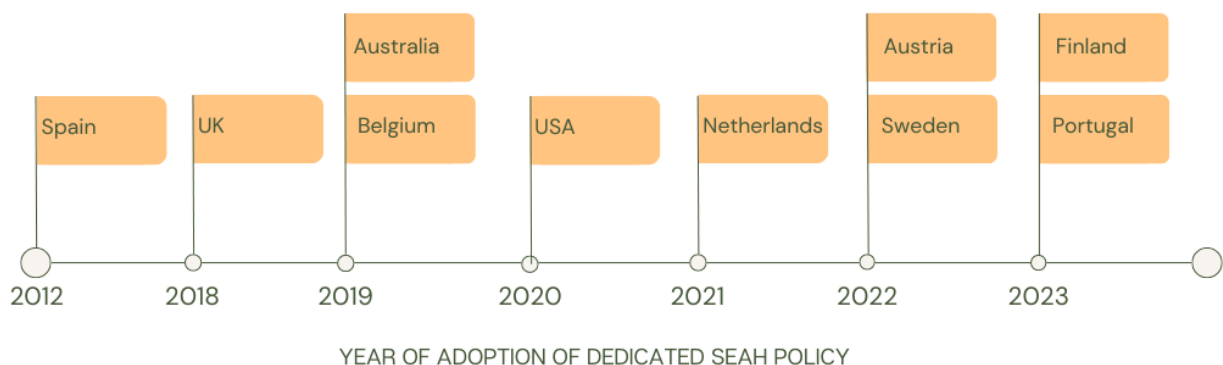
Figure 1.5. The existence of SEAH policies amongst DAC members 2018-2023



Source: Secretariat's analysis

77. DAC members that have adopted dedicated SEAH policies have done so at different times, with an overwhelmingly majority of SEAH policies having been adopted after the DAC Recommendation was adopted in 2019 (See Infographic 1.1 for a non-exhaustive list of examples).

Infographic 1.1. Timeline of DAC members' SEAH policies - examples



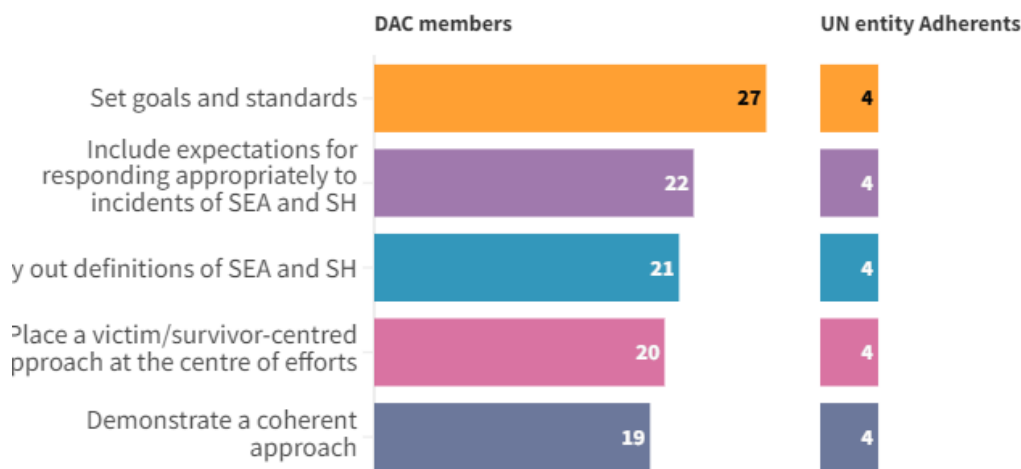
Source: Survey (2023)

78. Overwhelmingly, DAC members report that policies, strategies, work plans, codes of conduct, or relevant standards integrate the following considerations: they set goals and standards (27 DAC members); demonstrate a coherent approach, supporting implementation across related

work streams (19 DAC members); lay out definitions of SEA and SH, based on international standards (21 DAC members); place a victim/survivor-centred approach at the centre of efforts, which aim to do no harm (20 DAC members); and include expectations that failure to respond appropriately to incidents of SEA and SH will not be tolerated (22 DAC members) (Figure 1.6).

79. Additionally, DAC members with clear guidelines in place for staff also report that these are confidential (26 DAC members), victim/survivor-centred (21 DAC members), and ethically sensitive¹⁸ (20 DAC members). These qualities are important characteristics to respect across activities related to SEAH prevention and response more generally – as recommended in *section 1.e.* of the DAC Recommendation.

Figure 1.6. Qualities of SEAH policies amongst Adherents



Source: Survey, 2023

80. More than half of DAC members (20), and all UN entity Adherents, report that SEA and SH standards, procedures, requirements, and/or binding commitments are included in their cooperative agreements and/or funding instruments. This may include clauses on reporting requirements explicitly referencing SEA, making a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to SEAH a mandatory requirement for implementing partners, requiring adherence to international standards on SEAH, and using harmonised language on SEAH in funding agreements. For 17 DAC members, cooperative agreements include reporting requirements; and for 11 DAC members these include remedies for breaches.

81. Availability and accessibility of policies is important criteria to consider [and as cited as a commitment under *section 1.d.* of the DAC Recommendation]. Most DAC members (25) report that they have codes of conduct or ethical standards on SEA, SH, and/or SEAH that are publicly available. However, while key policies are broadly available, they are rarely communicated in relevant languages and formats to local communities, with only 3 DAC members reporting that they provide this.

¹⁸ Further insights into ethical practices in public policy across a range of sectors can be drawn from complementary OECD research on [integrity](#).

82. Communicating and making sure that relevant parties are aware of these codes of conduct is also important [and is cited as a commitment under *section 1.d.* of the DAC Recommendation]. Most DAC members (21) convey codes of conduct to staff and senior management through key moments in the employment cycle and they form part of leadership values. For 19 DAC members, and two UN entity Adherents, these codes are shared with implementing partners. Some Adherents also convey these codes in the preparation for and during missions. Significantly less common, however, is the inclusion of these codes of conduct in performance management structures, with 6 DAC members reporting that they are included in these structures.

83. Additional analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of these different policies and systems within the SEAH “institutional architecture” would be important to continue supporting progress. Further analysis in terms of the scope of implementation, and the usefulness of such policies and systems to assess their impact would be important (see Figure 1.3. SEAH Results Pyramid). Given that many Adherents have now had policies and systems in place for multiple years, monitoring and evaluation are key parts of good policy practice although this is less developed or newer practice in SEAH prevention and response, given the relatively short existence of many Adherents’ policies and systems.

Organisational culture and norms

84. Beyond the policies and systems in place, progress across the DAC Recommendation is reliant on shifts in an institution’s underlying organisational culture [*section 1.a.*]. An institution’s culture has an impact in all its activities; and an organisation’s internal culture informs policy, and policy contributes to organisational cultural change (OECD, 2022^[12]). Unsupportive institutional culture that provides an enabling environment for SEAH to be perpetrated include aspects relating to mistrust, lack of accountability, and lack of protections for all individuals; it also is characterised by behaviours relating to harmful gender norms and power dynamics. Unsafe working environments have many integrity-related issues and forms of misconduct, including but not limited to, SEAH (OECD, 2024^[35]).

85. Whether SEAH is perpetrated *by* an employee, or someone associated with the Adherent, or perpetrated *against* an employee or victim/survivor with a relation to the Adherent, organisational culture is core to whether a permissive environment exists that allows for SEAH to occur writ large. As such, DAC members and UN entity Adherents must consider their organisational culture when designing activities across all SEAH efforts. However, many Adherents have reflected that it remains considerably challenging to measure their own organisational culture (to understand the starting point) and to design specific actions or activities to change such culture. Some Adherents note that surveys and other behavioural measurement tools can provide insight into measuring organisational culture to an extent.

86. In order to design actions to create more preventive environments, it is important to target underlying norms and behaviours (a list of possible drivers to consider are included in Figure 1.2. Ecosystem of SEAH). These drivers and norms must be analysed for each institution (whether government or other kind of organisation) and context (development/humanitarian environments). It is also important to acknowledge the layers of policy and practice that influence organisational culture.

87. Experience in specific sectors can also point to relevant points of action needed to shift culture across institutions and prevent sexual violence. For example, research from the health and social care sectors identifies recommendations and suggested approaches to driving change, including acting across many levels based on individual, interpersonal, institutional, community, and public policy factors (Women in Global Health, 2022^[45]).

88. Improved organisational culture to address SEAH requires change starting at the top, with organisational leadership, and high-level political will to promote deep system change throughout an organisation. However, not only management but also all those working at any level of an organisation (everyone) shares responsibility for establishing a safe environment, and an organisational culture that is built on trust, integrity, and respect. See Box 1.2 for a description of ‘institutional betrayal’ in the context of sexual misconduct.

Box 1.2. Sexual misconduct as ‘institutional betrayal’

Organisations that do not build workplace cultures that can prevent and respond appropriately to SEAH risk harming both employees, beneficiaries, other key stakeholders, and the integrity of the institutions itself. People who experience sexual misconduct may, in addition to the harm of SEAH itself, also experience ‘institutional betrayal’.

Institutional betrayal is defined as harm an institution does to those who depend upon it. This includes failures to adequately respond to or prevent any type of wrongdoing within an institution when there is a reasonable expectation of protection.

The types of failures of an institution, which can engender a state of institutional betrayal may be:

- The institution does not take proactive steps to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.
- The institution makes it difficult to report experiences of sexual misconduct; or proves strategically inefficient (slow processes, labour-intensive on the complaint, unnecessarily bureaucratic, etc.).
- The institution penalises speak-up culture by – implicitly or explicitly – punishing people that speak-up (i.e., by hindering career progression, etc.).

Encountering institutional betrayal may further exacerbate any preexisting trauma symptoms associated with experiencing SEAH – such as anxiety, sleep disorders, dissociation, etc.

Institutional betrayal may also carry extensive costs *to* an organisation. These costs may be:

- Employees, beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders disengage from the system.
- Higher rates of absenteeism, turn-over, and illness.
- Diminished attractiveness as an employer, and reputational damage.
- Further spread of corruption.
- And institutional collapse.

To prevent and counter institutional betrayal, organisations ought to work towards building institutional courage. This includes, but is not limited to: complying with comprehensive legal frameworks that seek to protect against SEAH; adopting a victim/survivor-centred approach in engaging with affected individuals; engaging in educational activities around SEAH prevention and response across all levels of the institution; building speak-up cultures with encourage reporting, complaints, and whistleblowing; engaging in constant monitoring, evaluating, and learning, from good practices as well as from malpractice; etc.

Source: The text has been adapted from Smith and Freyd, (2017^[46]; Smith & Freyd, 2013^[47]), Insult, then injury: Interpersonal and institutional betrayal linked to health and dissociation, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2017.1322654>; Dangerous safe havens: Institutional betrayal exacerbates sexual trauma, <https://doi.org/10.1002/its.21778>; and Ahmed (2021^[48]), Complaint!, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478022336>

89. Most DAC members (26) report that since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation, management and leadership have demonstrated their commitments to positive organisational culture and norms on SEA and SH prevention and response on a regular basis.

90. For a majority of Members, these efforts are linked to commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment and in human rights. Examples of these commitments include leadership hosting events on SEAH prevention and response, launching or revamping policies integrating SEAH prevention and response, and supporting training for staff. Other examples of demonstrable commitment by leadership include hosting dialogue events with partners, public statements, and reiterations of their commitment to SEAH prevention and response, and senior management signing a "Leader's Pledge" on preventing and responding to SEAH in the development co-operation and humanitarian assistance sector.

91. One DAC member intertwines SEAH prevention and response with their overall responsibility for safeguarding at-risk populations. This includes addressing structural inequalities, such as gender inequality, both internally and in relation to partners. Another DAC member has included SEAH prevention and response in their annual organisational management plans, which is also reflected in the individual departments' workplans.

92. Since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation, the vast majority of DAC members report that their institution has taken steps to promote inclusive, non-discriminatory, gender-balanced work environments and opportunities. 23 DAC members report that their institution has increased recruitment and actively encouraged career development of women (and as relevant minority groups) in senior leadership. Adherents primarily refer to their institution's gender equality policies or other strategies aimed at increasing the number of women in leadership roles, with some aiming for complete gender parity within the institution. Other examples provided include internal reviews of leadership opportunities for women and accommodating staff members in different stages of their lives (for example, during parenthood).

93. Another element of engendering organisational culture changes can be seen in the improvement of internal institutional mechanisms following the adoption of the DAC Recommendation. For example, measures to prevent the hiring and rehiring of perpetrators are in place across most Adherents. Additionally, most Adherents have mechanisms in place which screen candidates' backgrounds, references, and criminal record checks for former misconduct.

94. More examples of promoting gender equality within institutions and working towards a gender-balanced and non-discriminatory environments can be found in the DAC Guidance on GEWE (OECD, 2022^[12]). Additional information related to elements impacting organisational culture and norms can be found under Pillar 4. – Conduct Training, Raise, Awareness, and Communicate on SEA and SH Prevention.

Dedicated internal resources

95. In order to be able to implement policies, affect positive organisational culture change, and ensure overall progress is made, dedicated organisational capacity (staff resources) is essential. While 25 DAC members report that they have some form of dedicated organisational capacity, staff members, or functions, to support and coordinate work on SEA and SH, the composition and size of this capacity varies greatly. The number of dedicated staff members reported range greatly from institution to institution: from 0 to 25 staff members dedicated to SEAH prevention and response.

96. A minority of DAC members have dedicated staff working full-time on SEAH in development assistance – either internally for staff, or in relation to development partner countries. Most commonly, DAC members report that staff may have prevention of sexual exploitation,

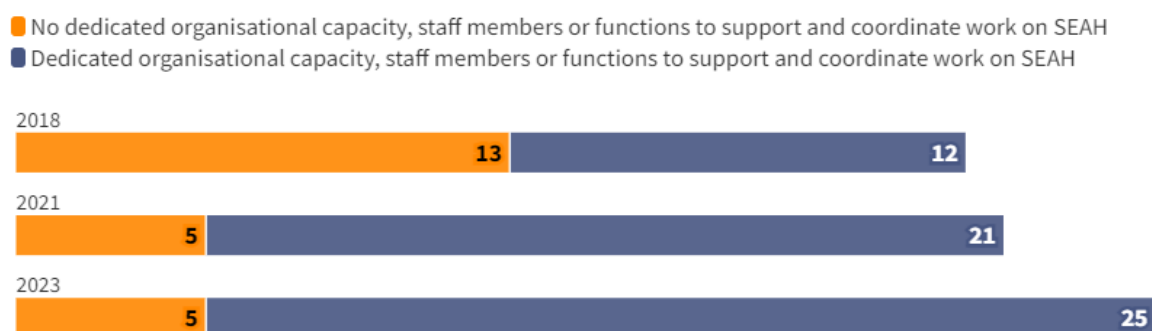
abuse, and harassment (PSEAH) as part of a broader portfolio, such as: work on gender equality; workplace health and safety; environmental safeguarding; safeguarding of children; and risk management. For some DAC members, gender focal points are counted as part of the dedicated capacity for supporting and coordinating work on SEA and SH.

97. Furthermore, the number of DAC members reporting that their institution has dedicated specific organisational capacity, staff members or functions, to support and coordinate its work on SEA and SH has also increased from 12 in 2018, to 21 in 2021, and 25 in 2023 (Figure 1.7).

98. All UN entity Adherents report that they have specific capacity for coordinating work on SEA and SH, with more than 17 dedicated staff members working on PSEA and SH across all UN entity Adherents.

99. For recommended approaches and points to consider in regard to dedicated resourcing and expertise, Adherents can take learning from the field of gender equality and development co-operation, chapter 6 of the DAC Guidance on GEWE (OECD, 2022^[12]).

Figure 1.7. Dedicated organisational capacity for ending SEAH amongst DAC members 2018-2023



Note: The full membership of the DAC in 2018 and 2021 was 30 Members, compared to 32 in 2023. Only DAC members that responded to the given question in the surveys have been included in the figure.

Source: Secretariat's analysis

Internal and external coordination

100. Integrating SEAH response and prevention efforts domestically may include vertical integration (e.g., cooperation across different levels of government) and horizontal integration (e.g., cooperation across different Ministries and institutions (OECD, 2023^[24]). From research on whole-of-state approaches to address gender-based violence in OECD countries, several DAC members are shown to have central co-ordinating bodies to manage a coherent response to GBV (OECD, 2023^[24]) – however, the extent to which these bodies integrate SEAH into their broader GBV response is mixed.

101. Several DAC members refer to having established focal points on either SEAH, safeguarding, or gender equality, which function as the key coordinating actors. 20 DAC members have internal working groups or coordination mechanisms that focus on addressing SEAH. See Box 1.2 for examples.

102. Coordination mechanisms may vary in degrees of formality, yet several DAC members report that regular meetings are held where key actors are convened across the organisation. Other examples of internal coordination efforts include employing gender equality advisors to support managers at headquarters and country levels and establishing PSEAH “champions”. One

DAC adherent refers to the incorporation of SEAH in their foreign policy as forming part of an overall compliance framework – which also includes corruption, fraud, and aid diversion – in projects related to stabilisation and humanitarian assistance.

103. For many DAC members, their internal working groups and co-ordination mechanisms consists of representatives from different divisions within the institutions, for example from the Human Resources, Legal, Risk Management, and Compliance divisions. Co-ordinating across institutions, and beyond, is key to effective SEAH prevention and response; it also supports minimising duplication and facilitates faster uptake of learning. Building capacity and sharing expertise, best practices, and coordinating efforts across an institution and beyond, with other actors, is key towards streamlining effective SEAH prevention and response (See Box 1.3 for examples).

104. All UN entity Adherents have extensive internal coordination mechanisms in place (See Box 1.4 for examples).

Box 1.3. Examples of DAC members' approaches to internal coordination for SEAH prevention and response

The examples below illustrate different ways of working and coordinating internally, which depends both on organisational structures, capacity, and preference. A majority of DAC members incorporate elements of the below examples in their internal coordination on SEAH prevention and response.

Example 1

One Member has an internal working group on SEAH which consists of representatives from the Legal Affairs division, the Human Resources division, the Strategic Planning division, and from the division working on Gender Equality.

These divisions have different responsibilities:

- the Legal Affairs division oversees allegations of SEAH involving implementing partners; and
- the Human Resources division oversees allegations of SEAH involving employees; and
- the Strategic Planning division oversees allegations of SEAH within programmes; and
- the division working on Gender Equality provides expert input to the working group.

Example 2

Another Member has an internal working group on SEAH prevention and response, which consists of representatives from the Legal division, the Human Resources division, the Management Support division, the Controlling and Investigations division, and the Policy Support division.

In addition, the institution has gender equality advisors at its operational departments that provide support to programme managers at both headquarters and embassies and operate a gender equality helpdesk for staff, which includes experts on SEAH.

Example 3

Another Member operates with two teams working on SEAH, both internally and externally. One team works on policy development, operational support, and capability building.

The other team works on investigations – both managing investigations and supporting others with managing investigations.

Source: Survey, 2023

Box 1.4. Examples of coordination efforts across the UN system and beyond

As key actors internationally in SEAH prevention and response, and as represented through several Adherents to the DAC Recommendation, it is important to also consider UN structures and coordination functions when considering implementation of the DAC Recommendation within the broader international context.

- The **UN High-level Steering Group on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse** oversees the implementation of the UN Secretary General's (UN SG) strategy for the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff, related personnel and implementing partners. The UN SG appointed a **Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**, who leads the implementation of harmonised and aligned approaches across the system's more than 30 affiliated programmes, funds and specialised agencies, and promotes systemic coordination among United Nations system entities in operational settings. Their office chairs regular virtual discussions of the **system-wide working group on addressing sexual exploitation and abuse**, which develops tools and supports the implementation of policies and of High-level Steering Group decisions.
- The **UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment** within the organisations of the United Nations system was established in November 2017 to support the Secretary-General and UN system leaders' commitments to zero-tolerance for inaction on sexual harassment, to strengthening victim-centred prevention and response efforts, and fostering a safe, equal, and inclusive working environment across the UN system.
- The **UN Victims' Rights Advocate** and their office promotes the rights and dignity of victims, including by providing guidance to Senior Victims' Rights Officers in the field.
- The **Inter-Agency Standing Committee** coordinates humanitarian actors and action within and outside the United Nations, providing technical support and fostering cooperative approaches. The IASC's membership consists of the heads or their designated representatives of the UN operational agencies, including UNFPA, UNHCR, and UNICEF. Other agencies hold standing invitations, i.e., the World Bank. The IASC has a **PSEA Technical Expert Group**, which supports humanitarian coordinators and country teams in delivering on the commitment to protecting affected populations from SEA within humanitarian response operations.
- Working groups across specific sets of institutions, such as the International Financial Institutions working group on SEAH has also been established.

Source: (Survey, 2023; Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2023⁽⁶⁾; Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2023⁽⁶⁾; Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2019⁽⁷⁾ United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, 2024⁽²³⁾; UN General Assembly, 2023⁽²²⁾)

Pillar 2 – Develop or Support Survivor- and Victim-Centred Response and Support Mechanisms

105. Organisations have the responsibility to operate safely wherever they work – and specifically in development and humanitarian contexts – in a way that does no harm. They also

work in partnership across actors and communities. Their roles and responsibilities also include providing protection from SEAH, working to prevent SEAH, and responding when SEAH occurs. At the heart of these efforts, is the SEAH victim/survivor¹⁹. It is of the utmost importance to recognise the harm and long-term damage inflicted on individuals and their communities through the perpetration of SEAH, and the responsibility that entities have to promote the well-being, healing, and recovery of an individual and/or community affected, as well as to pursue accountability measures (OECD, 2024^[35]). When designing any response or activity, all actors should keep in mind the explicit harm that can be caused, see Box 2.5 for examples of such harm; and see Box 2.6 on examples of necessary services and support.

Box 2.5. Examples of possible harm to SEAH victim/survivors

The kinds of harm that SEAH causes will vary depending on the victim/survivor and the wider context. These may include, but are not limited to, medical, psychological, social, and legal harm. These examples of harm or categorisations are by no means exhaustive.

Medical harm

- Physical injury; infertility; sexually transmitted diseases; unwanted pregnancies; etc.

Psychological harm

- Immediate and long-term trauma responses; anxiety; depression; self-blame; isolation; anger; etc.

Social harm

- Ostracisation from family and/or community; punishment and retaliation, including physical violence; forced reconciliation with perpetrators, etc.

Economic harm

- Loss of employment or livelihood

Legal harm

- Arrest and legal punishment, i.e., due to criminalisation of premarital sex or same-sex relations.

Source: Adapted from Women in Global Health (2022^[45]), Her Stories: Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment of Women Health Workers and The Global Fund, <https://womeningh.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/HealthToo-Policy-Report.pdf>; The Global Fund (2022^[49]), Guidance Note: Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment, <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/pseah/pseah-definitions/>.

Box 2.6. Establishing comprehensive assistance and support for SEAH victims/survivors

¹⁹ Victim/survivor refers to a person who has had sexual exploitation or abuse, or harassment perpetrated against them. The definition of SEAH victim/survivor may be interpreted and used differently by Adherents. See OECD (2024^[35]), *Toolkit to Support Implementation of the OECD DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment*, for further discussion of this terminology.

There are essential elements of assistance and support that are key to establishing comprehensive services to SEAH victim/survivors. The following types of services have been identified:

- Safety
- Immediate medical care (including Clinical Management of Rape (CMR))
- Physical health and related provisions
- Mental health and psychosocial support
- Legal services
- Basic material assistance, socio economic empowerment/livelihoods
- Support for children born as a result of SEA

While these key principles were developed in the context of cases of SEA, victims/survivors of SH also require comprehensive support and assistance, based on similar principles also included in UN guidance.

Adherents should uphold the principles of a victim/survivor-centred approach throughout the provision of any services. Access to assistance and support is in accordance with the individual needs of the victim/survivors and should be provided as needed and wanted. It is also not dependent on whether, or how, victim/survivors cooperate with any investigation or accountability process.

It is also important to obtain informed consent from victim/survivors throughout the process, for example if legal action is pursued or data is collected on their allegation. Disclosing the Adherents' responsibilities where they may conflict with the wants and needs of a victim/survivor, – for example, any duty to report or prosecute – is essential.

In many contexts where SEAH is perpetrated, there are no structures established for service provision or when they do exist, they are under-funded. In development and humanitarian contexts, support is most commonly provided by implementing partners, by gender-based violence or child protection practitioners. Such practitioners may not exist in remote areas and where they do, they may not have the expertise needed or understand the importance of different elements of assistance specifically for victim/survivors of SEA.

Note: The [UN Protocol](#) and [Technical Note](#) also provide guidelines on how to (1) assist a victim, (2) address special considerations for child victims, (3) address gaps in services, and (4) support effective coordination and integration of victim assistance into country frameworks. Source: Adapted from (UN Women, 2016^[50]; Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, 2022^[51]; UNGA, 2007^[52]; United Nations, 2019^[53]; United Nations, 2021^[54]; United Nations Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, 2023^[55])

106. The understanding of a victim/survivor centred approach to SEAH prevention and response, and the recognition that such an approach is necessary, has evolved since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation. There is a higher awareness of the importance of this kind of approach, and in 2023, most Adherents reported taking a victim/survivor-centred approach across at least some of their systems.

Integration of a victim/survivor-centred approach across systems

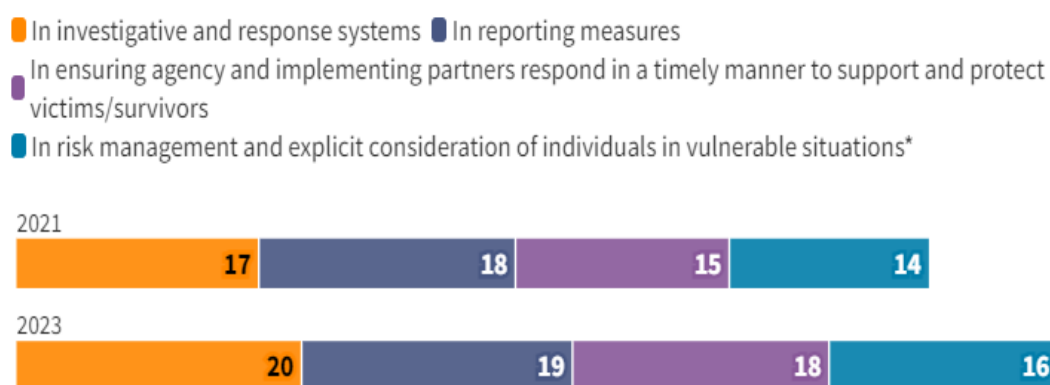
107. The integration of a victim/survivor-centred approach in different elements of response and support has grown between 2021 to 2023. Most commonly, a victim/survivor-centred approach is integrated in investigative and response systems by 20 DAC members, which is an increase from 17 DAC members in 2021 (Figure 2.8). DAC members integrate a victim/survivor-centred approach in multiple ways, and 12 DAC members apply the approach across all of the listed categories. More DAC members also provide a victim/survivor-centred approach for SEAH

prevention in their reporting measures, an increase from 18 DAC members in 2021 to 19 DAC members in 2023.

108. The number of DAC members who report that they apply this approach to ensure the agencies and implementing partners respond in timely manner to support and protect victims/survivors has also increased from 15 in 2021 to 18 in 2023. A victim/survivor-centred approach is slightly less integrated – by 16 Members – in risk management and in explicit consideration of individuals in vulnerable situations, including women and children, and people most at risk of discrimination, including on the basis of, for example, disability, gender identity and sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age or religion. However, this is still an increase from 14 DAC members in 2021.

109. See Box 2.7 for more on the importance of intersectionality and considering people most at risk of discrimination in SEAH prevention and response efforts.

Figure 2.8. DAC members' application of a victim/survivor-centred approach



Note: Several DAC members integrate a victim/survivor-centred approach in multiple ways and across several systems simultaneously. Additionally, 12 DAC member the approach across all the listed categories.

*The full statement in the survey reads: "In risk management and explicit consideration of individuals in vulnerable situations, including women and children, and people most at risk of discrimination, including on the basis of, for example, disability, gender identity and sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age or religion."

Source: Secretariat's analysis

110. All UN entity Adherents use this approach in all abovementioned ways, and most Adherents use this approach in a combination of ways.

111. Since 2019 and the adoption of the DAC Recommendation, the essential elements of the rights of victim/survivors have been further supported and enshrined in the UN Victims' Rights Statement, an important tool to support the understanding and definition such an approach (United Nations Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, 2023^[55]). The IASC also established the *Definition & Principles of a Victim/Survivor-Centered Approach* (IASC, 2023^[56]), to which several Adherents refer.

112. While on a conceptual level a "victim/survivor-centred approach" is widely accepted, many actors have reflected that there is a need for further learning and guidance around what this means in practice. Commonly accepted principles include ensuring survivors and victim's rights, needs and wants, as well as their safety, confidentiality, and non-discrimination; ensuring agency for victim/survivors entails respecting their wishes and needs; gaining informed consent throughout

any supportive efforts. There is mixed understanding of the practical implications of such an approach.

Box 2.7. Intersectionality and SEAH prevention and response

SEAH prevention and response also requires strengthened “governance systems and enabling environments for gender equality and for civil society, including working towards women’s and youth’s equal, full, effective and meaningful participation, in all their diversity, in all spheres of public and political life.”*

An intersectional approach, in this vein, is also important, and holds that one form of power inequality often intersects and is compounded by other forms of inequality or discrimination (OECD, forthcoming). Many women and girls face compounding dimensions of vulnerability and discrimination alongside gender inequality, including but not limited to “disability, gender identity and sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age or religion.”*

Applying an intersectional lens to work on SEAH response and prevention entails considering how efforts are made relevant and appropriate for all by contextualising such efforts to people experiencing multifaceted discrimination.

For example, SEAH prevention and response efforts that relate to children and young people, will likely be different than such efforts for adults. Working with racialised young people, who are simultaneously further marginalised “based on, but not limited to disability, gender identity and sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age or religion, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination”*, further necessitates contextual approaches. Overly general, one-size-fits-all approaches risks further marginalising victim/survivors, and further discouraging people to report, and erodes trust in an organisation.

Ensuring that SEAH efforts are intersectional while being victim/survivor-centred, enables organisations to adequately respond to and work towards preventing SEAH.

Note: Additional research on intersectionality and SEAH safeguarding are also available, including through Resource & Support Hub (2021^[57]).

Source: OECD, (2024^[58]; 2024^[35]); OECD, forthcoming.

*DAC Recommendation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance [[OECD/LEGAL/5022](#)]

Shared principles of a victim/survivor-centred approach

113. In order to assess the strength of a victim/survivor-centred approach, it is important to look at what underlying principles or guiding definitions are used to establish this approach (regardless of the specific mechanism/structure/policy in question). The DAC Recommendation builds on a set of widely referred to principles²⁰, referring specifically to respect for human rights, and respect, safety, confidentiality, and non-discrimination.

²⁰ This includes but is not limited to: Inter-agency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming (2019^[116]); United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

114. A small majority of DAC members (17) report having an established definition of victim/survivor-centred approach. All UN entity Adherents (4) have such a definition in place.

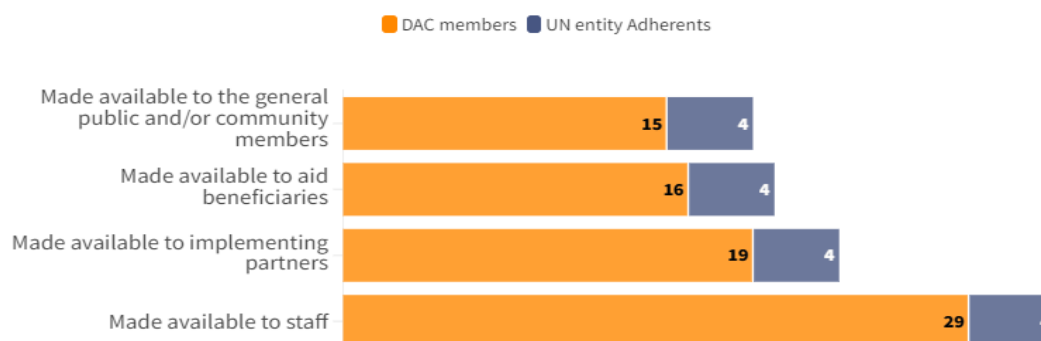
115. Most commonly, Adherents describe these approaches where the principles of respect, safety, confidentiality, and non-discrimination, as well as where the experiences, dignity, rights, needs, and wants of survivors are at the centre. Four Adherents explicitly refer to using the IASC definition, which encompasses all the abovementioned principles (IASC, 2023^[56]). This also aligns with the provisions laid out in Pillar 2 of the DAC Recommendation.

116. A small majority of DAC members (18) report that their victim/survivor-centred approach involves ensuring agency²¹ and that implementing partners respond in a timely manner to support and protect victim/survivors. This forms part of the DAC Recommendation [section 2.a.] and the IASC definition & principles and other international standards, which encourages that response time – whether this be in relation to investigation service delivery, or legal support – ought to be as timely as possible to adequately provide care for victim/survivors of SEAH (IASC, 2023^[56]).

Complaints mechanisms and collaboration with other actors

117. Adherents report having effective, clear, and simple victim/survivor-centred complaints mechanisms, which are made available to different groups (Figure 2.9), including to staff (29 DAC members), implementing partners (19 DAC members), aid beneficiaries (16 DAC members), and the general public and/or community members (15 DAC members). Work relating to complaints mechanisms and investigations is further expanded upon under Pillar 3.

Figure 2.9. Availability of complaints mechanisms in 2023



Source: Monitoring survey, 2023

118. Despite progress, there is room for further improvement. While most Adherents make complaints mechanisms available to staff and to implementing partners, less than half of Adherents make these mechanisms available to aid beneficiaries, and the general public or

(2019^[126]); and the Technical Note on the Implementation of the United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2021^[61]).

²¹ SEAH is often a violation of a person's agency and ensuring or restoring agency to victim/survivors entails enabling them to make informed choices on how they wish to be supported after being subjected to SEAH. This support and need will vary from individual to individual, wherefore it is of utmost importance to ensure that victim/survivors are provided a full ability to choose for themselves.

community members. Incorporating aid beneficiaries and community members in victim/survivor redress and assistance is a crucial aspect of enhancing accountability and legitimacy in PSEAH in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance.

119. In addition, a smaller majority of DAC members (18) do not support or cooperate with local actors on complaints mechanisms, adapting to local and cultural contexts. This may partly be due to DAC members partnering through other intermediaries with local actors, and thus not being in direct partnership or contact themselves with local actors. However, further research could be useful to gather lessons learned and experiences around cooperation with local actors. See Box 2.8 for a case-study of developing culturally sensitive accountability mechanisms for victim/survivors.

120. Amongst DAC members that report collaborating with local actors, examples of these efforts include establishing units that can provide advice for in-country officers, working with partners from civil society organisations, or building capacity for signposting to local legal services. Another example includes having developed country specific SEAH policies and complaint mechanisms across more than 30 countries; or providing dedicated funds to support capacity development in implementing partners to develop complaints mechanisms. In the latter case, an implementing partner could be eligible to receive funds to develop complaints mechanisms, if the absence of such mechanisms has been identified as a risk during the project appraisal process.

Box 2.8. Developing culturally sensitive accountability mechanisms for victim/survivors

The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) Alliance's project *Closing the accountability gap for victim/survivors of SEAH* demonstrates how effective protection against SEAH can be established in ways that are culturally appropriate, informed by local and national frameworks, and community led.

The project centres on three different contexts: West Bank and Gaza Strip, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh. The project selected three different humanitarian settings, characterised by violence, power imbalances, mass displacement, restricted access, high presence of aid actors, and more. Aiming to explore effective mechanisms for addressing and redressing SEAH, the approach leverages community intermediaries and experts on SEAH to lead the projects in their respective communities. Collaboration with local women's organisations and networks, as well as listening to SEAH victims/survivors in the cultivation of accountability *for* them, is central to this project.

The project has resulted in seven recommended pilots currently underway, implemented by local organisations in local languages, which will inform a sharing of best practices by CHS Alliance.

Source: CHS Alliance (2023^[59]; 2021^[60]) Breaking the silence: Insights from Ethiopia, Palestine and Bangladesh in the fight against SEAH, <https://www.chsalliance.org/get-support/article/insights-from-ethiopia-palestine-and-bangladesh-in-the-fight-against-seah/>; Closing the accountability gap, <https://www.chsalliance.org/get-support/resource/closing-the-accountability-gap/>.

121. A minority of DAC members (13) link their complaints mechanisms to support for the provision of victim/survivors' assistance. Some Adherents may devolve matters of victim/survivor redress and assistance – including complaints mechanisms – to implementing partners. However, ensuring that adequate recourse to action is in place, is always central. The ability to signpost victim/survivors or bystanders to appropriate services ought to be an integrated part an Adherents' engagement in any context.

122. Assistance is almost always multisectoral and institutions should be aware of their individual and collective responsibilities for the provision of assistance (IASC, 2021^[61]); this commitment is also cited in *section 2.c.* of the DAC Recommendation. DAC members can have different roles to play depending on the context within which SEAH is perpetrated. This is reflected in most DAC members' approaches, and their ways of collaborating with other actors. 20 DAC members report that they collaborate with a variety of actors around providing an integrated and safe response and protection for those who report. Most commonly, DAC members collaborate with civil society organisations (18), the UN (15), and/or national or local governments (14).

123. All UN entity Adherents collaborate within the UN, and most (3) collaborate with both civil society organisations (CSOs), local women's organisations, and/or national or local governments.

124. Collaboration with other actors has increased somewhat over time, with 21 DAC members reporting in 2023 that they collaborate with any or more of the abovementioned actors to provide integrated and safe response and protection for those who report SEA and SH. This is up from 14 in 2021.

125. Less than half of DAC members (12) report that they have developed their own guidance and minimum standards for survivor and victim's assistance, redress, and support. However, this is still a positive increase from 2021, where only 7 DAC members reported to have developed guidance.

126. The absence of independently developed guidance and minimum standards for victim/survivor assistance, redress, and support, amongst DAC members may indicate that Members are working through or with other institutions that already have these standards for support. However, it is unclear whether this is considered by all Members; and there is room for further learning in this regard.

127. All UN entity Adherents report that they have developed their own guidance and minimum standards for survivor and victim's assistance, redress, and support.

Referral pathways and mapping key stakeholders

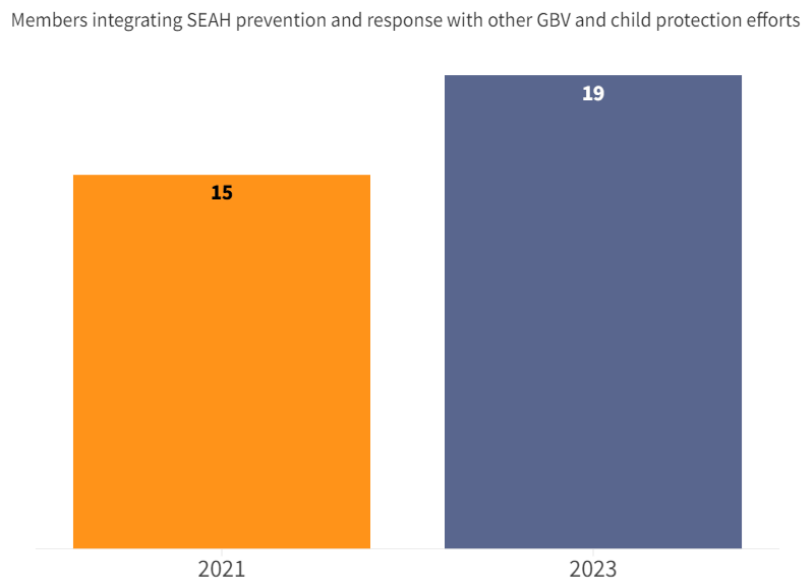
128. Service provision is often channelled through existing GBV and/or child protection referral pathways²². As such, it is important that there is coherence and complementarity between pathways, as well as improving the shared awareness of existing mechanisms – and key gaps. *Section 2.d.* also refers to the commitment to strengthen such services.

129. A majority of DAC members, 19, increasingly integrate SEAH into broader efforts to strengthen responses to GBV and child protection at a local level. This is an increase from 15 DAC members in 2021 (Figure 2.10). Examples include supporting the creation of one-stop-centres; projects related to combating trafficking in persons; social reintegration of SGBV survivors.

130. Synergies should also be created through decision-making on financing and resources of such services and development programming (across GBV, child protection, and SEAH prevention and response).

²² Resources for referral pathways and country mappings can draw from existing coordination mechanisms on GBV (UNFPA, 2022^[130]), and also be updated based on ongoing development (for example, the GBV AoR produces updates for specific countries of importance, and includes important reflections for referral pathways that also have an impact on SEA service provision (ex: Sudan recent updates "The Current Context and Concerning GBV Trends: Trends Analysis and Situational Update" (GBV AoR, 2023^[124])).

Figure 2.10. DAC Members' integration of SEAH in other GBV and child protection efforts, 2021-2023



Source: Secretariat's analysis

131. When working in any development or humanitarian context, each Adherent or DAC member will necessarily work with relevant service providers. It is important that Adherents are aware of the providers and networks in the context, and this should be mapped in countries (and updated at regular intervals) (UNICEF, 2014^[62]). Furthermore, these stakeholders should be actively integrated into prevention and response mechanisms, and where possible, information should be shared between partners. Mapping key stakeholders and/or service providers for victim/survivor referrals remains limited, with 26 DAC members reporting that they have not undertaken such a mapping in the countries where they are active.

132. This has remained largely unchanged over the years, but has increased slightly, with 4 DAC members reporting that they have conducted such a mapping in 2023, up from 2 DAC members in 2021. There is thus scope for further collaboration around this point, as a common awareness and understanding of the available services in country is important for any actor working in this context. Some mapping initiatives are also made publicly available, for example OVRA's Mapping of Victims' Assistance (Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, 2020^[63]). All UN entity Adherents have undertaken mappings.

133. For 16 DAC members, their broader efforts also include minimising the risks of victim/survivor stigmatisation, as committed to under *section 2.d*. Stigmatisation of victim/survivors is one barrier to reporting across the spectrum of SEAH and GBV more broadly.

134. For example, one DAC member reports that during the conceptualisation phase of a GBV programme, reflections are undertaken on how to minimise the risk of survivor stigmatisation. This includes reflecting on the role of gender inequality and harmful social norms and its impact on programming. Another example provided by a DAC member, suggests aligning GBV programming with health services as contributing to destigmatisation, i.e., when health staff are well-trained in considerations around GBV and are able to provide better care to victim/survivors. In some circumstances, health facilities can be comparatively more accessible, and accessing these services can carry less stigma – as such, many GBV actors work closely with the health sector as

a key referral partner. For further examples of minimising risks of victim/survivor stigmatisation, see Box 2.5.

135. Another important element of ensuring that SEAH victim/survivors receive comprehensive support is to ensure that efforts are made to support existing local services or networks and improve the quality and availability of referral services and protection mechanisms [also referred to under *sections 2.c. and 2.d.*]. DAC members are largely split in their approaches here. A minority of DAC members (14) report that they do support these existing local services and mechanisms in some capacity, whereas the remaining Members do not.

136. Three UN entity Adherents report that they do support existing local services and improve services and mechanisms. For all of these UN entity Adherents, these efforts also include minimising the risks of victim/survivor stigmatisation.

Provision of financial support for victim/survivors

137. Most Adherents *do not* provide financial support for survivors and victims’ assistance and redress (Figure 2.11). 21 DAC members, and 2 UN entity Adherents, report that they do not provide financial support for survivors and victims’ assistance and redress. 9 DAC members and 2 UN entity Adherents do provide this support.

Figure 2.11. Prevalence of provision of financial support for survivors and victims’ assistance and redress in 2023

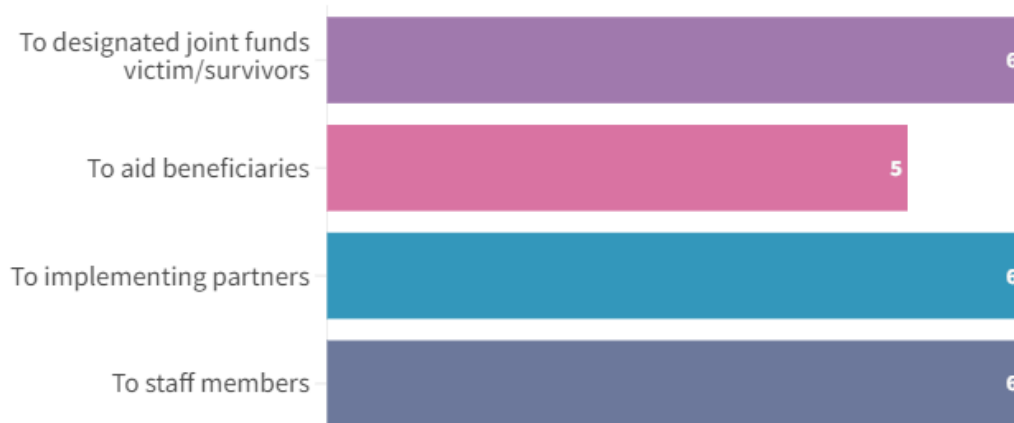


Source: Survey, 2023

138. Of those Adherents that do provide financial support for survivors and victims, the eligibility to this support varies, depending on the relationship of the victim/survivor to the Adherent (Figure 2.12). In 2023, 5 DAC members reported to provide support through designated joint funds for victim/survivors more generally; 3 to aid beneficiaries; 5 to implementing partners; and 4 to staff members, specifically. In addition, 10 other DAC members have contributed to one designated joint fund – at some point – since the adoption of the Recommendation.

139. Amongst UN entity Adherents that do provide financial support, one UN entity Adherent provides this to staff members, implementing partners, aid beneficiaries, and designated joint funds. The other UN entity Adherent provides this to staff members and aid beneficiaries.

Figure 2.12. How do Adherents provide financial support for survivors and victims' assistance and redress?



Note: The graph only accounts for those Adherents (11) that do provide financial support to victim/survivors.
Source: Survey, 2023

140. Some of the key challenges in applying a victim/survivor centred approach in practice may be persisting lack of clarity over responsibilities for assistance, redress, and support; and difficulties in accommodating the wants of victim/survivors with seemingly opposing organisational responsibilities, such as reporting responsibilities when these may be contrary to the wishes of victim/survivors (OECD, 2024^[35]).

141. Victim/survivor support services will vary significantly based on the specific case, wishes of the victim/survivors, and the context (whether within an institution with SH or externally with SEA). However, there are basic underlying principles and obligations that apply to all circumstances, which should be applied. For examples of essential services for victim/survivors see Box 2.8.

Pillar 3 – Establish Organisational Reporting and Response Systems and Procedures for the Prevention of SEA and SH

142. Reporting systems and their use are important elements of institutional frameworks to address SEAH. It is important to note that an organisation or institution should not wait for cases to be reported before putting in place policies and processes to prevent and respond to SEAH; or before taking action to establish a more supportive organisational culture.

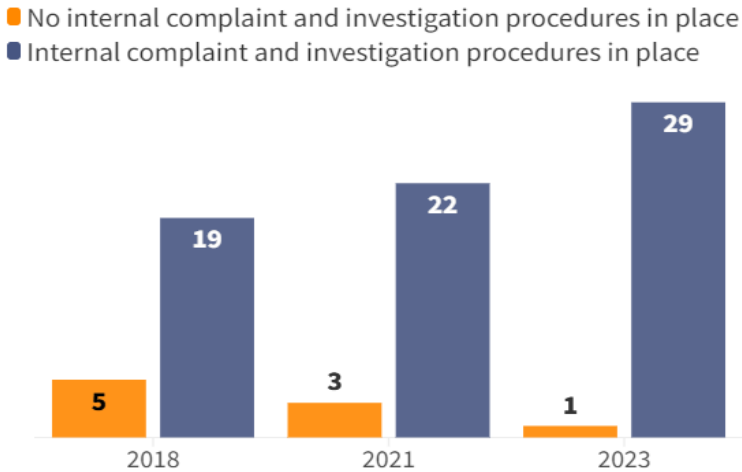
143. SEAH prevention and response necessitates co-operation with other actors, including implementing partners, partner governments and other local authorities, civil society, and more. DAC members reflect this reality to varying degrees in their reporting, for example by lacing responsibility for establishing certain elements of the DAC Recommendation with implementing partners (e.g., mapping referral mechanisms).

144. Nearly all DAC members (29) have internal complaint and investigation procedures in place that include established functions and mechanisms to handle incidents and allegations of SEA, SH, and/or SEAH. For 20 DAC members, these complaints mechanisms can also include incidents and allegations in relation to implementing partners.

145. All UN entity Adherents have internal complaint and investigation procedures in place, including established functions and mechanisms to handle incidents and allegations of SEA, SH, and/or SEAH. These complaints mechanisms include incidents and allegations in relation to implementing partners for all UN entity Adherents.

146. The number of DAC members that have internal complaint and investigation procedures in place including established functions and mechanisms to handle incidents and allegations of SEAH, SEA, or SH, has progressively increased over the years. In 2018, 19 DAC members reported that they had such procedures in place. This number rose to 22 Members in 2021 and grew to 29 Members in 2023 (Figure 3.13).

Figure 3.13. Internal complaint and investigation procedures amongst DAC members, 2018-2023



Source: Secretariat's analysis

147. While the existence of reporting and complaints mechanisms is essential, it must also be contextualised by the reality that such systems may be under-used and that under-reporting remains a known, and large challenge. There may still be significant disincentives to using such systems, as well as barriers to accessing them (both within an institution and in a development/humanitarian context). Experiences around these persistent challenges should be drawn from the GBV sector; and several Adherents report to pull from learning in this sector.

148. Further analysis is needed to understand the quality of these systems, their impact on improving responses to SEAH, and their impact (if any) on creating more preventive environments. When analysing impacts, it is important to not make assumptions around the existence of systems (such as complaints mechanisms) serving as a deterrent for SEAH or automatically serving a preventive function. More evidence and further analysis should be gathered to underscore these points.

Upholding key principles of a victim/survivor-centred approach within reporting and complaints

149. The fundamental principles of accessibility, safety, confidentiality, and anonymity within reporting are a means of protecting both victim/survivors, as well as providing access to a due process for an accused person [section 3.b. of the DAC Recommendation]. Since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation in 2019, these fundamental principles have also been reinforced by key normative frameworks such as the UN Victims' Rights Statement (United Nations Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, 2023^[55]).

- a. Accessibility is central to ensuring that victim/survivors have access to reporting mechanisms. Barriers to accessibility can be numerous: from geographical and physical restrictions, such as distance, to the cost of services or general administrative barriers for handling allegations. Service provisions themselves can also present challenges in some cases – and conflict with the abovementioned principles – for example by not having appropriately trained staff, or by fostering a perception that services are not available or friendly to certain groups of people.
- b. Other barriers include social norms or other community barriers.
- c. Ensuring the upholding of key principles of a victim/survivor-centred approach can help alleviate the practical implications of such barriers and encourage victim/survivors to report.

150. A majority of DAC members (23) report that their institution provides easy, safe, accessible, context-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanisms, which are confidential and anonymous, for individuals and communities [as committed under section 3.b. of the DAC Recommendation]. Often these mechanisms are coordinated with other investigations capacities, and whistleblowing mechanisms in relation to compliance breaches, fraud, or other forms of misconduct.

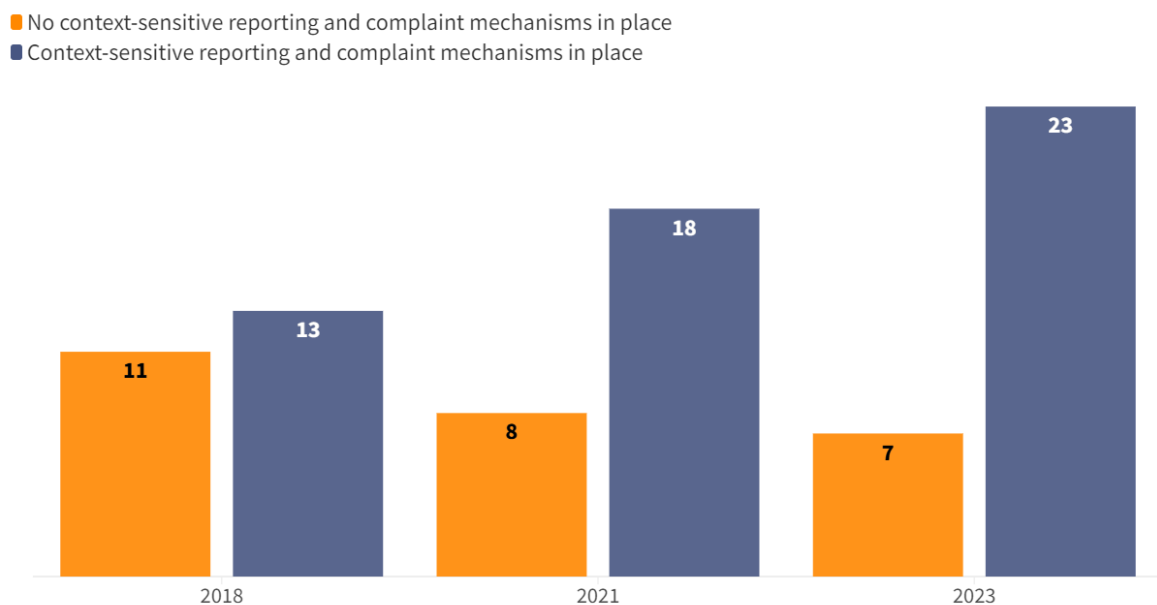
151. This number has also grown over the years. In 2018, 13 DAC members reported that there is a way of reporting SEAH anonymously. In 2021, 18 DAC members reported that their institution provides easy, safe, accessible, context-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanisms, that are confidential and anonymous, for individuals and communities, and this number grew to 23 in 2023 (Figure 3.14).

152. While these improvements indicate a positive trend, more work should be done to go beyond these descriptions of such mechanisms and look further at how they are implemented and

used in practice. Overall, several years since adoption of the DAC Recommendation, a number of DAC members have formed a dedicated safeguarding investigation group to exchange on best practice and share ideas for victim/survivor-centred investigations, reporting mechanisms, and information sharing. All UN entity Adherents report that their institution provides easy, safe, accessible, context-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanisms, which are confidential and anonymous, for individuals and communities.

153. This is a potential area for further learning, where Adherents can share reflections on implementation and feedback on such mechanisms. Given the challenges and sensitivities in this area, it would be useful to reflect further on how the values of safety, accessibility, and confidentiality, are upheld in practice.

Figure 3.14. Existence of context-sensitive reporting and complaint mechanisms amongst DAC members, 2018-2023



Source: Secretariat's analysis

154. The format and structure of these mechanisms varies. Several DAC members mention that incidents, allegations, or complaints can be lodged and reported online. This can include emailing a designated inbox, reporting via an online platform or calling designated hotlines. There is room for more learning around the usefulness of such modalities. Some institutions report challenges with specific formats. Challenges around the effectiveness of certain formats may include issues around accessibility due to infrastructure constraints (e.g., lack of network coverage to access digital mechanisms) or language barriers (e.g., mechanisms are set-up in a language that is not easily accessible to the complainant) and thus may act as a deterrent (IASC, 2016^[64]; CLEAR Global, 2022^[65]). Many of these systems are relatively new, and as experience is accumulated, it would be important that further learning around the effectiveness of such modalities is evaluated and shared. Learning and experiences in other sectors, and also technical expertise in languages and communication should be drawn from. See Box 3.9 for examples of such challenges.

Box 3.9. Known challenges around the accessibility of complaints mechanisms

Case-study research from the Democratic Republic of Congo, conducted by CLEAR Global, concluded that community members encounter barriers to reporting SEAH.

Challenges vary, but examples include **accessibility issues**, i.e., people lack access to phones, reporting hotlines are left unanswered, etc. Another common challenge revolves around **communication**, i.e., how to report in the first place is not clearly communicated or understood. For example, information is communicated in French within a region where many community members do not speak this language.

Additional learnings from the case-study stress the need to tailor complaints mechanisms in a more inclusive and intersectional manner, enabling appropriate avenues of complaint for other at-risk groups, such as men and boys, and other adolescents.

Building complaints mechanisms that are truly accessible is crucial for encouraging the reporting of SEAH.

Source: CLEAR Global (2022^[65]), Insights into community needs and wishes, <https://clearglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CLEAR-TWB-DRC-WHO-PSEAH-English-Report-4.pdf>

Determining responsibilities and capacities in allegations

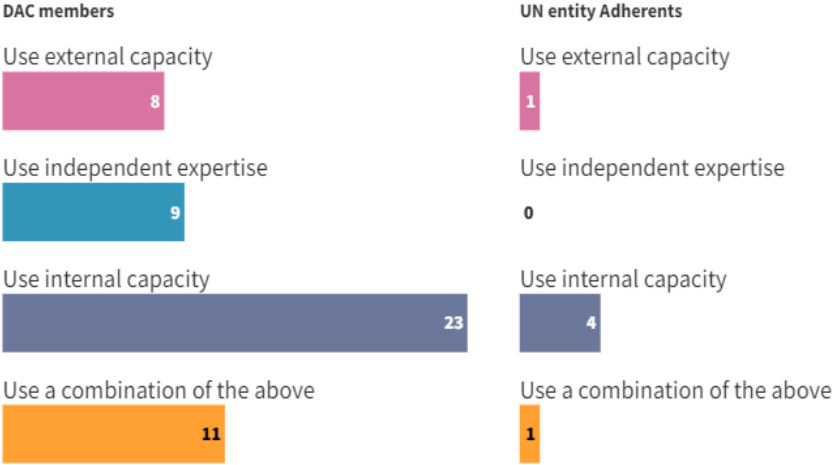
155. For most DAC members, determining capacity and responsibility for handling allegations [sections 3.a. and 3.e. of the DAC Recommendation] depends on who made the allegation and whether it is an internal or external allegation. For internal allegations – i.e., from one staff member against another – most DAC members mention that these fall under the responsibility of Human Resource departments. See Box 3.10 for an example of an internal reporting mechanism.

156. A majority of DAC members (23) use internal capacity within the agency for investigations, or place responsibility, in case of allegations (Figure 3.15). However, several DAC members use other types of capacity or a combination of different capacities. This includes external capacity (8 Members) and/or independent expertise (9 Members), with 11 DAC members using a combination of the abovementioned capacities.

157. As an example, one DAC member mentions that formal, internal investigations always involve an external investigator. In external cases, several DAC members also report that implementing partners or the funded organisation is responsible for handling complaints and conducting investigations.

158. UN entity Adherents overwhelmingly use internal capacity for conducting investigations and placing responsibilities in case of allegations (Figure 3.15). Of these, one UN entity Adherent draws on a combination of both internal and external capacity.

Figure 3.15. How do Adherents delegate responsibility for addressing allegations?



Source: Survey, 2023

159. Several DAC members place responsibility on or require implementing partners to address SEAH incidents directly. For some DAC members, SEAH prevention and response forms part of the contractual obligations and responsibilities of implementing partners, e.g., implementing partners are required to handle and report back to DAC members on their handling of SEAH allegations and inform the development co-operation provider of any outcomes.

160. These requirements or obligations between DAC members and implementing partners continue to be a priority source of exchange since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation. Additional reflections and learning around these arrangements would continue to be helpful to further elaborate.

Box 3.10. Example of an internal reporting system

Several DAC members have different systems for people raising allegations of SEAH, SH/SEA, which may depend on the victim/survivor's relationship to the organisation, as well as the alleged perpetrator. Below is an example of a DAC member's internal reporting, complaints, and resolutions mechanism as described below.

First steps

- Speaking to a confidential adviser. These focal points are in place at headquarters and at most missions; or
- Addressing the behaviour directly with the colleague or discussing the behaviour with one's manager. If the manager is the person exhibiting inappropriate behaviour, the person is encouraged to turn to the manager's immediate superior; or
- Contacting a centralised integrity office, which can provide advice on how to deal with the situation. This office will follow up on any report and discuss further possible steps, including offering mediation, submitting an official complaint, and initiating an investigation. Other units of the organisation may be involved, including an adviser from the Human Resources division, or a specialist in employment law. This is also the entity where an official complaint or report may be lodged.

Launching an investigation and/or lodging a complaint

- An investigation may be launched, which must first be deemed necessary by the integrity office, and then a plan of action must be approved by the most senior leaders in the organisation, i.e., the Secretary-General. The most senior leaders are responsible for concluding the process on the basis of the investigation report.
- Any complaint is lodged through the integrity office and can be lodged by any staff member against a colleague. Complaints are investigated by a designated Complaints Committee composed of both internal and external parties. The most senior leader is ultimately responsible for declaring if a complaint is well-founded or unfounded, but responsibilities may be delegated to the integrity office as well.

Resolution

- If the complaint is well-founded, disciplinary measures may be imposed on the individual concerned. The severity of these measures depends on the severity of the integrity breach. Possible measures include a written reprimand, suspension, transfer, salary reduction, or termination.
- Disagreement over the handling of a complaint can be referred to the Ombudsman.

Source: Survey, 2023

161. For 13 DAC members, and all UN entity Adherents, complaint mechanisms are coordinated with other relevant actors. Members describe this coordination as shared responsibility between implementing partners and the DAC member. Typically, the implementing partner is expected to have mechanisms in place to receive and respond to complaints, and then expected to report back on these processes to the DAC member. Other DAC members have

established working groups, aimed at addressing SEAH prevention and response challenges (including around complaint mechanisms).

162. However, 16 DAC members report that their complaint mechanisms are not coordinated with other actors, which indicates that there is scope for joining forces and building respective expertise in order to accelerate progress.

Information-sharing

163. Sharing information around allegations, cases, risks, and trends can be highly sensitive [and is referred to under *section 3.e.* of the DAC Recommendation]. There are often central issues concerning privacy, confidentiality, and the right to a due process, which must be upheld. However, the ability to analyse trends and learning from experiences and handling of allegations is also important. Ensuring that the principles of due process and impartiality are upheld alongside a victim/survivor-centred approach, is central towards enabling the sharing of information in a dignified and respectful manner (OECD, 2024^[35]).

164. For most DAC members, information sharing remains limited, with 18 reporting that they do not share information around SEAH prevention and response efforts including allegations and/or investigations with other relevant stakeholders. 11 DAC members report that they do share information, with examples of this including consolidating disaggregated data on SEAH and producing reports annually, participating in different for a for knowledge-exchange, and cooperating with different domestic agencies in line with national law.

165. All UN entity Adherents report that they do share information around SEAH prevention and response effort including allegations and/or investigations with other relevant stakeholders. For UN entity Adherents, SEAH allegations and cases are consolidated in a report on an annual basis and shared publicly in the *Report of the Secretary-General on Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse* (UN Secretary-General, 2024^[37]).

Recruitment and employment practices

166. The institutional changes that have taken place between 2018 and 2023, which relate to recruitment and employment practices for SEAH prevention are especially notable (Figure 3.16). This relates to *sections 1.e., 3.c., 3.f.-h.* of the DAC Recommendation. Being accountable to and for staff applies both to protecting staff members reporting SEAH from retaliation, and to holding staff perpetrators of SEAH accountable (including preventing their rehiring into different organisations).

167. The number of DAC members that report having policies and processes in place to ensure accountability for staff in cases of misconduct has grown from 7 in 2018, to 20 in 2021, to 25 in 2023 (Figure 3.16). This number has thus more than tripled since 2018.

168. While this increase is notable; it is also of great importance that there remain a number of DAC members who do not have accountability in mechanisms in place. The consequences of this gap are potentially significant, as lack of action when SEAH is perpetrated can lead to further circulation of perpetrators and additional abuse, and strengthening of a permissive environment. This is an important example of where zero for inaction is especially important (see Pillar 4 for more on zero tolerance for inaction).

169. A supportive organisational culture is also one where every staff member recognises their own individual responsibility and feels safe to do so; and that there is an active “speak up” culture. This includes in the role that all individuals play as active bystanders, and can also be encouraged, for example, through the establishment of whistle-blower mechanisms (OECD, 2024^[35]). These

should be accompanied by protective measures for those who speak-up [and is also included as a commitment under *sections 3.c. and 3.d.* of the DAC Recommendation].

170. Most DAC members (19) have policies in place that protect those affected or who report from retaliation, including whistleblowers. Most of these anti-retaliation policies are dedicated policies for protecting whistleblowers. These policies may be internal to the organisation, to specific agencies and/or ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs), or in place at a national level for example as part of employment law prohibiting discrimination. In 2018, only 1 DAC member had an anti-retaliation policy in place which included preventing SEAH. This rose to 17 DAC members in 2021 and has now risen to 19 in 2023 (Figure 3.16).

Figure 3.16. Developments on anti-retaliation and accountability processes amongst DAC members, 2018-2023



Source: Secretariat's analysis

171. The ways that these policies and processes are communicated vary, with 11 DAC members reporting that these measures are only communicated among staff. For 14 DAC members, these measures are communicated amongst both staff and implementing partners.

172. A majority of DAC members (23) report having effective and transparent recruitment, performance management, and referral practices to prevent the hiring, re-hiring, transfer, or promotion of perpetrators [*sections 3.f-h.* of the DAC Recommendation].

173. 26 DAC members also have mechanisms in place that screen candidates' backgrounds, references, and criminal record checks for former misconduct. Most DAC members refer to the usage of national-level screening mechanisms, which typically apply to civil servants. This can include reference checks, producing a certificate for a clean criminal record, or undergoing a form of security clearance or vetting.

174. The number of DAC members that report that they have effective and transparent recruitment, performance management, and referral practices to prevent the hiring of perpetrators has grown, from 19 in 2021 to 23 DAC members in 2023 (Figure 3.17).

Figure 3.17. Developments in recruitment practices amongst DAC members, 2021-2023



Note: The full statement reads: effective and transparent recruitment, performance management, and referral practices to prevent the hiring, re-hiring, transfer, or promotion of perpetrators."

Source: Secretariat's analysis

175. It is important to coordinate with other actors to limit the re-hiring or transfer of perpetrators between agencies. Examples of this co-operation includes the usage of ClearCheck, Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, and Project Soteria. ClearCheck is an online database that allows for UN entities to share information on a system-wide basis, which relates to individuals with established allegation related to SH and/or SEA (UN CEB, 2024^[66]). The Misconduct Disclosure Scheme is hosted by the CHS Alliance and aims to facilitate sharing of misconduct data between recruiting organisations and previous employers (Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, 2019^[67]). Project Soteria is an Interpol project aimed at strengthening cooperation between law enforcement and aid sector organisations to prevent sexual offenders from using roles in the aid sector to perpetrate SEAH and to strengthen the capacities to investigate reports of SEAH and to bring perpetrators to account (Interpol, 2022^[68]). Focused multi-stakeholder exchanges and more research has also taken place through initiatives such as the Roadmap to Employment Accountability (USAID, 2021^[69]), which is an example of efforts made by DAC members and other experts to tackle key challenges and address gaps in employment accountability measures in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance.

176. A minority of DAC members (8) have positive incentives in place for promoting good practice and rewarding learning and improvements on work for addressing SEAH. These incentives and/or rewards can contribute to fostering a culture of inclusion, trust, and openness to enable accountability and transparency. Examples of this include training on ethical leadership, hosting award ceremonies across an organisation to highlight successful initiatives on SEAH prevention or establishing PSEAH champions (See Box 3.11 for a description of PSEAH Champions).

177. The number of DAC members that report that they have positive incentives to promote good practice and rewards for learning and improvement relating to work to address SEAH has grown slightly, from 6 in 2021, to 8 in 2023. However, most DAC members (19) do not have such positive incentives in place in 2023. Learning can be taken from examples of incentives taken from other related sectors, such as for gender equality and women's empowerment (See "Pillar 6.3 Incentives and accountability for gender equality" in *Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: DAC Guidance for Development Partners*, OECD, 2022^[5]).

178. All UN entity Adherents report to have effective and transparent recruitment, performance management, and referral practices to prevent the hiring, re-hiring, transfer, or promotion of perpetrators, and all UN entity Adherents, also have mechanisms in place which screen candidates' backgrounds, references, and criminal record checks for former misconduct.

179. Most UN entity Adherents (3) do not have positive incentives in place for promoting good practice and rewarding learning and improvements on work for addressing SEAH. One UN entity Adherent does.

180. All UN entity Adherents have policies or processes in place to ensure accountability for staff in cases of misconduct, including dismissal, suspension, and other measures.

181. For 2 UN entity Adherents, these accountability measures are communicated among staff, but not implementing partners. For 2 UN entity Adherents, these policies and processes are communicated both amongst staff and implementing partners.

Box 3.11. PSEAH Champions

Several DAC members mention the existence of champions as a role that can provide support for individuals, as well as being a convening and leading role in encouraging conversations around SEAH prevention and response.

- One DAC member encourages country offices to become PSEAH champions and produce good practice for other representations and for the development agency writ large.
- Another DAC member hosts a network of champions, consisting of designated SEAH leads from departments across the organisation and posted both nationally and internationally. Similarly, the goal of the network is to convene champions and share learning, best practices, and challenges in SEAH prevention and response.
- Another DAC member has a champion who chairs bi-annual panels for all staff highlighting issues related to PSEAH both in programming and in relation to organisational culture.
- Another example of using 'champions' comes from IASC, where a PSEAH Champion is chosen on a yearly basis, and provides leadership and political support to advocate for the IASC Vision and Strategy.

Source: Survey, 2023; Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2024^[36]), IASC Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-champion-on-protection-from-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-and-sexual-harassment>

Pillar 4 – Conduct Training, Raise Awareness, and Communicate on SEA and SH Prevention

182. An organisation's culture has implications internally and externally. Governments and organisations cannot adequately tackle sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment without transparently challenging the power dynamics within their own institutional cultures and ensuring that equality and representation are delivered at every level within their institutions (OECD, 2024^[35]).

183. Providing training, along with useful and accurate tools, to all staff regardless of their job or expertise, is essential to building individual and organisational understanding and capacity to prevent and respond to SEAH. Effective training is an indispensable part of embedding a culture of zero tolerance for inaction (OECD, 2024^[35]).

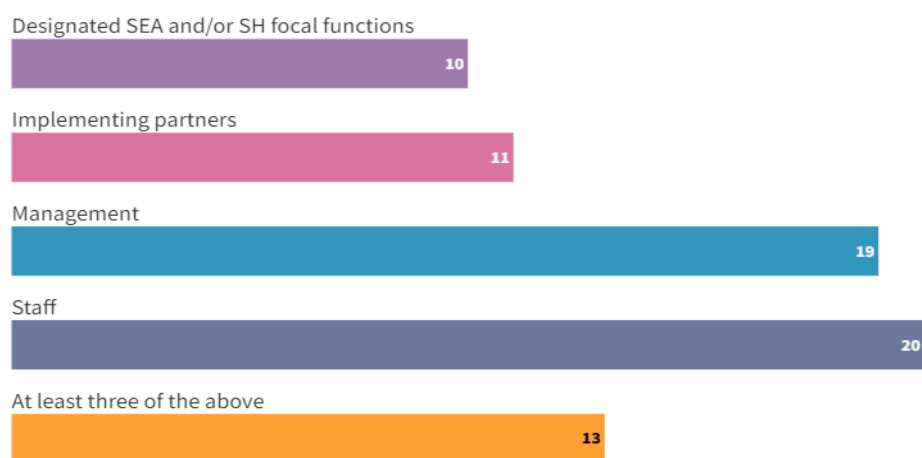
Providing training and capacity development on SEAH

184. Capacity development and effective training are integral parts of embedding a culture of zero tolerance for inaction. Providing training, along with useful and accurate tools, to all staff – regardless of their job or expertise – is essential to building individual and organisational understanding and capacity to prevent and respond to SEAH.

185. This is an area where some progress has been seen since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation. Many DAC members and partners have invested resources and developed training exercises. DAC members are increasingly providing adequate and sustained resources to conduct training, raise awareness and communicate on SEAH prevention, from 17 in 2021, to 19 in 2023.

186. 21 DAC members also report that they provide or support regular training and capacity development on SEAH (Figure 4.18). This is largely made available to staff (20) and management (19), to implementing partners (10), and – less commonly – to designated SEAH focal functions (10). Overall, 13 DAC members provide or support this training or capacity building to at least three different groups. The proportion of DAC members that provide or support regular training and capacity building on SEAH has also grown from 17 in 2021, to 21 in 2023.

Figure 4.18. Groups that are offered regular training by DAC members

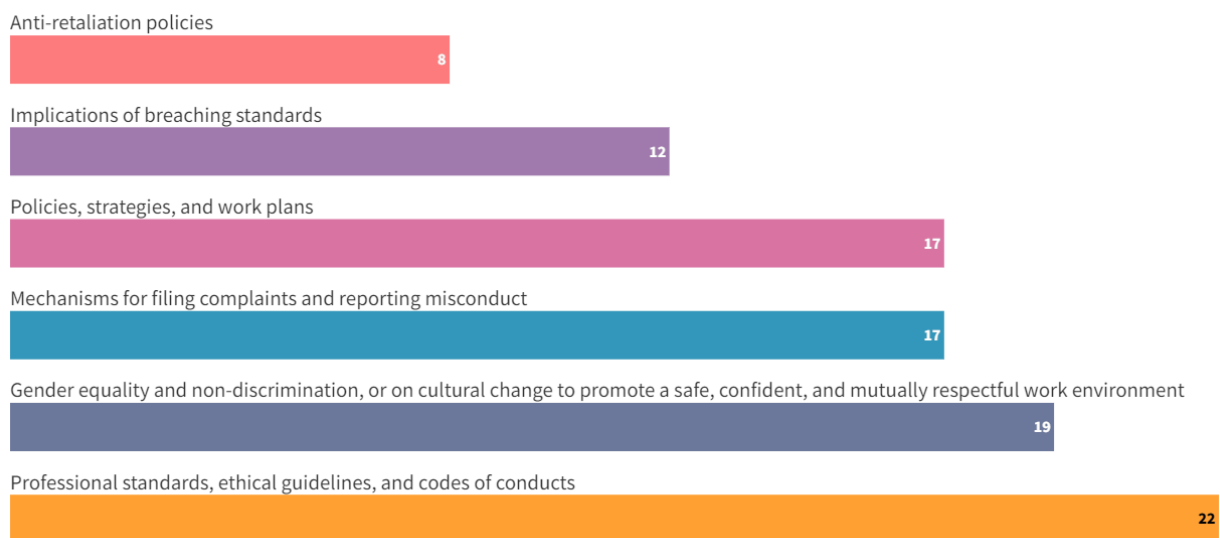


Source: Survey, 2023

187. The focus of this training and capacity building includes: professional standards, ethical guidelines, codes of conduct, gender equality and non-discrimination, and anti-retaliation policies (Figure 4.19). Many DAC members have trainings and capacity building on at least two of the categories of topics.

188. In addition, certain DAC members report to conduct additional trainings on related or more specific thematic topics related to SEAH, such as: SEAH risk management; victim/survivor-centred approaches; child protection; investigations; general leadership training; and legal implications in relation to SEAH allegations/cases.

Figure 4.19. Focus of DAC members' training and capacity building



Source: Survey, 2023

189. The format of these trainings varies. For example, some trainings are done in person, others online. The audience also can include jointly between headquarters and embassies, others with implementing partners or local organisations.

190. Several Adherents have developed resources around training through multi-stakeholder collaboration, such as the CHS Investigator Qualification Training Scheme, which provides a four-tiered approach to investigator skills and skills in the management of SEAH investigations (CHS Alliance, 2024^[70]). Learning and dedicated exchange of experiences between actors has also increased, for example, with the establishment of the donor safeguarding investigation group (DOSIG).

191. While some trainings and resources are made available internally for staff, other Adherents make trainings and resources publicly available. For example, the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) course on Gender & Development; the MOOC course on Safeguarding in the international Aid sector; and the United Nations System-wide Training Module on SEAH (Agence française de développement, 2021^[71]; United Nations Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2021^[72]; The Open University & the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 2022^[73]).

192. Conducting training related to SEAH prevention and response can be associated with different challenges. Several DAC members have highlighted complexities they have faced, such as adapting training to local contexts and being culturally sensitive to potential taboos around what

constitutes SEAH. Other DAC members raise that insufficient resources prove a challenge as well, particularly for providing training for implementing partners or other external stakeholders.

193. Although not unique to the sector of SEAH prevention and response, the impact of trainings and capacity building is often not measured or analysed. Several Adherents have reflected on the reach of their trainings: for example, two DAC members report that they have trained more than 200 employees internally and indirectly provided training or resources for at least 70 civil society organisations as well. In general, when feedback is gathered, DAC members report that colleagues reflect positively on trainings. One DAC member has conducted analysis of stakeholder perception of training supported by the organisation, and feedback was positive with users responding that the trainings or engagement with the overall service had improved their knowledge. Another DAC member reports that trainings have led to staff being better informed about the organisations' professional standards, or ethical guidelines. While more could be done to gain more understanding of the impact of existing trainings, it is notable that when feedback is received, many Adherents have reported that stakeholders find trainings valuable and useful.

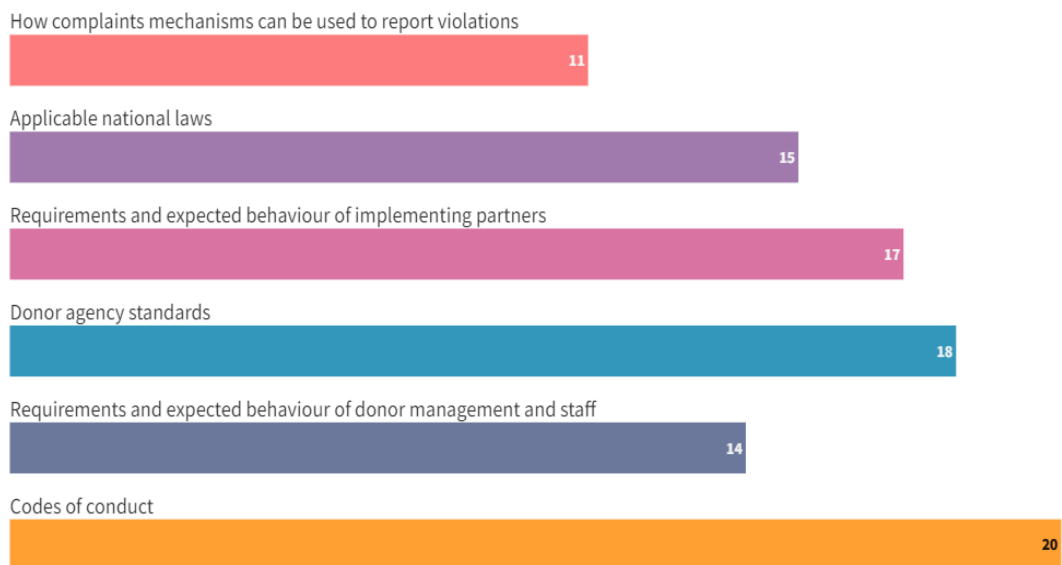
194. All UN entity Adherents also report that they provide or support regular training and capacity building on SEAH. This is made available to staff, designated SEAH focal functions, and implementing partners. This training covers a wide range of topics amongst all UN entity Adherents: professional standards, ethical guidelines, codes of conducts; policies, strategies, and work plans; mechanisms to file complaints and reporting misconduct; implications of breaching standards; and cultural change to promote a safe, confident, and mutually respectful work environments. Slightly less commonly, UN entity Adherents (3) also provide or support training on the topic of gender equality and non-discrimination, and on anti-retaliation policies.

Awareness-raising efforts, communication, and tool-sharing

195. Awareness raising and educational outreach efforts can help ensure aid recipients are aware of their rights, available reporting mechanisms and available services. A minority of DAC members (8) support such activities or programmes with implementing partners.

196. The focus of such awareness-raising efforts varies between DAC members (Figure 4.20). Most commonly, DAC members report to have conducted awareness-raising at the national and international levels on SEAH response by communicating information on their codes of conduct (20 DAC members) and on donor agency standards (18 DAC members). Other topics include information on requirements and expected behaviour of implementing partners (17 DAC members), applicable national laws (15 DAC members), and expected behaviour of donor management and staff (14 DAC members). Least commonly, DAC members communicate information on how complaint mechanisms can be used to report violations (11 DAC members). Several DAC members conduct awareness raising on multiple or all the above-mentioned categories.

Figure 4.20. The focus of awareness-raising efforts amongst DAC members



Source: Survey, 2023

197. Information-sharing and communicating tools between headquarters, country offices, implementing partners, and local and national governments where safe and appropriate, has grown. This is in relation to both gender equality and non-discrimination, and to prevent and protect against SEAH. In 2021, 13 DAC members reported that they do share tools and materials across headquarters, country offices, etc., and by 2023, this number had grown 18 DAC members.

198. A small majority of DAC members (18) report that they share tools and materials between headquarters, country offices, implementing partners, and local and national governments where safe and appropriate. These materials relate to gender equality and non-discrimination, and to prevent and protect against SEAH.

- a. Most commonly, these materials related to employees or implementing partners' responsibilities in meeting expectations on gender equality and non-discrimination.
- b. Other examples include sharing training modules and resources; and toolkits for employees or partners. Certain Members also report to having hosted a dedicated inbox for questions; or websites dedicated to SEAH prevention and response, as key resources available to actors in any locale.
- c. Some DAC members also refer to a variety of policy marker tools, which they introduce and share with implementing partners. These are used to ensure that gender equality and non-discrimination considerations are integrated across the programme cycle.

199. All UN entity Adherents provide or support awareness-raising and educational outreach efforts and all UN entity Adherents broadly share materials across their own agencies to other agencies, headquarters, as well as with regional and country offices. For example, these materials may be a resource package shared with country offices, consisting of the various tools, materials, standard operating procedures, policies, etc., which are relevant to PSEAH. Some UN entity

Adherents have also tailored training packages for different partners, including government partners.

Engaging with local communities

200. Engaging with local communities is important, as the absence of tailoring or contextualising SEAH responses can lead to a breakdown in collaboration between actors, and less effective provision of assistance for victims/survivors (OECD, 2024_[35]). Without proper coordination, a survivor-centred approach, and principles, and ensuring victim/survivor assistance, will be undermined (OECD, 2024_[35]).

201. Three DAC members consult with aid beneficiaries and local populations in the design of SEAH response programmes and wider programming. Furthermore, of the DAC members which do not consult with aid beneficiaries, half require implementing partners to do so, and the other half do not require implementing partners to do so. Much more can be done to ensure that programmes are better adapted to local context.

202. A minority of DAC members (12) report that they support or include SEAH prevention and response capacity development and training of established local, in-country organisations. Of the DAC members who provide this support or inclusion, 10 report that this includes women's rights organisations and 9 report that this includes SEAH prevention networks and mechanisms. Several DAC members mention that this includes other local organisations or CSOs. The proportion of DAC members that collaborate with established local, in-country organisations in this manner has grown slightly, from 8 in 2021 to 12 in 2023.

203. Two UN entity Adherents consult with aid beneficiaries and local populations in the design of SEAH response programmes and wider programming, and all UN entity Adherents report that they support or include SEAH prevention and response capacity development and training of established local, in-country organisations.

204. Regardless of the type of consultation or engagement, it is important that tools and resources are also communicated in clear and accessible language. See *Upholding key principles of a victim/survivor-centred approach within reporting and complaints* for more on the importance of improving accessibility. Additional sharing of experiences between Adherents would also be helpful to share tools and compare experiences, including identifying takeaways in specific contexts.

Pillar 5 – Ensure International Coordination for SEA and SH Prevention and Response

205. Coordination (across international, national, and sub-national levels) remains critical to ensuring the effectiveness of development co-operation and humanitarian assistance across all sectors. While international coordination itself is a standalone pillar of the DAC Recommendation, it is also cross-cutting and supports progress across all pillars. Due to the complexity of development and humanitarian contexts, and the intricacies of SEAH response, it is almost always necessary for some level of coordination to take place between multiple actors. In addition, to support a stronger enabling environment to prevent SEAH, collaborative work and coordinated actions between actors can strengthen prevention efforts in country contexts.

206. In addition, due to the challenging nature of SEAH prevent and response, the low level of capacity in many institutions, and lack of systems or SEAH policies in place before the adoption of the DAC Recommendation, it has been especially important for DAC members and partners to learn and exchange to support both individual and collective progress. DAC members have demonstrated a commitment to such coordination, with almost all DAC members (27) reporting that they coordinate internationally with donors and implementing partners on efforts relating to ending SEAH. This includes through the OECD DAC Reference Group on Ending SEAH and the DAC GENDERNET.

207. The number of DAC members that report that they coordinate internationally with donors and implementing partners on efforts relating to ending SEAH has grown from 21 in 2021, to 27 in 2023.

208. In addition, more broadly, adherents report to co-ordinate and collaborate with a breadth of stakeholders. These include other DAC members, implementing partners, international and national experts, the IASC, non-DAC development co-operation providers, and the UN CEB. Collaboration is also underway with partners in the private sector, the CHS Alliance, and various UN entities. 14 DAC members, and all UN entity Adherents, collaborate internationally with at least three different groups of actors (Figure 5.21). It is slightly less common for DAC members to collaborate with non-DAC development providers and the UN CEB for Coordination.

209. DAC Members also coordinate through international fora such as the G7; through other Member-led initiatives such as the UK-led donor Technical Working Group (follow-up to the 2018 London Summit) and an initiative to support a common approach to protection against SEAH (CAPSEAH); and through regular bilateral and multilateral partner dialogue on the topic.

210. Several coordination groups have also been established around the UN Headquarters in Geneva and New York, through the Group of Friends on Elimination Sexual Harassment (GOFESH). Coordination also occurs beyond the DAC membership when consulting with UN member states and UN agencies through Executive Board processes. Furthermore, Adherents coordinate through in-country PSEA networks and inter-agency coordination mechanisms when these are established in-country.

211. The development of multi-stakeholder initiatives and related technical advisory groups can also provide an opportunity for additional coordination and learning. Examples of these initiatives include, but are not limited to, the Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Overview (SEARO), the CHS Data Harmonisation Scheme, the UN CEB Task Force²³ and more.

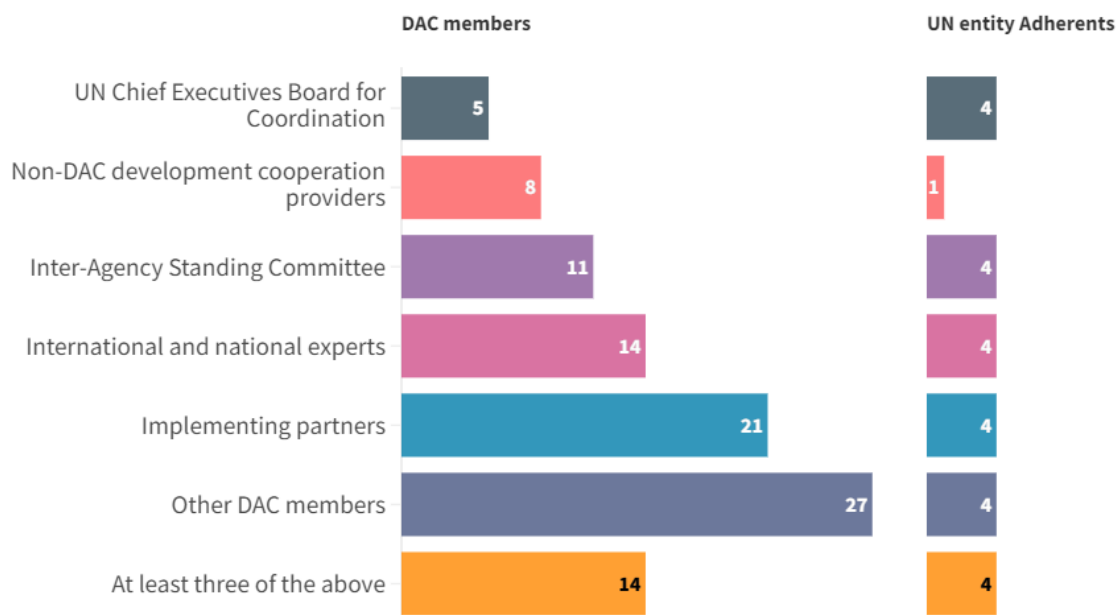
²³ The UN CEB Task Force was taken over by the UN Executive Group to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment (Executive Group) in January 2024.

212. All UN entity Adherents report that they coordinate internationally with donors and implementing partners on efforts relating to ending SEAH. For more examples of the UN system’s internal coordination mechanisms, refer to Box 1.3.

213. All UN entity Adherents also collaborate with a breadth of stakeholders. These include other DAC members, implementing partners, international and national experts, the IASC, non-DAC development co-operation providers, and the UN CEB. All UN entity Adherents collaborate internationally with at least three different entities. It is slightly more uncommon for UN entity Adherents to collaborate with non-DAC development co-operation providers, with only 1 UN entity Adherents reporting that they do this.

Figure 5.21. International collaboration, DAC and UN

Adherents report on their collaboration with different groups of actors.



Source: Survey, 2023

214. There are many reasons that motivate institutions to coordinate across actors. The focus of this coordination can be around multiple topics (Figure 5.22). Most commonly, coordination is focused on standard-setting (22) and aligning to existing measures (20). DAC members also coordinate around taking comprehensive action in SEAH prevention and response (19) and, to a lesser extent, responding to victim/survivors’ needs (16). All UN entity Adherents coordinate internationally across all the abovementioned topics.

215. Lesson sharing and learning from each other including around best practices is also a reported driver and benefit of many coordination activities. This includes around a range of topics, such as: case management and investigations; identifying risks and mitigation measures in relation to safe programming; child protection and abuse; encouraging joint reflection on contextualising PSEAH efforts for local contexts, as well as locally-led PSEAH; and identifying compliance on SEAH requirements.

216. DAC members also report that their involvement in coordination mechanisms helps to maintain – and reset when necessary – the political urgency on the SEAH agenda.

Figure 5.22. Reasoning behind international co-ordination amongst DAC members



Source: Survey, 2023

Applying relevant norms and standards

217. There are several notable international standards and guiding principles beyond the DAC Recommendation that set out key norms for action on SEAH prevention and response. These standards provide the basis of policy basis for action on SEAH. 27 DAC members report that for their institution, the DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH is included as a policy basis for action. For example, DAC members have utilised the DAC Recommendation for producing internal PSEAH guidance and/or for developing their own PSEAH policies. Several DAC members utilise the structure of the DAC Recommendation – the pillars and subsections – as the basis for their own efforts on SEAH prevention and response. Some DAC members include references to the DAC Recommendation (and in some cases other relevant standards) in partnership agreements or in due diligence processes; the DAC Recommendation also serves the basis for the organisation of many DAC members' work on SEAH prevention and response more broadly.

218. A range of existing international commitments are taken into account as a policy basis for further action.

- a. Half of DAC members (16) mention the *Inter-Agency Standing Committee Minimum Operating Standards* (IASC, 2012^[74]).
- b. 14 DAC members mention the *Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability* (Core Humanitarian Standard, 2023^[75]).

- c. Other relevant commitments mentioned include the *Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies, Gender Action Plan III*²⁴, several UN core documents such as the *UN Secretary-General Bulletin on PSEA*, the *UN Statement on Victims' Rights; Convention Against all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*; and *UNSCR 1325* (United Nations Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, 2023^[55]; European Commission, 2020^[76]; Call to Action GBV, 2013^[77]; United Nations Secretariat, 2003^[78]; United Nations Security Council, 2000^[79]; UN General Assembly, 1979^[80]).

219. All UN entity Adherents report that the DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH is included as a policy basis for action for their institution. UN entity Adherents also cite the use of the DAC Recommendation, for example through using key components in their own strategies and action plans on SEAH prevention and response and in the development of reporting templates. UN entity Adherents largely utilise the *Inter-Agency Standing Committee Minimum Operating Standards* and the DAC Recommendation, with one UN entity Adherent reporting that they utilise the *Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability* as well.

220. Other joint approaches include support for assessments. 21 DAC members and all UN entity Adherents report that the institution aligns to, and or/supports the development of measures to jointly assess the performance of multilateral organisations regarding their approach to SEAH, such as those by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN). Additional information around monitoring and assessment mechanisms, including MOPAN, can be found under Pillar 6.

Financing and resources

221. The international architecture around SEAH prevention and response faces certain systemic challenges, including a lack of adequate funding and resources. DAC member governments have many roles and responsibilities in development and humanitarian contexts, with one significant role being that of donors. UN and other multilateral entities can also act as donors, in addition to their roles as implementing partner (OECD, 2024^[35]).

222. Since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation, the provision of resources has consistently been identified as a priority area of action and challenge within implementation, as expressed in exchanges in the DAC Reference Group and other fora. Further contributions by individual institutions, and alignment of donor efforts in SEAH prevention and response, are important to ensure greater progress.

223. Financing and resources in this area cut across many internal institutional actions, as well as those involving other partners and joint initiatives. Considerations should include:

- a. dedicating resources to preventing SEAH within their own institutions;
- b. investing in capacity of partner organisations to prevent and respond to SEAH;
- c. playing a role and providing resources to co-ordination mechanisms at the country-level;

²⁴ The '[Gender Action Plan \(GAP\) III: An ambitious agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action](#)' has been adopted by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on 25 November 2020 and welcomed through [EU Presidency Conclusions](#) of 16 December 2020 endorsed by 24 EU Member States.

- d. investing in joint projects and initiatives; and
- e. providing sustainable support to development programmes that improve the enabling environment for prevention and response.

224. 21 DAC members report that they are dedicating resources – including financial and personnel – to realise the goals of this DAC Recommendation.

225. A minority of DAC members (15) report that their institution is dedicating resources – including financial and personnel – to ensure that *implementing partners* can uphold these standards. The number of DAC members that report that their institution is dedicating resources – including financial and personnel – to ensure that implementing partners can uphold these standards (including, but not limited to, the DAC Recommendation), has dropped slightly between 2021 and 2023, from 16 to 15 DAC members.

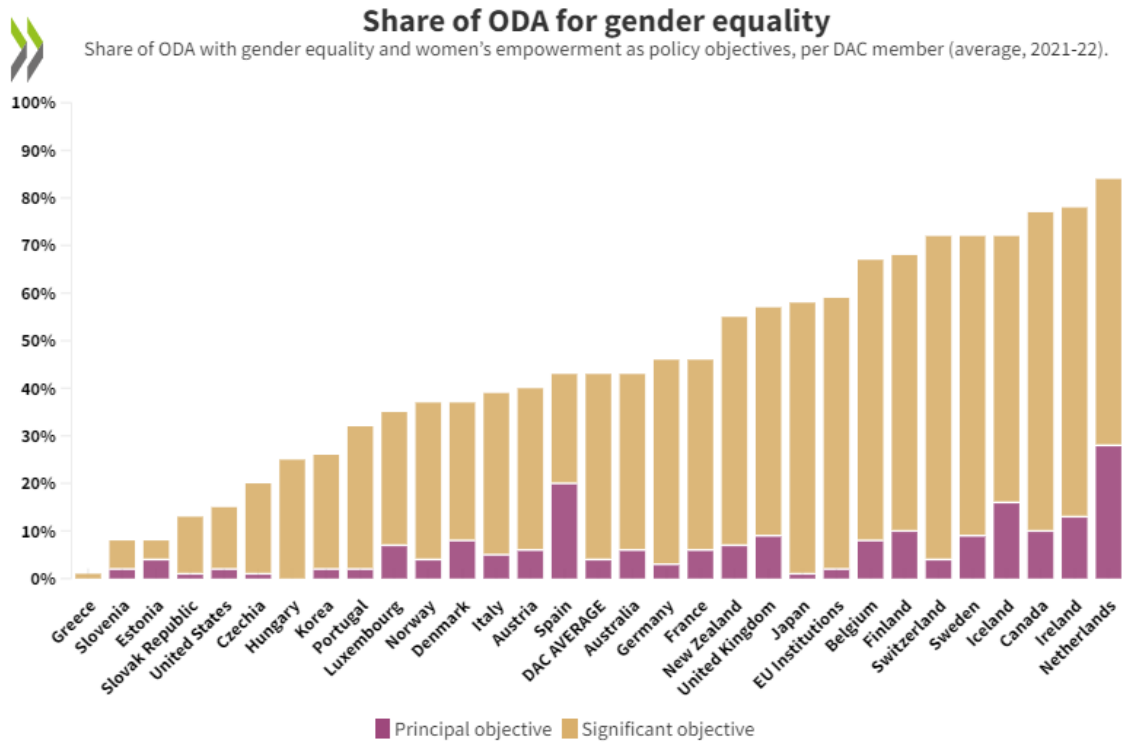
226. All UN entity Adherents also report that they are dedicating resources – including financial and personnel – to realise the goals of this DAC Recommendation, including to ensure that implementing partners can uphold these standards.

227. 12 Adherents provide or invest in specific funds to support ending SEAH. 11 Adherents do not do this. Examples of financing for SEAH include supporting the Global Survivors Fund (also known as the Global Fund for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence), of which 8 DAC members contributed more than 13 CHF million to in 2022 (Global Survivors Fund, 2022^[81]).

228. Adherents also provide or invest in specific funds to other sectors that can be related to SEAH prevention and response. This includes investing in gender equality and women's empowerment, investing in the prevention of violence against women and girls and/or gender-based violence sector, in conflict prevention and support to fragile contexts, investing in improving local capacity and governance, or in strengthening rule of law and access to justice.

229. All DAC members invest, to some extent, in gender equality (See Figure 5.23) and Official Development Assistance continues to be an important flow of financing for advancing gender equality. Ending violence against women and girls is included in these efforts, of which SEAH prevention and response efforts often form part. However, ODA to gender equality is declining for the first time in a decade, with 43% of bilateral allocable ODA having gender equality as a policy objective in 2021-2022, down from 45% in 2019-2020 (OECD, 2024^[42]).

Figure 5.23. Share of Official Development Assistance with gender equality objectives



Source: Creditor Reporting System, OECD-DAC statistics
Note: Poland and Lithuania are not included as coverage was below 50%



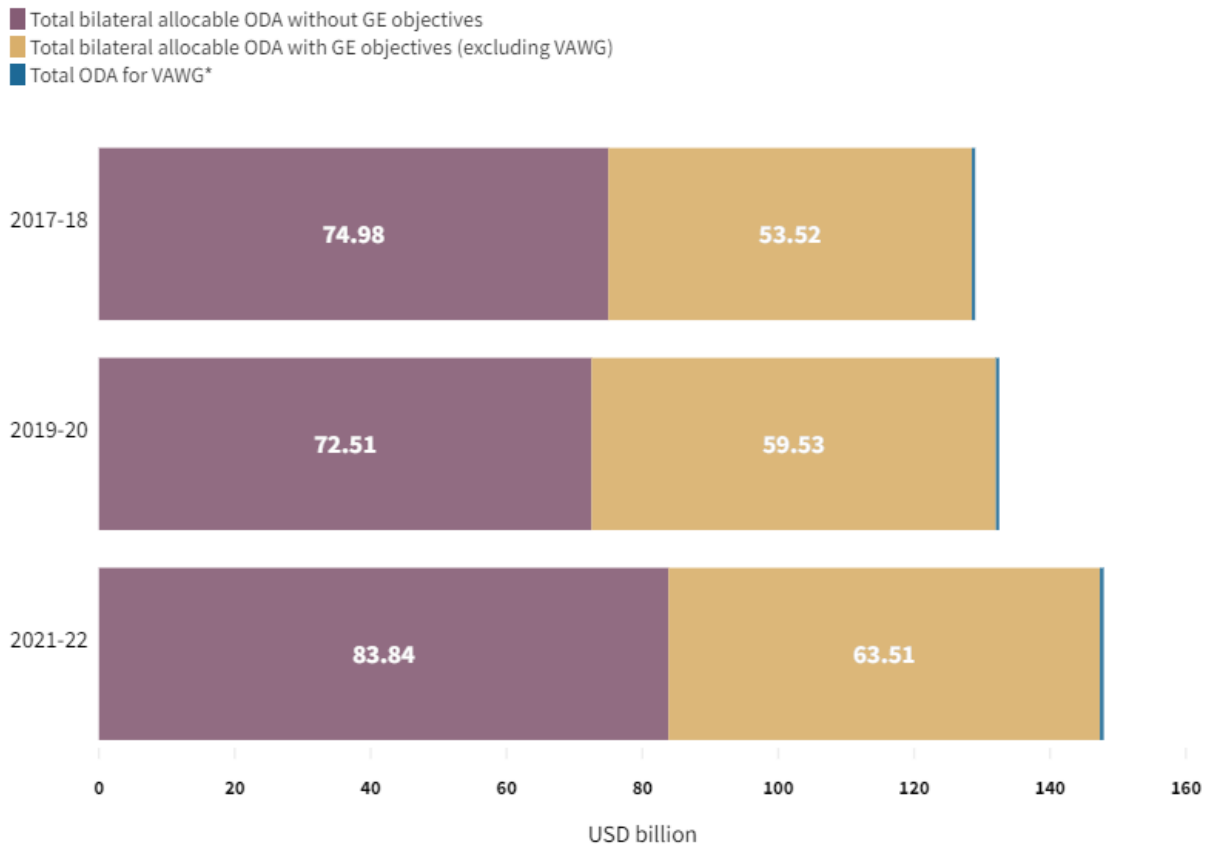
Source: OECD (2024)₍₄₂₎

230. Recent crises have illustrated the reliability and resilience of ODA, including in responding to an urgent increase in humanitarian crises with an increase in humanitarian aid spending (OECD, 2024₍₈₂₎). However, bearing in mind that the humanitarian aid sector has the lowest shares of aid with gender equality objectives at 18% of total bilateral allocable aid (OECD, 2024₍₄₂₎), there is room for significant growth.

231. Furthermore, dedicated programming to SEAH prevention and response remains limited. In 2021-2022 ODA to end violence against women and girls amounted to USD 563 million on average per year, representing less than 1% of total bilateral allocable ODA (See Figure 5.24).

Figure 5.24. Official Development Assistance to gender equality and ending violence against women and girls (VAWG), 2017-22

The figure shows the total bilateral allocable ODA without gender equality objectives, ODA with gender equality objectives, and the volume of ODA for ending VAWG. ODA for VAWG amounted to 0.483 USD billion in 2017-18, 0.479 USD billion in 2019-20, and 0.563 USD billion in 2021-22.



Note: 'Total ODA for VAWG' is counted in 'ODA with GE objectives', as per the CRS definition of the VAWG code.

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (2024^[42])

232. It is important to work towards hardwiring SEAH prevention and response across all ODA sectors. SEAH management and mitigation also needs to be better integrated across all programming, in order to create safer environments and support prevention. Mitigating risks of SEAH also supports the safeguarding of ODA integrity.

233. Use of existing systems to track development finance, is important, including in regards to resourcing for SEAH prevention and response. Reporting to and using the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) further allows for the identification of concrete examples of programming financed by ODA. This also supports opportunities for peer learning and exchange, or provide examples of good practice (See Box 5.12 for an example of PSEAH programming).

Box 5.12. Preventing sexual harassment on tea estates

One example of programming from the CRS towards ending violence against women and girls that emphasises PSEAH, includes a project on promoting sustainable business practices in tea estates in Malawi. Female workers are marginalised in the tea production industry with several SEAH related challenges, including being faced with sexual harassment from their superiors. Raising the issue of harassment is difficult and can further drive vulnerability.

By working to improve terms, conditions, and rights at work, the project aimed to improve worker welfare, productivity, advance gender equality, and strengthen union capacities to represent workers.

This particular project was funded by one DAC member and implemented by Fairtrade Africa, in cooperation with the trade union PAWU, the Tea Association of Malawi, and Oxfam.

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System

Pillar 6 – Develop Mechanisms for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting on SEA and SH Prevention and Response

234. Monitoring and evaluation should be integrated into an organisation's approach to ending SEAH [section 6.a. of the DAC Recommendation]. It should be factored into an agency's work from the outset, and appropriately resourced. Monitoring should be a continuous process that provides early indications of progress in SEAH prevention and response systems. Setting up effective monitoring and learning plans can help professionals working on development co-operation design interventions that can be corrected in a timely and responsive manner. Monitoring also supports donors and other actors to better measure whether systems in place deliver the expected results (OECD, 2024^[35]).

235. 18 DAC members report that they have established mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing responses, prevention, support, and follow-up on SEAH. Most commonly, these mechanisms include evaluations, and producing and reviewing best practices and lessons learned. A small number of DAC members, 4, have established mechanisms for including independent progress and impact assessments.

236. There are several other examples of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. One DAC member reports that their established mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing include providing annual reports to parliament, which are made public. PSEAH is viewed as part of gender-related risks and must be reported annually in relation to the organisation's investment reporting.

237. Part of improving SEAH response and prevention efforts entail monitoring, reviewing, and learning from past and current practice. Between 2021 and 2023, the number of DAC members with established mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing response, prevention, support, and follow-up on SEAH grew from 11 to 18 (Figure 6.25).

238. All UN entity Adherents report that they have established mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing responses, prevention, support, and follow-up on SEA and SH. One UN entity Adherent reports that they have a GBV policy monitoring framework in place, where prevention and responses to sexual harassment is monitored and evaluated at an operational level.

239. Several DAC members have reporting responsibilities where documenting allegations of SEAH is mandatory. Other DAC members produce yearly reports on allegations of SEAH, as well as other risks, such as corruption and misconduct. Whether these reports are shared beyond senior management or other responsible entities varies. Additional examples also include operating a case management system where cases of SEAH are recorded, track, and analysed. Another DAC member has annual reporting responsibilities towards senior management, wherein process on PSEAH policy implementation is presented and revised on a triennial basis.

240. Since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation, external monitoring exercises have taken place on SEAH prevention and response. This includes for multilateral institutions (including UN entity Adherents) through MOPAN, which assesses the performance of individual multilateral organisations as an external, independent, third-party assessment, commissioned jointly by the MOPAN member states (including many DAC members). MOPAN has integrated indicators to measure and monitor performance on SEAH²⁵. They focus on the presence and application of policies and procedures, resources, monitoring, reporting and response, interagency coordination, and victim-centred approaches regarding SEA and SH. The MOPAN SEA/SH indicators are closely aligned with the DAC Recommendation, the MOS-PSEA of the IASC, and other existing norms and best practice. Since adoption of this indicator framework, 17 assessments²⁶ have taken place; and an additional synthesis pulling key lessons across concerned UN entities (MOPAN, 2022^[83]), and for MDBs (*forthcoming*). See Box 6.13 for more on MOPAN's work on measuring PSEAH.

Box 6.13. MOPAN: Progress on SEAH? From words to deeds

²⁵ See MOPAN Methodology, indicators 4.7. 4.8 and element 5.4.5 under www.mopanonline.org/approach

²⁶ As of June 2024, full assessments can be found <https://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/>.

MOPAN – the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network - introduced specific benchmarks measuring organizations' maturity in protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) into its assessments in 2020. They focus on the presence and application of policy protecting from sexual misconduct.

In an analysis of its first six UN organisations assessed on PSEAH in 2020-22, MOPAN concludes that it is time to move from words to deeds. Organisations have policies, action plans and codes of conduct in place, along with training and systems to report allegations publicly. MOPAN found great variation between agencies when it comes to mechanisms, structures, and capacity to protect from SEA and SH. What organisations lacked across the board were reliable and sustainable resources to fund these efforts, consistent inter-agency collaboration at HQ and in the field, tracking of progress against their PSEAH policies, and tangible evidence that victim-centred approaches are being applied.

This synthesis was the first in a series; the second brief – on PSEAH in Multilateral Development Banks - is expected to be published in early 2025.

Source: MOPAN (2023^[84]) Report: Progress on PSEAH? From Words to Deeds, Lessons in Multilateral Effectiveness, https://www.mopanonline.org/analysis/items/LME_SEAH_REPORT_Final2_WEB_pages-compressed.pdf MOPAN (2022^[83]) Brief: Progress on PSEAH? From Words to Deeds, Lessons in Multilateral Effectiveness, https://www.mopanonline.org/analysis/items/MOPAN_LME_SEAH_December_2022_web.pdf

241. Progress on implementation of *section 6.a.* of the DAC Recommendation has been relatively limited. To support further progress – and acknowledging that monitoring and evaluation relating to SEAH prevention and response is a relatively new field – Adherents could consider drawing from lessons in the fields of gender equality, other areas of violence and abuse, the promotion of fundamental human rights, and security of persons, among others²⁷. Many challenges associated with monitoring and evaluating gender equality results have become more apparent in recent years, particularly transformative change related to shifting power relations and changing norms, and the view of what counts as “evidence” of change. As tools and guidance on gender-sensitive or responsive monitoring and evaluation have increased, the need for indicators and methodologies better able to capture long-term change and transformational gender equality results is acknowledged widely. These shifts in norms and culture are also necessary for ending SEAH; monitoring and evaluation should be adapted to consider how to define this transformational change.

242. Certain mechanisms can also provide lessons around assessing other related issues, such as Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative, which looks further into the efficacy of due diligence requirements and aid integrity (HQAI, 2024^[85]).

243. Several Adherents identify challenges relating to the difficulty in being able to track, measure, and evaluate organisational culture. Changes in organisational culture are necessary to support progress on SEAH prevention and response, but monitoring of values or culture can be difficult. An organisation’s overarching values may be broad, or defined in a conceptual way. Some of the values may be more easily susceptible to quantitative assessment, but others will be more difficult to measure, and a more qualitative approach may need to be taken. In cases where the values themselves may not be quantifiable, the implications or manifestations of these values – or how they show up on a day-to-day basis – may be measured and monitored.

²⁷ For example, this can include resources such as guidance on applying a human rights approach to evaluation (OECD, 2020^[132]).

Data collection and sharing

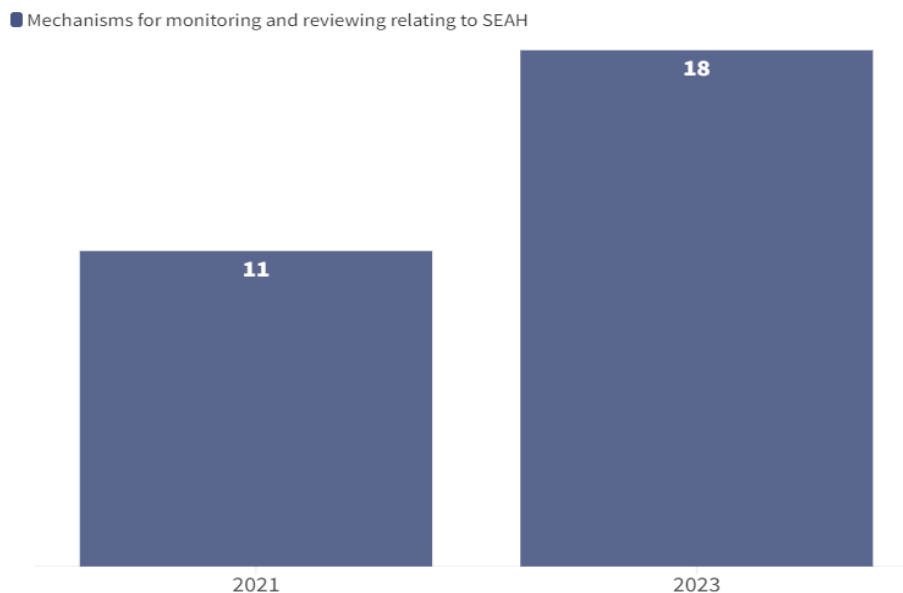
244. Data availability is a particularly sensitive area for SEAH prevention and response.

245. Improving data collection can help detect trends and inform gaps, to allow for more efficient prevention and response efforts. 16 DAC members report that, since adopting the DAC Recommendation, their institutions has undertaken steps to improve their data related to SEAH prevention and response.

- a. The shape of this data varies, with 10 DAC members reporting that efforts have been made to improve sex- and age-aggregated data;
- b. 9 DAC members report that these include assessments and evaluations of agencies and partners' initiatives; and
- c. 6 DAC members report that these include qualitative and quantitative measures.
- d. For 9 DAC members these efforts include disaggregating data to be able to use it across organisations, locations, and time to learn and detect trends.

246. Receiving feedback from different groups is also important, for example: one Adherent operates a victim reference group, which provides feedback on the processes around victim/survivor support, operates a PSEAH 'checklist' for senior staff, conducts system-wide surveys on PSEAH, and a victim/survivor satisfaction survey.

Figure 6.25. Developments in mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing SEAH efforts amongst DAC members, 2021-2023



Source: Secretariat's analysis

247. All UN entity Adherents report that, since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation, efforts have been made to improve sex- and age-aggregated data to be able to use it across organisations, locations, and time to learn and detect trends.

248. Using quantitative methods to collect data on SEAH may encounter limitations if they are used in isolation. These limitations may be structural, such as victim/survivors encountering accessibility issues in providing data in the first place (i.e., language and financial barriers to reporting, etc.), or sociocultural (i.e., restrictive social norms, lack of trust in the system, lack of support for victim/survivors). These are known limitations that contribute to consistent underreporting of SEAH – everywhere. Adopting both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection allows for flexibility, which recognises the complexities of SEAH data collection, builds a more comprehensive picture of the prevalence of SEAH, and centres the victim/survivor throughout the process.

249. Mitigating risks of SEAH in ways that are relevant and appropriate – and thus effective – necessitates a contextual approach, which can be further supported through the collection of qualitative evidence. Learning from the humanitarian sector shows the value of innovative, qualitative approaches – and that these can be scalable. Innovative approaches to qualitative data collection may include using participatory action research approaches, where at-risk groups and communities, are involved throughout a project cycle, providing a comprehensive picture of contextually relevant SEAH risks, and respected as experts and knowledge-bearers when it comes to SEAH prevention measures. See Box 6.14 for examples of research approaches to identify contextually appropriate measures for SEAH prevention, and see box 6.15 for examples of research-based programming.

Box 6.14. Additional examples of approaches to collecting evidence in relation to SEAH

Other participatory action research approaches further emphasise need to tailor care to different groups of victim/survivors. For example, to enable young victim/survivors to communicate their experiences in ways that feel appropriate to them, actors can use a range of innovative visual data collection methods like ‘body mappings’ where victim/survivors can draw their experiences of SEAH, by mapping this violence to a 2D representation of a body, and writing any associated feelings following the experience (Oosterom, Namuggala and Nankindu, 2023^[86]; Institute for Development Studies, 2024^[87]). Body maps may be traced after the bodies of victim/survivors themselves in safe, confidential spaces with other victim/survivors, in the presence of professionals trained in SEAH response and support.

Another example of qualitative approaches to collecting evidence can be ‘safety audits’ (Viswanath and Basu, 2015^[88]). In the context of SEAH, safety audits intend to map the places, timings, and nature of sexual harassment, and who is vulnerable (Oosterom, Namuggala and Nankindu, 2023^[86]). Safety audits can also be enabled through online platforms or apps where data collection is crowdsourced and public, e.g., people that have witnessed or experienced SEAH can report this online and log the location in which it happened. Examples of such apps include HarassMap from Egypt and SafetiPin from India (HarassMap, 2024^[89]; SafetiPin, 2024^[90]).

Source: < Viswanath and Basu (2015^[88]), [SafetiPin: an innovative mobile app to collect data on women's safety in Indian cities](#); Oosterom, Namuggala and Nankindu (2023^[86]), [Workplace sexual harassment as a feature of precarious work in Uganda's agro-processing factories: "Mince your words and watch yourself"](#); Institute for Development Studies (2024^[87]), [Participatory Methods: Body Mapping](#); SafetiPin (2024^[90]), [SafetiPin](#); HarassMap (2024^[89]), [HarassMap](#).

Box 6.15. Researching risk-mitigation measures on survival sex in humanitarian settings

Limited access to- and a general scarcity of resources can be a key contributing factor to the prevalence of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. Survival sex refers to engaging in sexual acts in exchange for meeting a survival need, such as food, housing, protection, etc. In humanitarian crisis settings, basic needs are often extremely difficult to fulfil and competition over limited resources may exacerbate preexisting inequalities – such as gender inequality – and further increase the risk of SEAH.

Seeking to address the issue of survival sex and other types of SEAH in relation to food distribution in humanitarian crisis settings, Empowered Aid adopted a participatory action approach to collect data and develop appropriate mitigation practices. The projects worked with affected populations in Lebanon and Uganda, engaging forcibly displaced refugee women and girls as co-researchers. One of the findings from the pilots was that having sex-segregated lines and more female staff present at distribution points led to women feeling safer.

Empowered Aid use a participatory action research approach to reduce power disparities and give the populations most affected by abuse an active voice in how aid is delivered. The lessons and methods from Uganda and Lebanon were eventually scaled-up, contextualised, and adapted to a variety of other contexts – for example, in Bangladesh, Kenya, Jordan, and Türkiye.

Source: (The Global Women's Institute, 2020^[91]; The Global Women's Institute, 2022^[92]; Empowered Aid, 2024^[93]; Hartworth, Hartworth and Convery, 2012^[94])

250. Measuring progress on improvements to SEAH prevention and response is complex. Even if the objective is to ultimately stop all abuse from occurring, positive results cannot be indicated by zero SEAH cases reported. A lack of cases reported does not mean that SEAH is not occurring. Instead, it is more likely an indication of a lack confidence in reporting or complaints systems, a lack of trust that reports will be taken seriously and that victim/survivors will be treated with dignity – or a lack of awareness of any existence of available mechanisms, among numerous other reasons.

251. Data documenting the prevalence of SEAH is scarce and underreporting of cases remains a challenge. In addition, and drawing from established practice in GBV monitoring and evaluation, the number of reported cases (either increase or decrease) should not be used as an indicator of success, due to numerous reasons related to safety, ethical, and practical issues (IASC, 2015^[95]). However, learning can be drawn from overall trends, with respect to confidentiality and privacy, and other safety considerations. Certain Adherents have begun to make some data and analysis available more publicly, and some are also involved in certain reporting exercises (see Table 6.1. Examples of information made available on reporting of SEAH cases across Adherents and other relevant stakeholders below).

Table 6.1. Examples of information made available on reporting of SEAH cases across Adherents and other relevant stakeholders

In recent years, certain initiatives are able to track reporting of cases, and make this information available more publicly. Some initiatives have gone as far as to begin to draw learnings from available information.

Institution	Description	Takeaways
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UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)	The UK's annual reporting on progress on safeguarding against SEAH provides some insights into the extent of cases within their own systems.	There has been an overall increase in cases reported during the 5-year period from 2018-2023. The overall increase in reporting since 2018 suggests rising staff confidence that when concerns are reported that they will be addressed and that disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, is being taken when justified. FCDO has done a lot of work internally to raise awareness of SEAH and to encourage staff to report when incidents occur
UK-led Cross-Sector Progress report	UK-led report based on commitments made at the 2018 London Summit	9 DAC members provide case numbers to this cross-sector report, with over 460 cases were recorded by these nine members in 2021-2022. The cases vary in their state of progress, the victim/survivor, the affiliation of the alleged perpetrator, etc.
UN Secretary-General Report on Special Measures for protection from SEA (annual report)	Annual report produced by the UN SG, covering measures taken by the UN to strengthen SEAH prevention and response.	The 2024 latest Report includes reports of 1160 allegations in 2023 involving either UN staff and related personnel or involving implementing partners and non-UN military forces. An additional 79 allegations were reported in relation to special political- or peacekeeping missions.
CHS Alliance Harmonised Reporting Scheme – led by CHS Alliance and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, supported by the UK FCDO	This initiative aims to increase accountability and transparency on SEAH in the aid sector and reduce under-reporting through the development of a harmonised reporting Scheme for SEAH.	The pilot phase considered 133 allegations of SEAH reported by 24 organisations and provided some insights into the importance of data collection to allow for the development of appropriate prevention and response efforts. Some of the emerging findings has allowed for the development of a typology of incidents and a profile of victim/survivors. The members of the Harmonised Reporting Scheme represent a small section of the overall organisations working in this – however, the Scheme provides an insight into what the future of using data in SEAH prevention and response could look like

Note: Any presentation of numbers of alleged cases should be understood within their given context and within its reporting methodology. Furthermore, knowing that underreporting is endemic to SEAH, frequency, or lack thereof, of SEAH cases are not in themselves an indicator of having sufficient SEAH prevention and response measures in place.

Source: (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2022^[96]; Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2024^[97]; UN Secretary-General, 2024^[37]; CHS Alliance, 2023^[15])

Cross-cutting themes – Across the Pillars of the Recommendation

252. There are a number of cross-cutting themes that are relevant across pillars. These are especially important to take into consideration when assessing overall progress on implementation. For example, this includes **financing and resources** (elaborated further under Pillar 5 – Ensure International Coordination for SEA and SH Prevention and Response), and **organisational culture change** (elaborated especially under pillar 1, 4, 6). The section below aims to cover a number of other critical issues.

Adapting to local contexts

253. A multi-sector and multi-actor response is necessary for many elements of SEAH prevention and response, whether providing comprehensive support for victim/survivors, or engendering the organisational – and systemic – changes needed. It is important to look at coordination across all levels, including internationally, nationally, and locally. Coordination at the local level across country/regional/local level actors implies particular attention to actors representing other donors (bilateral, multilateral), civil society organisations, and partner governments or authorities.

254. DAC members have showcased gradual progress, particularly in relation to establishing a SEAH response architecture within their own systems. However, less progress has been made in relation to tailoring and adapting prevention and response efforts for local contexts. This is recognised by Members, as adapting to local contexts has also been identified a consistent, and

significant, challenge across the pillars of the DAC Recommendation; there is clear recognition that improvements are necessary.

255. Greater cohesion between Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs), headquarters, development agencies, and implementing organisations on the ground could support ensuring that SEAH prevention and response efforts are streamlined, accessible, safe, and confidential – providing robust support for any victim/survivor. Another DAC member mentions that adopting a victim/survivor centred approach can be challenging when implementing partners either forward funds or use intermediaries – particularly in settings where donors may not have any in-country presence at all.

256. The necessity of adapting to local contexts is underscored by many DAC members, although it is acknowledged that the starting points for preventing and responding to SEAH can be very different, as SEAH itself may be understood differently depending on cultural understanding of what it constitutes. Several DAC members mention that there is room for greater alignment between the locally-led development agenda and SEAH prevention and response, and that an emphasis on locally-led development would be welcome.

257. Half of the UN entity Adherents have established extensive mechanisms focusing on responding and being adapted to local contexts. All UN entity Adherents refer to inter-agency, in-country coordination structures, including on developing complaints mechanisms that are adapted to local and cultural contexts. One UN entity Adherent states that, the accessibility of community-based reporting channels for SEA has led to more than 49 million people having access to this – up from 6 million in 2017.

258. Local organisations are well situated in terms of supporting norm changes necessary to build a speak-up culture, as well as providing appropriate support for victim/survivors. Specialised organisations possess the expertise and the knowledge of how to support victim/survivors in each context – this includes knowledge of complaints mechanisms, avenues of redress, and general victim/survivor health- and psychological support. Several DAC members express motivation to work with local services, networks, and referral mechanisms when possible. For some, whether this is possible may depend on the outcome of a given risk assessment. More typically, DAC members entrust in-country partner organisations with establishing referral mechanisms or mapping other relevant services. An additional challenge may be that sometimes local referral pathways are unclear to DAC members.

259. Several DAC members refer to specific projects on advancing culturally appropriate and localised measures for SEAH and overall gender-based violence prevention and response. For instance, an example of such an approach can be seen through the work of the Uganda-based organisation Raising Voices (See Box 7.9).

260. Establishing and disseminating information that is accessible to the stakeholders concerned is crucial for engendering trust. Adapting to local contexts may also entail providing guidelines for an affected population in a language that they understand. With 3 DAC members reporting that their codes of conduct, and other relevant policies are communicated in relevant local languages, this may be an area of accelerated action, ensuring that the communities that DAC members operate in have access to the information they need if they are affected by SEAH.

261. Increasing communication with implementing partners and local population, including in the design of SEAH response and prevention programmes, can support a more coordinated response; and develop mutual capacities together with implementing partners.

262. The ‘reporting tax’: a broader challenge raised by one DAC member, is a concern that local actors may inadvertently contribute to underreporting, due to a fear of ‘retribution’ in the face of documented increases in alleged sexual misconduct. For example, by development co-

operation providers limiting access to funds or instigating measures that may be damaging to programmes in the short-term. This concern further underscores the necessity of intertwining SEAH prevention and response as part of any engagements' overall risk management strategy, where risks of SEAH are mitigated – including through assuring development partners that reporting on SEAH will not necessarily jeopardise funding.

263. Some DAC members refer to supporting the creation of local complaints mechanisms based on World Bank Standards through the Global Partnership for Education. A similar example is the support for Country Based Pooled Funds (CBPF), where the guidelines adhere to the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability yet go further in including an expectation that partners create or identify existing, accessible complaints mechanisms (OCHA, 2023^[98]). This expectation explicitly refers to SEA.

Co-operation with partner governments

264. Working with partner governments and national or local authorities, where safe and appropriate, is central to Adherents' work in countries. They can also be important actors in terms of providing adequate support for victim/survivors, include redress and assistance. National and host governments often provide public service provisions, are employers of national aid workers, as well being the overseers of existing and prospective legislation related to SEAH.

265. Several DAC members explicitly refer to collaboration with local governments as a challenge facing their agency. Partner governments are often partners in many development/humanitarian interventions, and also establish the legal/legislative environment in a country and have many implicated authorities. There is a need to further research and gather examples of how SEAH prevention and response can be integrated across bilateral partnerships with the partner government, regardless of the sector-focus.

266. 14 DAC members and three UN entity Adherents report that they collaborate with national or local governments/public bodies including local authorities. Examples of this collaboration relating to SEAH prevention and response include:

- a. One DAC member provides several examples of their work with national governments, i.e., a programme in East Africa supporting trainings of paralegals on GBV and victim/survivor-centred approaches.
- b. In addition, trainings were offered to the police, specifically to the desks working on gender-related challenges and helping children. Furthermore, the programme also focuses on the connection of medical, psychosocial, and legal support to survivors of violence i.e., through establishing One Stop Centres in the regions.
- c. A UN entity also provides training and support to local and national governments on PSEAH, including through broader training on GBV prevention and response.

267. An initiative on advancing enhanced measures on PSEA for co-operation with governments is under development (UNICEF, 2023^[99]). This is an interagency effort, which aims to establish a shared PSEA commitment to strengthen system-wide co-operation on PSEA, bolster the capacity of government partners on PSEA, and streamline different UN entities to engagement with partner governments.

Prevention

268. Many activities since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation have been focused on response. While it is imperative that institutions take actions to respond effectively and coherently to SEAH, more needs to be done to create conditions that stop abuse from happening in the first place and intervene at all parts of the continuum of violence.

269. Intervening along the continuum of violence implies not only working to shift norms and behaviours and assessing the factors that contribute to enabling environments²⁸ that allow for abuse to continue to be perpetrated (See Figure 1.2 Ecosystem of SEAH). There are different systemic elements that should be addressed further including:

- a. Social and gender inequalities, as well as intersecting inequalities
- b. Economic inequalities
- c. Impact of legal systems and disparities in access to justice

270. A whole-of-system approach is necessary to engender durable change. Prevention of SEAH requires “transformative approaches to shift power imbalances and address root causes of gender inequalities, notably by ensuring long-term and holistic policies and programmes for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”²⁹.

271. SEAH does not occur on its own. Rather, SEAH is perpetrated by individuals and against individuals. SEAH prevention efforts may also include working with perpetrators of SEAH and identifying risk factors or indicators that can be associated with potential perpetrators. Further research around cycles of violence and working with perpetrators of violence could provide insights and support further learning in SEAH prevention.

272. The efficacy of prevention can also be difficult to measure and evaluate. See Pillar 6 for further information on challenges around measuring change in this field. Yet, several emerging initiatives that are victim/survivor- and/or community-led highlight the importance of engaging directly with affected, or potentially affected, local communities (CHS Alliance, 2023^[59]). This allows actors to identify prevention efforts that are contextual, local, and culturally relevant, which enables such efforts to be much more efficient. See Box 7.16 for an example of an organisation developing transformative prevention programming.

Box 7.16. Raising Voices: transformative prevention programming for ending VAWG

The Raising Voices organisation develops creative methodologies for transformative prevention programming for ending violence against women and girls. They encourage learning, and leverage activists, community leaders, policy makers, etc. for advocating for upholding their ethical and evidence-based principles in preventing violence against women and girls. Their work is centred in and led by the community, and they employ a feminist analysis of violence against women and prevention.

²⁸ Other stakeholders have used the term “permissive environments” (Daigle, 2022^[23])

²⁹ DAC Recommendation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance [[OECD/LEGAL/5022](#)].

They emphasise being locally- and community-led, but also have global ambitions. For example, their *Gender Based Violence Prevention Network* covers 21 countries across the Horn, East, and Southern Africa – with more than 1500 members.

They also work across multiple networks. For instance, they also operate a *Sexual Violence against Children Thematic Group*, where they exchange with other national organisations on building capacity for responding to and preventing sexual violence – including through norm change.

They also convene a *Community for Understanding Scaling Processes*, which brings together other civil society organisations to share their experiences and good practices, particularly around social norms change. Finally, they operate a cohort for organisations providing technical assistance, consisting of several international NGOs and UN agencies. At present, training and technical assistance has been provided across 13 countries in Africa and Asia.

Source: Survey, 2023, Raising Voices (2024_[100]), Raising Voices, <https://raisingvoices.org/>

273. Learning from related fields can be beneficial for identifying interventions for SEAH prevention in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance, particularly learning from gender-based violence experts and GBV programming. For example, research from the World Bank provides examples for GBV prevention opportunities for different sectors, by providing an overview of key issues, a range of possible actions at different levels to address GBV and suggests potential indicators to measure the efficacy of such efforts (World Bank, 2022_[101]).

274. Prevention efforts must always be contextualised, and extrapolating lessons for SEAH prevention and response from the GBV sector must consider the ways in which SEAH may manifest differently than other forms of GBV for different sectors – and in different contexts.

275. When considering prevention efforts, it is important situate continuums of violence within the ecosystem within which it occurs. Research on successful approaches to preventing intimate partner violence in indigenous communities in New Zealand illustrates this approach. This includes acknowledging complex root causes, such as the continuous impact of colonialism, and other types of historic- and systemic discrimination. For many communities, their particular histories of colonialism have, alongside engendering systemic- and often racialised discrimination, have also led to a breakdown in traditional models of care and collectivity, leading to the emergence of more restrictive social norms that - in combination with a wide array of factors – create conditions for harm to occur (She Is Not Your Rehab & ihi Research, 2022_[102]). Working towards preventing gender-based violence, including SEAH, entails mobilising people using violence and communities around positive behaviour change, as well as continuing to address social norms which promote or reinforce the use of violence (She Is Not Your Rehab & ihi Research, 2022_[102]).

276. Working with perpetrators of SEAH may also allow actors to gain insight into which underlying factors may drive an individual to perpetrate SEAH, what an adequate response will be, and how to prevent an individual from re-offending. Emerging research also suggests a pathway for identifying ‘profiles’ of perpetrators (CHS Alliance, 2023_[15]; CHS Alliance, 2024_[103]), which may support actors in identifying the most appropriate prevention mechanisms for different typologies of perpetrators. However, there is scope for more learning in this regard.

Risk mitigation and management

277. There is a risk of SEAH within in all institutions, and within all development and humanitarian contexts. As such, it is important to manage and mitigate the risk of SEAH.

278. Understanding what these risk factors are and how to analyse them will require more work and dedicated capacity. It is also important to take models such as the Figure 1.2. Ecosystem of SEAH into account, understanding possible underlying factors, and apply them to a specific institution or context, in order to assess risk factors and then put in place adequate strategies.

279. Adherents refer to the need to understand these risks and implement risk mitigation and management across several pillars of the DAC Recommendation. Examples of risk management and mitigation efforts identified by Adherents are described as:

- a. Training for local partners, such as on international standards of response to and prevention of SEAH. These trainings can include building skills in report writing, providing psychological assistance, prevention, investigations, etc.
- b. Mandated progress reports that must account for efforts around SEAH prevention and response. These progress reports must be submitted by the implementing partner to the development agency.
- c. Advancing gender equality more broadly, including utilising gender equality analyses. This is often integrated with a general reporting requirement on SEAH for implementing agencies. This follows on from a general mandate that SEAH is part of an implementing agencies' reporting requirement.
- d. In-office initiatives aimed at encouraging safe and confidential spaces for staff. These may be used as a venting mechanism, but also as a space to receive advice on how to proceed with either formal or informal reporting processes.

280. It is important that risk management across development co-operation is connected to the consideration of SEAH. This is not always the case across development partners (including DAC members). Overwhelmingly, DAC members' approach to risk are skewed towards financial and fiduciary risks, with a focus on avoiding risks entirely or reducing risks to a minimum (OECD, 2023_[104]). While risk practices across development actors have been evolving in recent years, a comprehensive approach to risk management should include the risk of SEAH across all development programming decisions, including financing and resource decision-making.

281. Some Adherents have also taken the approach of analysing different contexts, and identifying those that are "highest" risk for SEAH. In some circumstances, this kind of prioritisation exercise supports DAC members or UN entity Adherents in identifying where to allocate limited resources. This exercise can also have an impact on DAC members' agreements and ways of working with implementing partners. For example, for certain Members, if a project is deemed as having a high or substantial risk, this will determine whether the implementing partner will be required to set-up appropriate grievance redress mechanisms.

282. This is also an area where information sharing can be useful, as work to analyse risk can be shared between relevant partners in certain contexts. For example, some Adherents have used tools and initiatives such as the IASC Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Overview (SEARO), a Composite Index that brings together indicators on a range of different factors that can influence the risk of SEA (IASC, 2022_[105]). SEARO categorises countries with ongoing flash appeals, humanitarian-, or emergency response operations according to their level of risk, enabling comparisons of risk between countries and assessing how those risks change over time. The SEARO index aims to support all actors in adequately assessing the risk factors and acknowledging their application in specific contexts.

283. Risk can also be tied into due diligence practices. For example, for three DAC members, assessing the capability of partners to adequately safeguard against SEAH, forms part of their due diligence requirements. Assessing existing, quality and implementation of policies and mechanisms are part and parcel of risk management, including due diligence.

284. Aligning SEAH prevention and response with corruption, fraud, and other integrity measures, may support greater institutional coherence on facing key challenges for maintaining trust in the institution, and supporting the efficiency of development co-operation and humanitarian assistance. See Box 7.17 examples of interlinkages between anti-corruption efforts and SEAH prevention and response.

285. Properly analysing risks and integrating these considerations into all development and humanitarian practices, and within institutions, are a key element of creating more preventive environments³⁰.

Box 7.17. 'Zero tolerance' and interlinkages between anti-corruption efforts and SEAH prevention and response

Lessons from the OECD Recommendation for Development Co-operation Actors on Managing the Risk of Corruption [[OECD/LEGAL/0431](#)]

The 2022 report on the implementation of the OECD *Recommendation of the Council for Development Co-operation Actors on Managing the Risk of Corruption* [C(2022)175], on which the DAC Recommendation was modelled, found that Adherents tended to conflate how 'Zero tolerance' is interpreted. For most Adherents, the reaction to instances of corruption tended to be making a wholesale decision on the entire project or relationship to a partner government. This could then lead to the slashing of aid and the dissolution of trust.

The report thus encouraged Adherents to separate the treatment of corruption cases into two dimensions: the proper investigation of the allegation or criminal offence, and the operational consequences on development co-operation and programming. It concluded that, while a zero

³⁰ Resources from other Reference Group members can point to areas to acknowledge as both prevention opportunities and elements that can contribute to risk, such as World Bank learning on prevention of GBV across sectors (World Bank, 2022_[101]).

tolerance approach can be useful, it is equally necessary to consider measured approaches so that 1) reporting is not discouraged due to perceived comparatively 'bigger' consequences; and 2) to enable an adequate response to cases that serve to mitigate further and/or future harm.

These lessons equally apply to mitigating and managing risks of SEAH.

Zero tolerance and SEAH

In relation to the DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH several Adherents refer to a Zero Tolerance approach. 'Zero Tolerance' in relation to SEAH recognises that zero tolerance – interpreted as cutting or suspending development assistance as a reaction to SEAH cases – may cause further harm, for example by discouraging reporting of cases, as well as leading to a slashing of funding with potentially disastrous socioeconomic consequences for development partners.

As an important distinction, several Adherents refer to an expanded approach, namely, 'Zero tolerance for inaction'. Zero tolerance for inaction entails a more contextualised approach, aiming to encourage reporting by ensuring that reports are taken seriously, that there is zero tolerance for not working to prevent and respond to SEAH, and that reporting does not inadvertently cause further harm to development partners.

Mitigation and risk management efforts must always be contextual and having institutional architecture in place serves as a building block for allowing adequate, and measured responses. Adopting a comprehensive approach to risk management that includes SEAH furthers the breadth of development actor' risk prevention efforts, while responding appropriately and in a measured way to any sexual misconduct.

Source: Survey (2023); OECD (2022_[106]), Recommendation of the Council for Development Cooperation Actors on Managing the Risk of Corruption

Dissemination

286. The Secretariat has taken a range of actions since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation to promote its dissemination. This includes:

- a. Development of a brochure, which synthesizes essential information contained in the DAC Recommendation and contact information (OECD, 2022_[107]).
- b. Dedicated workshops and presentations with a number of Adherents, including sessions internally and also with external partners, in order to explain the DAC Recommendation and its use, and discuss learnings based on experiences related to implementation. In addition, since adoption of the DAC Guidance on GEWE, dedicated workshops with DAC members have also included further briefings on learnings around the DAC Recommendation.
- c. Multiple high-level events to recognise high-level commitments by Adherents and other stakeholders to the DAC Recommendation; and to continue to support mobilisation of efforts in SEAH prevention and response internationally. This includes a high-level launch of the DAC

Recommendation in New York at the UN General Assembly in 2019; a high-level Roundtable focused on co-operation between the UN and DAC in 2021 (“High-Level Roundtable on the OECD DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance”), and a high-level Roundtable focused on collaboration with civil society in 2022 (“High-level Roundtable: Implementing the Recommendation on ending SEAH in cooperation with CSOs”).

- d. OECD leadership was regularly mobilised to disseminate the DAC Recommendation and continue to stress the importance of making progress on its implementation; this includes through bilateral engagements and participation in international fora.
- e. The OECD webpage is regularly kept up to date based on work around the DAC Recommendation, and a dedicated internal page accessible to Reference Group and GENDERNET members provides a closed space for internal exchange and sharing of information.

287. Adherents have taken different measures to disseminate the DAC Recommendation: 22 Adherents have conducted dissemination efforts across departments within the agency’s structure, 18 Adherents have conducted specific awareness-raising efforts towards relevant staff, 8 Adherents have undertaken domestic efforts towards development, humanitarian and peacebuilding agencies and respective partners.

288. Two DAC members have translated the DAC Recommendation into other languages and related dissemination – Spanish and Portuguese; one DAC member’s translation is forthcoming; and there are also 8 other unofficial translations available online (OECD, 2019^[108]).

289. Expanding adherence also continues to be an important step in disseminating the DAC Recommendation: the adherence of four UN entities, continued work through the expanding DAC and OECD membership, and the wider multi-stakeholder DAC Reference Group.

290. In addition, the DAC Recommendation continues to be disseminated through its use as a policy basis and key reference point in multi-stakeholder initiatives and mechanisms. This includes MOPAN assessments, UNICEF-led initiative on working with partner governments, and the UK-led multi-stakeholder initiative started in 2023 to establish a Common Approach to Protection from SEAH (CAPSEAH).

Summary and conclusions

291. Five years following its adoption, the DAC Recommendation has proved an important standard to steer policy change for ending sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance. The DAC Recommendation has served to mobilise several changes across the pillars of the DAC Recommendation, with some pillars showing more progress than others.

292. The survey and Report underline that the DAC Recommendation remains an important, necessary, and useful tool, with many Adherents refer to how this standard has supported organisation of its systems, promoted action on this agenda internally and externally, and facilitated coordination among essential partners. This will remain important and support continued work on implementation.

Implementation

293. In terms of framing its ultimate objectives, the DAC Recommendation refers explicitly to “ending” SEAH. While an ambitious objective, it is important to recognise even incremental progress towards this goal. The evidence for such progress (as discussed in pillar 6) should not be linked to the number of cases reported. Progress should also not be defined *only* by policies or systems being established, but should also consider the extent of their implementation, efficacy, and impact. Progress also depends on broader shifts in norms and behaviours, which are specific to each context.

294. Since 2019, **progress** has been made across a number of pillars, including:

- a. **An increase in the establishment of SEAH policies and mechanisms;** in most Adherents an “institutional architecture” for SEAH prevention and response has been put in place.
- b. **There has been a notable rise in coordination across stakeholders, and within the DAC membership specifically.** In order to sustain this coordination, and make further improvements across contexts, further efforts and dedicated resources will be required. Since 2019 and going forward, it has been shown that the DAC remains a critical venue for coordinating action and maintaining commitments in this area, including through the DAC Reference Group, which continues to be an important setting for learning and exchange.
- c. **Efforts have been made in terms of improving work between DAC members and implementing partners.** Most commonly, this has taken the form of adapting partnership and funding agreements to include SEAH prevention and response, and related requirements. Other work around reinforcing dialogue between partners and building capacity will continue to be needed to strengthen partnerships.
- d. **Increased coordination across actors around holding perpetrators to account,** including avoiding re-hiring and circulation within the international development and humanitarian systems, has been noted. This also includes an increase in complementary efforts such as the adoption of anti-retaliation policies.
- e. **Many Adherents have also dedicated resources to capacity building, notably through training.** To further implementation, these efforts should continue to be further strengthened with the deepening of awareness raising efforts, and with a wider range of communities and partners. Several Adherents also specifically mention the need to learn and evaluate the impact of trainings, and adjust as needed.
- f. Across the system, and specifically with Adherents, **there is a raised awareness of the need for and importance of systematically applying a victim/survivor-centred approach across all systems.** There is also the recognition by many Adherents that more needs to be done to implement this approach and practically put it in place.

295. There are several areas of **more mixed progress:**

- a. It has been noted by many Adherents that **while institutional leadership has demonstrated increased support for the SEAH prevention and**

response agenda, there have been more mixed results in making sure that this support is sustained, and translated into concrete actions. Prioritisation of this agenda by leadership still remains overly reliant on external pressures such as cases coming to public attention or gaining a higher profile.

- b. **There has been some increase in acknowledgement of the responsibility of all actors to ensure adequate and comprehensive support for SEAH victim/survivors** (whether within organisations or externally). **However, service delivery still remains challenging in many contexts**, and could be strengthened by further coordination and dedicated resources. Specialised knowledge and capacity when supporting SEAH victim/survivors also remains challenging.
- c. **Many institutions have brought together their SH and SEA approaches. However, further work to address the underlying causes and factors still remains a significant challenge**, and progress in implementing policies, processes, and systems for all relevant stakeholders remains varied across Adherents.

296. There are many areas where **progress has been minimal** and significant work remains to be done:

- a. **Establishing adequate and sustained financing and resourcing for SEAH prevention and response is one of the primary challenges** reported by Adherents. While there has been a minimal increase in dedicated resources internally for some DAC members since 2019, significant gaps remain, including across initiatives and programming.
- b. **Acknowledgement of the need to understand the risk of SEAH across and within all institutions and in all development and humanitarian contexts remains limited.** Certain DAC members have begun to adjust their approaches to risk frameworks, but more can be done to learn from and share across experiences adapting to different contexts and understanding risk mitigation and management.
- c. While efforts have been made at the headquarters level, **adaptation to country and local contexts remains challenging, and very limited in many areas.** This includes consultations with local communities and involvement of local stakeholders in processes and mechanisms. Coordination with specific local actors remains challenging, and an area for future learning (also specific to each context); especially in regard to collaboration and partnerships with partner governments.
- d. Many Adherents report that creating stronger environments for prevention remains extremely hard to define and measure, and thus also difficult to implement. **Shifting underlying organisational culture and behaviours that are supportive of more equal and safe environments remains limited.**
- e. As progress to implement the DAC Recommendation continues and more evidence and experiences are gathered, **monitoring and evaluation** will remain important. Many Adherents have not yet engaged in such processes. The information gathered – through documentation, tracking cases, learning from others – will further underline the work in monitoring

and evaluation. **The consideration of data, evidence, and how it is treated, is an area for greater learning.** This includes not only around information-sharing, but also the consideration of qualitative data, in addition to quantitative.

297. With this in mind, the following key topics have been identified as priorities of **areas for accelerated action to support progress on implementation of the DAC Recommendation:**

- a. **More efforts should be made to adapt all development programming across sectors to integrate SEAH prevention and response. The risk of SEAH needs to be taken into account across all contexts, including all development, humanitarian, and peace contexts.** This includes working through multiple channels and considering approaches to overall prevention, including risk management and mitigation.
- b. **Sustained and adequate financing and resources remain essential in order to support progress on ending SEAH.** Needs remain stark in relation to assistance and support services for victim/survivors; dedicated capacity in institutions; capacity of implementing partners to ensure PSEAH measures; and contributions to coordination mechanisms and joint initiatives. This includes dedicating resources, including through development finance, to gender equality and SEAH prevention and response, and supporting programs across development sectors that contribute to ensuring safer environments more broadly. More work should be done to identify priority areas.
- c. **Strengthening localisation of the SEAH prevention and response agenda is crucial.** This includes improving adaptation to specific contexts, collaborating and co-operating with local stakeholders, and improving our efforts on better governance systems formal and informal, and including partner governments where safe and appropriate. Improving the accessibility of existing mechanisms, and the tools used to communicate and raise awareness should also be considered.
- d. **More coherent efforts across SH and SEA are critical to support the promotion of safe environments everywhere, across and within all institutions.** Institutions should “walk the talk” and improve their own internal systems, practices, and organisational culture, including stronger coordination within institutions, which supports greater policy coherence across teams, departments, and ministries. A holistic approach is important, and efforts extending to other areas - such as gender equality, and other forms of GBV - should also be considered.
- e. **Strengthening prevention efforts will remain critical to stop SEAH from happening in the first place.** Many efforts since 2019 have focused on response; although this work remains essential, more efforts should be made to create safer environments. There is a need to intervene along the continuum of violence, and consider work to address perpetrators of SEAH. This will include a focus on transforming norms and behaviours for a more supportive environment to address gender inequality, harmful

power imbalances, and other forms of inequalities³¹. There is also a need to build the evidence-base around effective prevention efforts. .

- f. **More should be done to measure the quality and impact of existing systems.** Recognising that progress has been made to establish institutional frameworks for SEAH prevention and response, more needs to be done to consider their implementation and how to revise and improve, as needed. This necessitates examining sources of evidence and data, including qualitative- and quantitative data. Improvements in mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting - including on financing³² - will strengthen the overall effectiveness of SEAH prevention and response.

Dissemination

298. The Secretariat has taken a range of actions since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation to promote its dissemination. This includes:

- a. Development of a brochure, which synthesizes essential information contained in the Recommendation and contact information (OECD, 2022^[107]).
- b. Dedicated workshops and presentations with a number of Adherents, including sessions internally and also with external partners, in order to explain the DAC Recommendation and its use, and discuss learnings based on experiences related to implementation. In addition, since adoption of the DAC Guidance on GEWE, dedicated workshops with DAC members have also included further briefings on learnings around the DAC Recommendation.
- c. Multiple high-level events to recognise high-level commitments by Adherents and other stakeholders to the DAC Recommendation; and to continue to support mobilisation of efforts in SEAH prevention and response internationally. This includes a high-level launch of the Recommendation in New York at the UN General Assembly in 2019; a high-level Roundtable focused on co-operation between the UN and DAC in 2021 (“High-Level Roundtable on the OECD DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance”), and a high-level Roundtable focused on collaboration with civil society in 2022 (“High-level Roundtable: Implementing the Recommendation on ending SEAH in cooperation with CSOs”).
- d. OECD leadership was regularly mobilised to disseminate the DAC Recommendation and continue to stress the importance of making

³¹ This should include through implementation of the DAC Recommendation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance [[OECD/LEGAL/5022](#)].

³² This should include reporting through the OECD [Creditor Reporting System](#) and the [DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker](#) and related VAWG code.

progress on its implementation; this includes bilateral engagements and participation in international fora.

- e. The OECD webpage is regularly kept up to date based on work around the DAC Recommendation, and a dedicated internal page accessible to Reference Group and GENDERNET members provides a closed space for internal exchange and sharing of information.
- f. The OECD has also made efforts to ensure that non-Adherents and other partners, including multilateral institutions and international financial institutions, consider the use and/or adherence of the Recommendation.

299. Adherents have taken different measures to disseminate the DAC Recommendation: 22 Adherents have conducted dissemination efforts across departments within the agency's structure, 18 Adherents have conducted specific awareness-raising efforts towards relevant staff, 8 Adherents have undertaken domestic efforts towards development, humanitarian and peacebuilding agencies and respective partners.

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301. Expanding adherence also continues to be an important step in disseminating the DAC Recommendation: the adherence of four UN entities, continued work through the expanding DAC and OECD membership, and the wider multi-stakeholder DAC Reference Group.

302. In addition, the DAC Recommendation continues to be disseminated through its use as a policy basis and key reference point in multi-stakeholder initiatives and mechanisms. This includes MOPAN assessments, UNICEF-led initiative on working with partner governments, and the UK-led multi-stakeholder initiative started in 2023 to establish a Common Approach to Protection from SEAH (CAPSEAH).

Continued relevance

303. All Adherents report that the DAC Recommendation serves its purpose as stated in the DAC Recommendation, and that it incentivises change in their systems.

304. A majority of Adherents report that there has been noticeable improvement of approach to SEAH prevention and response through the development of new policies since the adoption of the DAC Recommendation in 2019. Adherents also report an increased emphasis on SEAH prevention and response in areas of development policy and programming, a noticeable improvement of work on SEAH prevention and response through structural and organisational changes. Finally, a small number of Adherents report that the Recommendation has supported broader policy changes.

Next steps

305. In light of the above, in order to further support implementation and dissemination of the DAC Recommendation, Adherents should continue to disseminate this DAC Recommendation, particularly throughout their development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding agencies and partners, and across government, and continue to learn from the implementation of this DAC Recommendation, mindful also of other relevant OECD and DAC standards, including the DAC Recommendation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance [[OECD/LEGAL/5022](#)], and the other OECD Gender Recommendations.

306. Adherents should aim to address the underlying norms, behaviours, and factors that contribute to the continuing perpetration of SEAH within their institutions and in development, humanitarian, and peace contexts, including working on transformative approaches to shift power imbalances and addressing root causes of gender inequalities. They should strengthen efforts across the areas for accelerated action, as identified in this Report, to guide further learning and progress in implementing the DAC Recommendation.

307. It is proposed that the GENDERNET continue to support Adherents in addressing the main challenges identified in the Report, including through continued analysis, sharing of good practices including in the context of the DAC Reference Group on Ending SEAH,; and contribute to the DAC peer review mechanism, including through the development of options for more frequent review of the implementation of this DAC Recommendation. It is also proposed that GENDERNET continue to disseminate this DAC Recommendation, including in relevant discussions in other international fora and in relation to applicable international agreements, such as on women, peace and security. The GENDERNET should also report back to the DAC on the implementation, dissemination and continued relevance of the DAC Recommendation in five years.

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