

# International Conference on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH)

## TAKING STOCK for FUTURE ACTIONS: Overview of the Program

On December 2, 2024, the Governments of Kenya and Switzerland co-hosted the International PSEAH Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. During the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV), the conference brought together over 120 participants from governments, donors, international and non-governmental organizations, activists, practitioners and survivors to:

- Present achievements and highlight good practices of PSEAH work of the last five years
- Identify barriers, gaps and challenges in PSEAH implementation
- Define possible measures to overcome barriers and challenges, and jointly commit to action

It was a full and very interactive day, focusing on learning from experience, challenging status quo, debating frameworks, identifying levers, with opening sessions helping to frame and take stock, and closing sessions helping to reflect and highlight key take aways.

## The Commitment and Partnership of the Governments of Kenya and Switzerland

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations, **Dr. Fancy Too** reiterated Kenya's commitment to a safe and equitable society, where dignity and respect are a right.



To achieve this, she highlighted the **importance of partnerships** like the one with Switzerland. She also shared insights about different programs, including a unique nationwide program called PoliCare, which she further highlighted are instrumental. The **PoliCare policy and initiative** provides holistic and reliable, one stop services for GBV survivors, and focuses on **strengthening the trust** between law enforcement, and citizens, involving CSOs and Women's Rights Organisations.

The ambassador concluded by reiterating Kenya's commitment: *The challenges are big, but so is our resolve.*

Director of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), **Patricia Danzi** reminded of the **zero-tolerance policy** of Switzerland, and the various instruments in place to respond to GBV and SEAH, namely: the **code of conduct** for staff and partners, the **whistleblowing platform**, and internal dialogue



sessions to raise awareness and better manage power and gender dynamics in the institution.

She highlighted SDC's commitment to foster a **safe and respectful environment for all**, in all its interventions and within its implementing partner organisations. This requires risk analysis at every stage of implementation, involving all actors.

Ms. Danzi re-emphasized Switzerland's commitment to *protect, support and empower survivors of PSEAH.*

## Framing and Taking Stock

Head of Unit, Gender Equality, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD, **Lisa Williams** set the scene, outlining global progress and learning along the **6 Pillars of the DAC Recommendation** on ending SEAH which are: **1 Policies**, professional conduct standards, organizational change and leadership; **2 Survivor/victim centred** response and support mechanisms; **3 Organisational** reporting, response systems and procedures; **4 Training**, awareness raising and communication; **5 International coordination**, and **6 Monitoring**, evaluation, shared learning and reporting. Some clear **signs of progress** include **increase in SEAH policies and mechanisms**, in dedicated **capacity for ending SEAH** amongst DAC members, and a **rise in coordination** within and across stakeholders. Important **challenges persist**, namely in adequate and sustained financing and **resourcing, mitigating the risk of SEAH** in development and humanitarian contexts, and **fostering local engagement** by adapting to country and local contexts. Beside addressing these challenges, **key areas for accelerated action** include more coherent integration with other forms of GBV and **coordination with respective GBV services**; and **measuring quality and impact** of existing systems.



Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, **Christian Saunders**, emphasized the relevance of the conference at a time when leadership, vision and action are needed urgently. Mr. Saunders underlined that incidents of SEAH are **profound violations of human rights**, and



every instance is a **grave betrayal of the trust** placed in us by the communities we serve and those who serve alongside us, particularly our female colleagues. Too often, we operate in **siloes**, and fear the **"transparency penalty."** This year, over 68 000 personnel completed an annual survey and almost 13% indicated a **fear of retaliation**. Although our standards are universal, our responses to SEAH cannot be a one-size-fits-all. We need to **move away from our traditional 'northern' frameworks** and solutions. He quoted alarming data from UNHCR where conflict related sexual violence had increased by 50% with women/ girls accounting for 95% of those cases and that 90% of women/ girl refugees/ migrants on the Mediterranean route are raped. He concluded that now, more than ever, we need the **commitment of leadership** to taking concrete and urgent action to eradicate the current tolerance for sexual misconduct in all its forms.

SEAH Investigator and Specialist, previous Safeguarding Representative of the Resource & Support Hub in Yemen, **Ranya Al-Jaberi**, reiterated the **essential role of local CSOs**, and not treating them like sideliners, rather acknowledging & valuing them as leaders. She added that **international and national actors need to not compete**, but to complement each other, and to be strategic partners in bridging international standards with local realities. Some key challenges include **lack of resources** for local organisations, and the **imposition of 'Northern' donor approaches or language** which are not understood or not culturally applicable. **Addressing SEAH is not impossible even in the most conservative contexts**, if adapted, and local CSOs are supported to do just that. Also emphasized was the added value of **national & regional networks** to ensure dignity & justice for all.



Ranya Al-Jaberi & Christian Saunders step up to share their insights

## Fishbowl Take Aways

**Faye Ekong** facilitated a Fishbowl discussion with **Meghan Latcovich** - Chief of Staff WFP, **Najla Nassif Palma** - Victims' Rights Advocate UN, **Peter Taylor** - Deputy Director and Head of Safeguarding Unit FCDO, **Dr. Gaya Gamhewage** - Director Prevention and Response to Sexual Misconduct WHO, **Sadia Hussein** - Brighter Society Initiative, Kenya, and **Ohaila Shomar**, Sawa Organisation OPT. The session started with a very personal & sobering reminder that SEAH & other forms of GBV such as Female Genital Mutilation and early marriage are not just a statistic issue, but a **very personal, harmful human reality** and severe human rights violation concerning hundreds of millions of girls and women, who need voice, safe space and longterm support. The discussion highlighted the need to address fragmentation, by looking at SEAH as a system-wide and not a survivor problem that requires a balanced focus between **compliance and prevention**. Questioned were the **disparity between investments** in prevention of fraud compared to PSEAH, **culture change initiatives** that remain person bound, and the **stigmatization** experienced by survivors & organisations that bring SEAH cases forward. Re-investing in participatory, **locally-led approaches** that include communities and governments were considered key. Other reflections emphasised that **survivor stories** can be as influential as policies, and that **sustained attention and pressure** is required from all, including media, parliaments and donors, so that survivors can **live in dignity**. The need for harmonized action using **CAPSEAH** to ensure minimum standards was underlined.



Facilitator Faye Ekong launches the Fishbowl

## Deep Dive Sessions



The Deep Dive session on Governments as Actors in PSEAH co-led by Ephraim Karanja & Anita K.C



The Deep Dive session on Localization of PSEAH co-led by Sadia Hussein, Ranya Al-Jaberi & Ismat Jahan



The Deep Dive session on Safe Programming co-led by Soheli Akter & Andy Watson

The day concluded with deep dive sessions co-led by conference participants. Each working group identified key priorities for future actions:

- 1) Safe Programming and Managing SEAH Risks:** needs to be anchored in organizational culture with strong leadership and donor support; requires continuous risk assessment including stakeholders and communities to adapt approaches and target better to ensure people's safety; harmonization of approaches is key to decrease reporting burden; may require over-resourcing for a period of time until inherent part of work,
- 2) Survivor Centered Support and Response:** systems need to be more integrated and coherent between SEAH, GBV and CRSV; embed protection and standardized accompaniment services; apply a human rights-based approach and inclusion (ethical and safe) of survivor voices.
- 3) Governments as Actors for PSEAH:** agree on local operational procedures between governments, donors and relevant local actors to mitigate revictimization, harmonize policies to diminish contradictions, collect data and evidence for informed changes to laws to enhance equality and justice.
- 4) Localization:** striking a balance between bottom up community-led PSEAH approaches and top-down knowledge, capacity and task sharing; contextualized narrative valued in terms of costs/benefits of localized solutions.
- 5) Institutional Culture and Duty of Care:** enhance speak up culture and radical transparency, resourcing and instruments to be weighted like investments in anti-fraud, duty of care to extend to all including those responsible for PSEAH due to time and emotional burden, often with limited resources.
- 6) Resourcing:** organizations should not be punished for reporting on SEAH; need an ecosystem which includes pooled funds, flexible, traceable and local organization accessible, according to the local PSEAH context. PSEAH funding needs to be long term, flexible and predictable.

## Power Compass

**Smruti Patel** helped keep the radar on **power dynamics**, triggering moments of reflection on:

- Meaningful active and deep listening, especially to local voices
- We talk about 'them' but are they involved?
- How racism further compounds SEAH
- The power of un/conscious bias
- Addressing power and privilege dynamics during onboarding
- Engaging men and boys; who can also be victims
- The power of language, how it can include or exclude, be accepted or not locally, culturally



## Key Resources from the Marketplace

- **OECD:** Pursuing adherence to the [Recommendation](#); A [toolkit](#) to support implementation of the Recommendation The [Implementation Report](#) A [Brochure](#) to support dissemination
- **CAPSEAH** (Common Approach to PSEAH)
- **CHS Alliance** [Harmonized Data & Reporting Scheme](#) & [Putting Victims and Survivors First](#)
- [Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub](#)
- **IASC** [SEARO](#) (Sexual Exploitation & Abuse Risk Overview)
- [The Misconduct Disclosure Scheme](#)
- **Terre des Hommes** [Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub](#)