

# RET International Framework on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Update: June 2022

## Introduction

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The RET International Framework on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) is RET's active commitment to use power safely and responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people RET seeks to assist.

This framework is anchored to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) 4 commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations (CAAP)<sup>1</sup> and the IASC's minimum operating standards for the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (PSEA)<sup>2</sup>.

Presented below is RET's organisational AAP framework for action, which is part of RET's Global Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) System to which all RET staff at headquarters, regional and field levels are committed and accountable to. This is particularly relevant as for RET "be accountable" is not simply a token gesture, but it is a key attitude to contribute to and improve programming. In that sense, it becomes a foundational element of programme quality assurance. Strong accountability mechanisms lead to more effective and efficient responses to those most in need.

RET's M&E System addresses the AAP through the collection, use and timely restitution of appropriate data on beneficiaries' feedback aiming at improving RET's humanitarian interventions, increasing cost efficiency and relevance of the humanitarian responses, and ensuring compliance with CAAP.

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<sup>1</sup> Link: [IASC AAP Commitments Nov 2017.pdf](#)

<sup>2</sup> Link: [IASC PSEA Minimum Operating Standards.pdf](#)

## Guiding commitments from the IASC

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IASC commitments on AAP and PSEA are presented in this document to illustrate the standards promoted globally in RET.

### **Commitment 1: Leadership**

RET will demonstrate its commitment to accountability to affected populations and protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by enforcing, institutionalising and integrating AAP approaches in the project cycle and strategic planning processes, at country level and by establishing appropriate management systems to solicit, hear and act upon the voices and priorities of affected people in a coordinated manner, including for SEA, before, during and after an emergency.

### **Commitment 2: Participation and partnership**

RET will adopt mechanisms that feed into and support collective/coordinated people-centred approaches that enable women, girls, boys, men, including the most marginalised and at-risk people among affected communities, to participate in and play an active role in decisions that will impact their lives, well-being, dignity and protection. RET will adopt and sustain equitable partnerships with local actors to build longer-term relationships and trust with communities.

### **Commitment 3: Information, feedback and action**

RET will adopt mechanisms that feed into and support collective and participatory approaches that inform and listen to communities, address feedback and lead to corrective action. RET will establish and support the implementation of appropriate mechanisms for reporting and handling of SEA-related complaints. RET will plan, design and manage protection and assistance programmes that are responsive to the diversity and expressed views of affected communities.

### **Commitment 4: Results**

RET will measure AAP and PSEA related results at the project and collective level, including through standards such as the Core Humanitarian Standard<sup>3</sup> and the Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA; the Best Practice Guide to

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<sup>3</sup> Link: [CHS Alliance FAQs on AAP.pdf](#)

Establish Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms (CBCM)<sup>4</sup> and its accompanying Standard Operating procedures.

## RET's indicators to meet the IASC AAP and PSEA commitments

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RET's framework for action fulfils two major purposes:

(1) To guide RET staff at all levels using country office implementation and M&E plans, to guarantee that accountability, feedback and complaints mechanisms are integrated in all stages of their professional work, and in all phases of the programme cycle: needs and assets assessment, design, establishing agreement on partnerships, project's implementation, regular monitoring and evaluation of completed interventions.

(2) To provide timely, accessible, adaptable and relevant information to the affected populations on procedures, services, facilities, legislation, processes and envisioned interventions that affect them, so that they are able to make sound decisions as well as make informed choices.

To meet the IASC AAP and PSEA commitments, RET will undertake the following indicators in each of RET's country programmes:

### IASC Commitment 1: leadership

- AAP approaches and the voices of crisis-affected people will be integrated in the RET project cycle and strategic planning processes.
- Support and resources will always be provided to create additional feedback channels that seeks, listens to and acts upon the priorities of affected people and complaints in a coordinated manner, including for SEA.
- Build the skills of RET staff members needed for designing, implementing, and evaluating AAP and PSEA programming.
- Each RET National Office will implement, monitor and update frequently their own AAP and PSEA plans, and in accordance with RET's PSEA Code of Conduct. This will include:

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<sup>4</sup> Link: [IASC CBCM.pdf](#)

- Effective PSEA implementation for each RET National Office with close follow-up of the implementation of the AAP-PSEA Framework in the Local Offices.
- Cooperative arrangements with project participants.
- Dedicated PSEA focal points committed to PSEA, including in the Local Offices
- Dedicated training for PSEA focal points.

### **IASC Commitment 2: participation and partnership**

- Use different tools and processes to include community representatives in all phases of the programme cycle (assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). RET will work collaboratively with its country programmes, national and local offices and partners to create inclusive and meaningful ways for participants of our projects to influence the design and delivery of the project. Extra efforts will be made to include women and girls, people with disabilities, older people, those who are displaced and other marginalised groups
- Build projects on existing local capacities
- Set up feedback and complaints mechanisms in close collaboration with local communities
- Reflect the views, suggestions, experiences and criticisms of the project in planning documents
- Create multiple channels for all communities to share their views and contribute to activities and decisions in all phases of the project cycle.
- Effective and comprehensive communication from HQ to the field on (a) what to do regarding raising beneficiary awareness on PSEA and (b) how to establish effective community-based complaints mechanisms.

### **IASC Commitment 3: feedback and complaints**

- Each RET Country office will focus the monitoring and evaluations on the satisfaction of project participants.
- RET Country Offices will inform all participants in RET projects, especially women, girls, older people, and those with disabilities, about the project outcomes and the principles they adhere to, including the commitments made on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Members of crisis-affected communities will be engaged in the design, implementation and monitoring of accessible, safe and timely feedback and complaints processes. They will know how to access the feedback mechanism.
- Feedback from all complaint mechanisms will be collectively analysed, with findings used to set priorities and adjust projects, programmes and policies at organisational level and in relevant clusters, working groups

and/or coordination platforms with other actors. Feedback (if not anonymous) is disaggregated by age, gender and nationality to gain deeper insights.

- Staff will know how to receive feedback and complaints professionally and sensitively from female and male survivors of exploitation and abuse and are able to make referrals to appropriate supports.
- Effective and comprehensive mechanisms to ensure awareness-raising on SEA amongst staff, as well as effective recruitment and performance management practices.
- Internal complaints and investigation procedures are in place for staff.

#### IASC Commitment 4: results

- RET country offices will assess the feedback collected and views expressed from communities against the objectives outlined in the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and other collective standards, including the IASC AAP commitments, Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA.
- The results of those assessments will be reported to key entities and to crisis-affected communities.

## Examples of RET's activities

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- Use of a set of beneficiary feedback tools tailored to specific target groups, such as education personnel, learners, parents and caregivers, civil servants, hosting community members, persons with disabilities.
- Holding monthly forums, meetings and focus group discussions with the affected populations and most vulnerable and marginalised groups. RET staff will be trained and guided by safe and good practice principles to facilitate such spaces.
- Having an open-door policy whereby beneficiaries can walk in or call and give feedback to the national/local/regional staff whenever needed. All staff members will be informed and trained to receive feedback in this way.
- Use of a fixed and/or mobile suggestion box for feedback, suggestion and/or complaints in each RET office and for each activity carried out by RET.
- Use of social media, such as a WhatsApp, is available to the beneficiaries for providing suggestions, ideas, feedback and making complaints. Specific guidance and monitoring of any online activities are in place to ensure the safety for the users.

- Reaching out to populations of concern through a door-to-door approach and the use of radio programmes. For instance, in Kenya RET is collaborating with Radio Gargar, a local radio station to hold “call in radio programme”. Beneficiaries have been able to connect with RET officer and feedback has been provided and recorded through the aired live programme.
- Conducting home visits with populations of concern, to identify, deliver and monitor specific situations. Participants are invited to give their feedback regarding the service received from RET either verbally, using a specific survey tool, or using another channel developed at the beginning of the project with the participation of the project beneficiaries.
- Conducting a feedback survey with beneficiaries at the end of an activity.
- Holding a project closure activity with the beneficiaries to discuss and evaluate the support provided and the activities carried out. Evaluation of the support received by the children through the use of smileys (happy, middle, sad).

## Terms

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### Accountability to Affected Populations

The IASC’s definition of accountability to crisis-affected people involves:

- **Taking account** of people by listening to their views in all humanitarian programming phases, and using that feedback to design and adjust programming
- **Giving account** by transparently and effectively communicating with people about humanitarian assistance in formats and languages they prefer
- **Being held to account** for aid workers’ conduct and for the quality, effectiveness and fairness of resources and programmes.

The term “Accountability to Affected Populations combines a large and growing number of activities related to regulating the relationships and power imbalances between people affected by crisis and humanitarian agencies.” (ALNAP 2018).

It also means, “taking account of the views of affected people in the design and implementation of aid activities and collecting and acting upon feedback from them, giving account by transparently and effectively sharing information with

communities, and being held to account for the quality, fairness and effectiveness of their actions." (GCER 2016).

## Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

The IASC's definition of sexual exploitation and abuse:

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) of affected community members by anyone associated with the provision of aid constitutes one of the most serious breaches of accountability. It frequently occurs when the essential needs of those most at-risk in communities are not adequately met. Issues of lack of accountability and of sexual exploitation and abuse are derived from asymmetries of power. It is also a serious protection concern and erodes the confidence and trust of affected communities and the host country in all those providing assistance.

Sexual exploitation is defined as "any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another".

Sexual abuse is defined as "the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions".