



World Health  
Organization

Lesotho

# PRSEAH

PREVENTION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE & HARASSMENT



# ANNUAL REPORT

2025

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# Executive Summary

The World Health Organization (WHO) upholds a strict Zero Tolerance Policy for all forms of sexual misconduct, including inaction or retaliation against individuals who report or witness violations. Central to this commitment is a strong victim- and survivor-centered approach that prioritizes dignity, safety, and access to essential support services.

In Lesotho, this commitment remains especially critical, as the country continues to record some of the highest rates of gender-based violence (GBV) globally. Evidence shows that 86% of women have experienced violence in their lifetime, and 14.5% were subjected to sexual violence before turning 18 (World Population Review, 2022).

Throughout the reporting period, WHO Lesotho, working with other UN agencies, strengthened national systems aimed at preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH). The Organization supported the health sector to improve survivor-centered services, enhanced data collection and analysis to inform policy and programming, and promoted community-level initiatives by establishing reporting channels designed to tackle GBV in the communities. Close collaboration with the UN Country Team, civil society organizations, academia, and government partners ensured a multisectoral response that provides survivors with access to medical, psychosocial, and legal support.

The year also marked significant progress in integrating PRSEAH across all operations. Several notable achievements were recorded during the year. WHO worked with other UN agencies and partners to support the establishment and launch of a Multi-Purpose Centre for Victims and Survivors of GBV, greatly enhancing access to comprehensive survivor services. The establishment of external PRSEAH reporting channels, including toll-free numbers, expanded safe pathways for community reporting. Internally, the UN Country Team's reporting mechanisms were strengthened to improve coordination and responsiveness.

WHO also increased awareness of PRSEAH among partners through the UN Coffee Book, which highlighted national progress and good practices. Further outreach included a major PRSEAH awareness session at the National University of Lesotho, which engaged students, civil society, and UN partners during International Women's Day celebrations—demonstrating WHO's commitment to empowering young people as agents of change. Capacity-building efforts were also extended to the Ministry of Health's PRSEAH focal point to reinforce institutional leadership on safeguarding. The Country Office's two PRSEAH focal points continued to coordinate closely with the Ministry of Health's PRS focal person, ensuring alignment of activities and strengthening national safeguarding systems. Leadership consistently reinforced WHO's Code of Conduct and Zero Tolerance Policy through ongoing briefings, partner engagement, and operational oversight, contributing to the Country Office's compliance with mandatory PRSEAH training.

Looking ahead, WHO will work with the Ministry of Health and other relevant government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies to strengthen member-state accountability by ensuring that PRSEAH assessments for partners are consistently conducted and integrated into programming and collaboration frameworks. Continued investment in survivor-centered services, community mobilization, and institutional capacity-building will remain central to efforts to reduce GBV and sexual misconduct in Lesotho.

# Key Achievements

## 1.1 Launch of the Boiketlong Multi-Purpose Centre for Victims and Survivors of Gender-based violence

In partnership with the Government of Lesotho and key stakeholders, WHO supported the successful establishment and launch of a multi-Purpose Centre designed to provide comprehensive services to victims and survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). The centre serves as a one-stop facility offering medical care, psychosocial support, legal aid, and safe shelter for survivors. It represents a major milestone in strengthening Lesotho's national protection and response systems. Through this initiative, survivors are now able to access integrated care in a safe and confidential environment, which significantly reduces delays in seeking help and enhances survivor recovery and empowerment.



## 1.2 Establishment of External Reporting Channels for PRSEAH – Toll-Free Numbers

To strengthen community access to safe and confidential reporting mechanisms, WHO collaborated with national partners to establish toll-free PRSEAH reporting lines. These external channels provide community members, including vulnerable groups, with an accessible way to report concerns related to sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment. The introduction of toll-free numbers expands the reporting ecosystem beyond internal UN structures and ensures that incidents can be reported without fear of cost, stigma, or reprisal. This achievement is an important step in enhancing transparency, trust, and accountability within WHO-supported programmes.

## 1.3 Strengthening the internal PRSEAH reporting mechanism in the UN Country Team (UNCT)

Throughout the reporting period, WHO continued to play a central role in strengthening internal PRSEAH reporting mechanisms within the UN Country Team. Efforts focused on harmonizing reporting procedures, improving case referral pathways, and reinforcing confidentiality standards across agencies. Staff members and implementing partners received regular briefings on proper reporting protocols, ensuring a unified, informed, and timely approach to addressing allegations.

As part of these efforts, WHO supported the installation of PRSEAH reporting boxes throughout all toilets in the UN House. These boxes serve as an additional confidential reporting channel, enabling implementing partners and collaborators to safely report any acts of sexual misconduct by UN personnel. Their strategic placement in toilets provides a sense of security and discretion for individuals raising concerns. Reports submitted through these boxes are escalated to the Ombudsman, IOS, and relevant government authorities, depending on the nature of the case.

These enhancements have resulted in a more robust internal reporting system, one that strengthens organizational accountability and ensures that concerns are addressed promptly, ethically, and in alignment with global safeguarding standards.



### 1.4 Improved PRSEAH awareness among partners through the UN Coffee Book

WHO increased national stakeholder awareness of PRSEAH by contributing to the publication of the UN Coffee Book, an advocacy and communication tool that showcases UN achievements in Lesotho. The publication featured PRSEAH milestones, good practices, and initiatives implemented across the country. By profiling these achievements, the Coffee Book helped strengthen partner understanding of PRSEAH principles, highlighted progress made under the Zero Tolerance Policy, and encouraged alignment across sectors. This visibility contributed to greater partner engagement and a more coordinated national response.



### 1.5 WHO advances PRSEAH awareness at National University of Lesotho



To engage young people as key agents of change, WHO conducted a PRSEAH awareness session at the National University of Lesotho (NUL) in celebration of International Women’s Day. The session equipped students, particularly those in the Faculty of Law, with knowledge and practical skills to identify, prevent, and respond to sexual misconduct. Participants included the Lesotho Girl Guides Association, civil society organizations, and representatives from multiple UN agencies, fostering cross-sector dialogue. The awareness session reinforced WHO’s Zero Tolerance Policy and highlighted the importance of creating safe learning environments, supporting survivors, and ensuring accountability for perpetrators. The initiative demonstrated WHO’s commitment to building a more informed and empowered generation capable of challenging harmful norms and advocating for safer communities.

### 1.6 Capacity building for the Ministry of Health PRSEAH focal point

WHO provided targeted capacity-building support to the Ministry of Health PRSEAH focal point to enhance national leadership in preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. Training sessions focused on strengthening case management skills, improving understanding of reporting obligations, and aligning national safeguarding procedures with international best practices. This investment in institutional capacity reinforces the sustainability of PRSEAH systems and supports the Ministry in fulfilling its safeguarding responsibilities across the health sector.

## 1.7 Regular internal PRSEAH briefings for staff

Throughout the year, the Country Office conducted regular internal briefings to ensure that all staff and affiliates remained informed about PRSEAH responsibilities, reporting pathways, and conduct expectations. These briefings reinforced the principles of the WHO Code of Conduct and provided ongoing capacity-building on safeguarding standards. The consistent communication helped promote a culture of accountability and strengthened staff confidence in reporting mechanisms.



## 1.8 Interagency coordination and collaboration

In 2025, WHO played a central role in strengthening interagency coordination on GBV and sexual misconduct within the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Lesotho. As the Lead of the Prevention Pillar under the UNCT Plan of Action against Sexual Misconduct, WHO guided the development and implementation of prevention strategies, ensured a harmonized reporting mechanism across agencies, and provided both financial and technical expertise to advance joint PSEA priorities. WHO's active participation in the UNCT Gender Theme Group reinforced coherence across agencies and strengthened integration of PRSEAH standards into UN programmes.



# Challenges

Despite the progress made in advancing PRSEAH priorities, the implementation of the 2025 workplan faced several challenges that affected the pace and scope of planned activities.

## Bureaucratic delays within government ministries

Despite notable progress in advancing PRSEAH priorities, implementation of the 2025 workplan was slowed by several interlinked challenges, many of which were compounded by bureaucratic processes within key government ministries. These bureaucratic hurdles affected the pace of decision-making and coordination between agencies, ultimately delaying the rollout of planned activities.

## Fear of retaliation

While progress has been made, PRSEAH awareness remains uneven across communities and implementing partners. Misconceptions about reporting pathways, fear of retaliation, and limited understanding of SEAH concepts continue to hinder community-level reporting.

## Socio-cultural barriers and stigma

Cultural norms, stigma around GBV and SEAH, and fear of social repercussions continue to discourage reporting. Overcoming these barriers requires continuous awareness efforts, which take time to implement and scale.

## Limited human resource capacity within the Ministry of Health

Implementation of the PRSEAH Workplan was also affected by limited human resource capacity within the Ministry of Health, particularly in roles directly supporting safeguarding and response functions. Although the Country Office has designated PRSEAH focal points, their work requires close coordination with the Ministry's PRSEAH focal person, who is responsible for leading national-level activities. However, the Ministry's focal point is simultaneously responsible for several other health programmes, resulting in significant workload pressures and competing priorities.



# Lessons Learned



## **Multi-sectoral collaboration**

Working jointly through UNCT structures such as the Gender Theme Group, multisectoral GBV working groups, and joint planning platforms proved essential in aligning priorities and preventing duplication. A unified approach enabled partners to speak with one voice and deliver more consistent prevention and response services across sectors.

## **Shared leadership enhances accountability and commitment**

Assigning agencies clear leadership roles, such as WHO's lead on the Prevention Pillar, created stronger ownership of results and improved follow-through. Clear division of responsibilities helped ensure that activities across the UNCT remained coordinated, timely, and technically sound.

## **Joint mapping exercises create stronger systems**

Interagency mapping of complaint mechanisms and survivor services improved understanding of availability, accessibility, and gaps across districts. These joint processes enhanced evidence-based planning and ensured that referral pathways were functional and mutually reinforcing.

## **Collaboration with the government ensures national ownership**

Working together as a unified UNCT strengthened support to government ministries, reinforced adherence to national standards, and improved the integration of PRSEAH measures into government systems. A multisectoral partnership with the government increased the likelihood of long-term sustainability.

# Strategic Foresights for 2026

In 2026, WHO will prioritize strengthening and accelerating the rollout of partner PRSEAH assessments to ensure that all collaborating organizations meet the required safeguarding standards. As this assessment process is relatively new for several partners, many still require dedicated support to fully understand, adopt, and comply with PRSEAH requirements. Previous delays driven by capacity gaps, limited familiarity with tools, and the need for step-by-step guidance affected compliance timelines and slowed the effective implementation of safeguarding measures.

To address these challenges, WHO will enhance partner capacity through targeted training, simplified tools, structured guidance, and closer follow-up. PRSEAH assessments will be further integrated into partner engagement, contracting, and monitoring processes to strengthen accountability and ensure timely completion.

In addition, WHO will increase community awareness of PRSEAH reporting mechanisms to ensure that individuals, especially vulnerable groups, know how to safely, confidentially, and effectively report concerns of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment. This will involve expanding outreach efforts, strengthening communication strategies, and partnering with community structures to disseminate information widely. By making reporting pathways more visible, accessible, and trusted, WHO aims to improve early reporting, strengthen prevention, and reinforce community confidence in safeguarding systems.

Together, these priority actions will enhance compliance, accountability, and community protection as part of WHO's commitment to zero tolerance for sexual misconduct.



**TAKE ACTION!**  
**Report acts of sexual exploitation and Harassment by UN personnel.**

  
UNITED NATIONS  
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 **Call the Toll-Free Number:**  
**(80011111)**

 **or Use the Suggestion Boxes in the UN Compound.**

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