



Fund for Innovation  
and Transformation

Fonds pour l'innovation  
et la transformation

# PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS TO PSEAH -

## Learnings from FIT Innovators



# Overview

The Fund for Innovation and Transformation (FIT) aims to share learnings from funded small and medium-sized organizations (SMOs) and their local partners from their short-term testing projects.

A PSEAH event organized by FIT provided valuable insights from SMOs and their local partners who shared practical strategies for preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment during their projects. This event fostered a collaborative atmosphere focused on improving PSEAH policy and practice.

Adrienne Wiebe (International Projects Manager, Change for Children) and Edda Muller (Local Gender Expert, Change for Children Nicaragua) shared their expertise on practical PSEAH applications through holistic approaches working with Indigenous communities in the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve, Nicaragua. Karen Kun (Founder and President, Waterlution) and Dawn Fleming (Innovation Lead, Waterlution) applied PSEAH strategies working with adolescent girls and communities in Mozambique while testing their water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) solution, and also spoke about their work.

This resource provides a snapshot of some of the lessons learned and examples of practical approaches to PSEAH from these funded SMOs and local partners.

# Lesson 1

## Holistic Community-Based Approaches Matter

One of the key takeaways from the event was the significance of **engaging with the entire community**, particularly in the context of local laws, social norms, and cultural practices. Both SMOs and local partners emphasized the role of community-based approaches to ensure that PSEAH policies are understood and implemented effectively. This involved working closely with local leaders, governments, police authorities, religious and spiritual figures to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of their responsibilities and can contribute to a safer environment for participants.

- **Example:** Local partners from Change for Children Nicaragua and the Territorial Indigenous Government of the Miskito Indian Taisbaika Kum worked with Indigenous leaders especially by leveraging the respect they commanded, religious figures, and the local police to create a support network for women and children. By involving trusted community figures, they were able to foster a culture of accountability and understanding, making it easier for victims of abuse to report incidents without fear of retribution or stigmatization.



Engaging the whole community, including local leaders and authorities, is vital for effective PSEAH policy implementation and fostering a safe environment.

# Lesson 2

## Adapting Training to Local Context Counts

Another critical lesson learned is that PSEAH training and policies need to be **adapted to local contexts**. Generic, one-size-fits-all policies often fail to address the specific challenges that communities face. Organizations must tailor their PSEAH training materials and policies to reflect the local realities, including language, cultural norms, and societal values.

- **Example:** In Mozambique, Waterlution worked with their local partner, Girl Move Academy, to create training materials that reflected the local challenges, such as early marriage and gender-based violence. The training was adapted for the local context, ensuring that it was relatable and impactful for the adolescent girls who participated.

A major takeaway was the need to adapt training and materials to local languages and cultural sensitivities. Including examples based on real-life, locally relevant situations improved understanding and made policies more relatable to both participants and staff.

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- **Example:** Community facilitators in Mozambique were given training on real-world scenarios to build confidence in discussing PSEAH issues.

# Lesson 3

## Capacity Building is Essential

For SMOs with limited resources, developing comprehensive PSEAH policies can seem daunting. However, the event highlighted that **even smaller organizations can build capacity** by collaborating with local partners who may have stronger policies or more experience in safeguarding practices.

The importance of **focusing on the strengths of local staff and participants** was a recurring theme. Building local capacity to prevent and respond to PSEAH incidents ensures that communities can sustain these practices long after the testing projects have concluded. **Training women facilitators, engaging young girls in leadership roles, and working with male community members** on gender equity played a central role in these projects.

- **Example:** Waterlution's project in Mozambique focused on training adolescent girls to take leadership roles in their schools and communities. Through workshops on water innovation and permaculture, the girls gained confidence and skills, which helped them play an active role in decision-making processes within their communities.
- **Example:** In the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve in Nicaragua, Change for Children and their partners focused on teaching women and girls about their rights and how to protect themselves from harassment and abuse.

# Lesson 4

## Addressing Monitoring and Evaluation Challenges is Key

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of PSEAH practices in small and remote communities can be challenging, especially when resources are limited. In both Mozambique and Nicaragua, **close-knit relationships within the community formed the foundation of monitoring mechanisms.** The event highlighted the importance of developing practical and culturally appropriate M&E tools that can be implemented by local partners with limited resources.

- Example: In Nicaragua, local partners used a community-based approach to monitor PSEAH compliance. They worked closely with local coordinators, who reported any incidents or concerns to the police and project staff. This approach allowed for real-time monitoring and a more personalized follow-up system.

**Recognizing non-verbal signs of distress or discomfort** was emphasized, as these are often critical in communities with lower literacy levels or where open discussion of exploitation may be culturally sensitive.

- Example: Waterlution and their partners employed a continuous feedback loop in Mozambique that involved post-session evaluations with facilitators and participants. This process allowed the organization to gather real-time insights into non-verbal cues and detect potential areas of concern early on. Reporting mechanisms included anonymous lines for complaints and clear channels for following up on any incidents, ensuring accountability at every step.



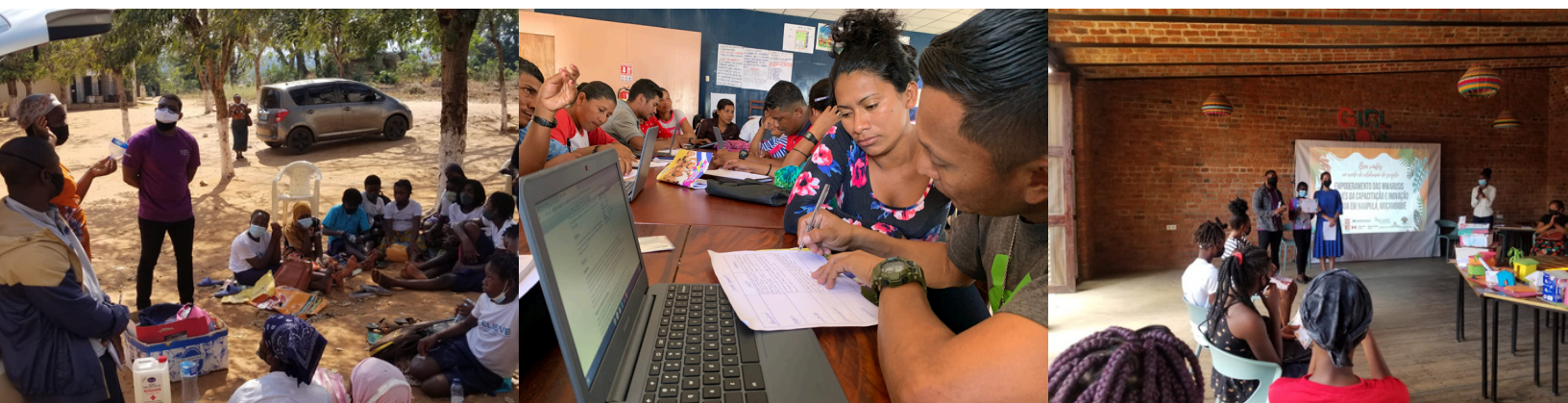
# Lesson 5

## Evolving Policies Through Continuous Learning is a Must

A significant insight from the event was the **need for PSEAH policies to adapt over time**. As organizations gain more experience and encounter new challenges, they must update their policies to reflect these learnings. This iterative process helps organizations stay responsive and ensure that their PSEAH practices remain effective.

- Example: Waterlution is currently on the third iteration of their PSEAH policy. Through continuous learning from their projects in Mozambique, Lebanon, and Tanzania, they have been able to improve their policy and training materials to better align with local realities and challenges.

**Regular feedback from community facilitators and project staff** helped identify gaps in knowledge or policy application, leading to periodic updates to ensure ongoing relevance and effectiveness.



# Lesson 6

## Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing is a Priority

**Selecting partners with existing strong PSEAH practices**, as seen in Waterlution's collaboration with Girl Move Academy, ensures that projects can build upon pre-existing structures. This also allows for a reciprocal learning environment where both international and local partners can strengthen their policies.

The event underscored the importance of collaboration between SMOs and local partners. **Sharing experiences and best practices between organizations** not only improves the effectiveness of PSEAH policies but also fosters a sense of solidarity among organizations working in different regions.

- Example: The collaboration between Change for Children and their Nicaraguan partners exemplified the benefits of sharing local knowledge and expertise. By working together, they were able to develop culturally sensitive approaches to PSEAH and strengthen local capacities to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.



# Lesson 7

## Visibility and Communication are Critical

Ensuring that PSEAH policies are **visible and understandable** for all stakeholders is essential. This includes sharing the policy through **multiple formats**—posters, community meetings, and verbal discussions. For instance, Change for Children developed visual communication tools like posters in **local languages** with contact numbers for anonymous reporting.

Establishing **clear, confidential reporting channels**, including phone and WhatsApp lines, provided an accessible way for community members to report incidents without fear of retaliation.

Clear and accessible PSEAH policies and reporting channels are essential for stakeholder understanding and safe incident reporting.



# Lesson 8

## Acknowledging Power Dynamics and Relationships is Relevant

One recurring issue discussed was the challenge of managing power dynamics between external staff and local community members, especially regarding relationships between staff and participants. In Nicaragua, Change for Children emphasized the importance of **clarifying boundaries around relationships** between project staff and local community members to **prevent exploitation**. This highlights the need for clear communication and enforcement of policies that address power imbalances, ensuring that local staff and community members feel empowered to report any violations.



# Recommendations for SMOs

For SMOs with limited resources, developing and implementing a robust PSEAH policy can be a daunting task. However, the event highlighted several **practical steps that smaller organizations can take** to ensure that their PSEAH policies are effective:

- **Leverage existing policies:** Start with a basic policy template and adapt it to your organization's needs and context. Developing a policy that is both manageable and implementable is more beneficial than creating a complex document that may not be practical to execute. Policies should evolve over time as the organization and local contexts change. Ensure that it aligns with local laws and cultural norms.
- **Engage your board and leadership:** Ensure that your organization's leadership is actively involved in developing and approving the PSEAH policy. This helps to secure buy-in from all levels of the organization.
- **Focus on practical implementation:** Develop training materials that are easily accessible and implementable. Ensure that staff and local partners understand their roles and responsibilities in preventing and responding to PSEAH incidents.
- **Collaborate with local partners:** Work closely with local organizations and leaders to create a support network that reinforces PSEAH practices. This can include training local women and youth leaders to act as PSEAH champions in their communities.

# Conclusion and Next Steps

The event raised powerful lessons about the practical application of PSEAH policies in testing environments. One of the key takeaways was the importance of making policies adaptable, implementable, and localized to specific contexts. Organizations must work hand-in-hand with local partners, adapting policies to suit local cultures, legal contexts, and sensitivities while ensuring continuous capacity building and training. Furthermore, the focus on community-based approaches and fostering safe spaces for participants underscores the importance of building trust at the grassroots level.

As SMOs and local partners continue to tackle the issues of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, they must remain vigilant, constantly learning from their experiences and refining their approaches. This event provided a crucial platform for sharing best practices and lessons learned, which will undoubtedly help guide future efforts to create safer, more inclusive environments for all participants.





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