

Guidance for the Development of a Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy



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A portrait of a woman with a warm smile, wearing a vibrant purple sari adorned with yellow and pink floral patterns. She has a small gold nose ring and is wearing gold bangles. The background is a soft, out-of-focus teal. In the top left corner, there is a white geometric pattern resembling a stylized spider web or a honeycomb structure.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

ACFID's members are committed to further improving standards, practice and culture to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in our sector. The development of a prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) policy is an opportunity for your organisation to establish a strong framework that can drive change and support best practice across your organisation.

A PSEAH policy outlines your organisation's commitment to the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, as well as outlining the responsibilities of staff, volunteers, partners and others in relation to prevention, reporting and responding to incidents of SEAH. It provides an important statement of your organisation's, and its leadership's, commitment to PSEAH, and can be used to communicate this commitment to internal and external stakeholders.

Alongside your policy, there are other important elements that will help support the prevention of SEAH. These include:

- 1 Establishing a clear plan for implementing and monitoring your organisation's actions and progress;
- 2 Providing a safe and trusted environment which protects all who have contact with the organisation, including staff, volunteers, partner organisations and beneficiary communities; and
- 3 Setting an organisational culture that prioritises safeguarding against sexual misconduct, so that it is safe for those affected to come forward and to report incidents and concerns with the assurance they will be handled sensitively and properly.

Our organisations need to build an internal culture that prioritises the safeguarding of vulnerable groups, and proactively addresses the power and structural inequalities that remain at the root cause of this issue. A PSEAH policy is an important opportunity to collectively set out your organisational commitment and approach.

Purpose of the Guidance

This Guidance has been prepared to assist ACFID's members to develop a prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) policy to satisfy the ACFID Code of Conduct's new [Commitment 1.5](#) and its associated [Compliance Indicator 1.5.1 and Verifier](#).

COMMITMENT 1.5

We advance the safeguarding of those who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse.

COMPLIANCE INDICATOR 1.5.1

Members demonstrate their organisational commitment to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, through a survivor-centred approach.

This document provides guidance to ACFID's members to produce a policy document that:

- describes the standards of behaviour for organisation's staff, representatives and partners;
- specifically prohibits sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment;
- outlines how the policy is implemented throughout the organisation; and
- specifies the organisation's reporting responsibilities where an incident is identified, including processes for reporting to local enforcement authorities, subject to the wishes and welfare of the complainant/survivor.

ACFID's members that receive or wish to receive funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT) should also note that DFAT is requiring its funded partners to have a PSEAH policy or other documented policies and procedures in place, which meet the expectations of [DFAT's PSEAH Policy](#) and its minimum standards.

Guidance in this document has been informed by: the [Inter Agency Steering Committee Minimum Operating Standards for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(IASC MOS-PSEA\)](#); the [Core Humanitarian Standard \(CHS\)](#), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee's (OECD DAC) [Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and Response](#); and the [DFAT PSEAH Policy](#) and minimum standards to facilitate alignment of expectations and practice.

A note on scope and language

Both the terms ‘sexual exploitation and abuse’ and ‘sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment’ have been used in the ACFID Code of Conduct and the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF).

The ACFID Code of Conduct requires members to have in place a policy that commits them to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (ACFID Code of Conduct Compliance Indicator 1.5.1). ACFID’s members are also already required to have an anti-sexual harassment policy that covers staff and volunteers (ACFID Code of Conduct Compliance Indicator 9.2.3). Requirements for the prevention of sexual harassment are set out in a number of areas in the Code such as verifiers 5.1.2, 5.2.1, 9.4.1, 9.4.2. When taken together, they form an organisational-wide approach to PSEAH.

Your organisation should decide whether to include harassment in your PSEA policy. This decision should be based on a review of your existing anti-sexual harassment policy, and its coverage of your organisation’s compliance requirements. DFAT and other donors, such as the Department for International Development (DFID), have deliberately expanded the scope of their policies to include the term ‘harassment’. Unlike the ACFID Code, these organisations had no existing requirements for sexual harassment, so this approach was appropriate to address the issue. If your organisation is funded by DFAT then you must ensure you are compliant with their requirements.

So, while this guidance has been developed to help your organisation understand and address compliance with Commitment 1.5, which requires a PSEA policy, this guidance document refers to ‘sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment’ (PSEAH), thus providing complete coverage. ACFID’s members can choose the best approach for their organisation.

The terms ‘complainant/survivor’ and ‘victim/survivor’ have been used purposefully in the ACFID Code of Conduct, QAF and in this guidance document. ‘Complainant/survivor’ is used in the context of reporting and complaints, because the person involved may not be the victim/survivor. The term ‘victim/survivor’ is used in the context of mitigating risks associated with the perpetration of SEAH and managing the impact.

Survivor-centred approach

The ACFID Code of Conduct's approach reflects a recognition of the importance of a survivor-centred approach. This is clearly reflected in Compliance Indicator 1.5.1:

COMPLIANCE INDICATOR 1.5.1:

Members demonstrate their organisational commitment to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, through a survivor-centred approach.

A survivor-centred approach prioritises the rights, needs, wishes and empowerment of survivors of SEA in both the prevention of and response to SEA. In practice, this means that ACFID's members need to ensure that:

- those who are affected by SEAH have accessible mechanisms to make a complaint that are designed with their needs and contexts in mind;
- SEA complaints are investigated sensitively and confidentially with primary concern for the survivor; and
- any response is both robust and sensitive to the wishes and protection of survivors.

This requires consultation with partners and primary stakeholders to ensure that PSEAH mechanisms and processes are contextualised and culturally and gender appropriate and reflect an understanding of local legislative frameworks.

WHAT DOES A SURVIVOR-CENTRED APPROACH LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

It is particularly important that, where the complainant is a beneficiary, the person receiving the complaint considers whether the beneficiary has ongoing needs requiring protection or assistance. There may be immediate safety needs if the beneficiary is returning to an unsafe situation, or immediate health and psychological needs, particularly if there was a risk of transmission of disease. As your organisation is responsible for the action of your staff, volunteers and those who represent you, every effort must be made to ensure that any survivor of sexual exploitation or abuse is provided with the necessary means for protection and rehabilitation, even if the complaint is not covered by the scope of your policy or organisation. This will generally involve referral to other organisations able to address these needs. In contrast, an approach that does not centre the survivor at its core would only provide referrals and assistance where the complaint falls within the scope of the organisation's policy.

The importance of a survivor-centred approach is also recognised in the [OECD DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance](#) adopted in July 2019.



ACTIONS TO DEVELOP AND
IMPLEMENT A
PSEAH POLICY

Actions to Develop and Implement a PSEAH Policy

The following actions are provided as a guide only and should be tailored to suit your organisation. The actions and the order in which they occur will differ depending on your organisation's size, activities, partners and risk level.



CONSULTATION WITH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

ACFID's members should consult staff, partners and governing body members in the development of their PSEAH policy in order to create ownership and awareness. The policy needs to suit the size and nature of the organisation to ensure that its implementation is appropriate and realistic. For example, your organisation may choose to have a standalone policy that addresses solely the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, or you could have a wider safeguarding policy that incorporates both child safeguarding and PSEAH.

The notion of SEAH and acceptable and unacceptable behaviours is understood in different ways in different cultures and contexts. Consultation with in-country partners and other stakeholders will build shared understandings and ensure that PSEAH mechanisms and processes are contextualised and culturally and gender appropriate and reflect an understanding of local legislative frameworks. Consulting with external stakeholders in Australia and other countries of operation also helps to gain an understanding of good practice, legislative requirements, linkages to support systems and referral mechanisms and compliance standards across other sectors.

WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

You could do this by running a consultation with staff, volunteers and partners, raising awareness on what PSEAH means and asking for their inputs on what the policy should say. You could use an example of a PSEAH policy from elsewhere however it is crucial that you adapt it to suit your organisation and the context in which you work. You should involve staff, volunteers and partners by circulating the draft and asking for comment before finalising.

Where relevant to your organisation, review the requirements of DFAT or other donors to ensure your policy is compliant with their policies, standards and requirements.



CONSULTATION WITH AFFECTED COMMUNITIES AND PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS

ACFID's members, and local implementing partners, should consult with affected and/or vulnerable communities and individuals to better understand the SEAH risks they face and inform the detailed design of procedures such as complaints mechanisms to ensure these are community based, truly accessible and appropriate. Ensuring these consultations inform the design of your policy and procedures will enhance the effectiveness and relevance of the policy and procedures for primary stakeholders. This step is ideal but may not be feasible for smaller ACFID members. It can be a simple consultative approach, brought to the community for their viewpoints at a community meeting or similar forum.

Feedback received would then be considered and would inform the design or review of the policy approach. In particular, special effort should be made to receive meaningful feedback from girls, women and people with disabilities in this consultation process.

It is important that community members have accessible and appropriate ways to complain if they think SEAH is taking place. It is also important that they are fully aware of the expected behaviour of your organisation's staff, volunteers and in-country partners. By including them in the design or review of your policy and implementation approach, you can ensure that the policy is applicable and implementable in the contexts and communities in which you work.



DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTED PROCEDURES

It is an expectation that any policy will also be supported by and operationalised through documented procedures that cover:

- complaints mechanisms,
- recruitment,
- induction and ongoing training,
- investigating reports,
- disciplinary actions,
- partner due diligence,
- project risk assessment,
- the role of the governing body, and
- external reporting requirements.

Without taking this wholistic approach to safeguarding, a policy can only do so much. It is the effective combination of all of these elements that work together to help protect organisations and individuals from SEAH risks.

ACFID's members will already have procedures relating to the above. They will need to be reviewed to ensure that they align with and support the PSEAH policy approach, and don't contradict or remain silent on important requirements articulated in the PSEAH policy. A good governance approach will have these various documented procedures

linked/articulated/referenced in your PSEAH policy, to allow your organisation to easily see the linkages and be able to make changes accordingly.



RATIFICATION / ENDORSEMENT BY GOVERNING BODY

Your policy should be reviewed by and formally ratified or endorsed by your governing body. Final accountability rests with the governing body and as such it is vital that they are fully aware of their responsibilities in this regard. Endorsement by the leadership in this way also provides a strong message to the organisation.



ENDORSEMENT BY USERS & COMMUNICATION OF THE POLICY

Once your PSEAH policy has been developed and formally approved by your governing body, it is recommended that staff, volunteers and partners sign the policy to demonstrate their awareness of and commitment to PSEAH and to ensure they understand their accountabilities.

Internally, the policy should be used in training, induction and made accessible at all times. External stakeholders need to be able to access it via your organisation's website. You should identify how you will

support your implementing partners to develop their own approach which maintains an equivalent standard, and ensure partners are held accountable this through MoU's or equivalent.

In terms of working with communities, appropriate awareness-raising tools and approaches need to be developed which are relevant to age, language and capacity.

WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

Pull out the key messages from your organisation's policies on PSEA that communities need to know.

- What should communities expect from the organisation and its staff in terms of PSEA?
- What is unacceptable conduct?

Then consider how to communicate these key messages in a way that is relevant and accessible to the community or community group.

- Is this group literate?
- If so, what languages do they speak?

Involve the community throughout the process of developing your key messages communication materials. This will help ensure that your messages are appropriate, sensitive and likely to get the right message across.

Develop your communication materials – they could be posters, leaflets, acting out plays, radio or focus group discussions.



ENDORSEMENT BY USERS & COMMUNICATION OF THE POLICY

It is important to monitor the implementation of your policy and related procedures. You could do this by developing a checklist or audit process to ensure all areas of your organisation, including partners, are implementing the policy and procedures as intended.

The policy and procedures themselves should also be periodically reviewed to ensure continued relevance, effectiveness and consistency with evolving global standards and best practice.





KEY ELEMENTS OF A PSEAH POLICY

Key Elements of a PSEAH Policy

Your PSEAH policy should be tailored to your organisation, although there are common elements in a good quality policy. Organisations may decide to order or group these elements differently and include additional elements.

Regardless of how you decide to lay out your policy, the common elements should include:

- Title and Scope of Policy
- Introduction/Statement of Commitment
- Principles underpinning the policy
- Scope of application
- Working with partners
- Policy linkages
- Standards of Conduct
- Recruitment
- Communicating the policy
- Reporting
- Responsibilities to Report
- Managing reports
- Risk Assessment/Safe Programming
- Definition of Terms
- Policy Management

Guidance is provided on each of these elements in the table below.

TITLE AND SCOPE OF POLICY

Your policy needs to suit the size and nature of your organisation to ensure that its implementation is appropriate and realistic. You will need to consider whether you choose to have:

- A policy that includes anti-sexual harassment behaviours and procedures inside your PSEA policy, making it a PSEAH policy OR you keep them separate and cover harassment in your anti-sexual harassment policy which remains separate from your PSEA policy;
- Separate policies that deal individually with PSEAH and child safeguarding OR combine child safeguarding and PSEAH into a broader safeguarding policy.

In order to make these decisions you might consider:

- Whether your organisation receives DFAT or other international donor funds and the need to comply with their PSEAH requirements;
- The range of your other policies such as those that may already cover anti-sexual harassment and whether these meet Code requirements;
- The scope of your organisation and the amount of contact it has with communities and vulnerable people (either directly or indirectly through implementing partners). For example,

an organisation which is child-focused should have a standalone child safeguarding policy rather than a blended safeguarding policy; and

- Balancing the potential positive benefits of having a stand-alone PSEAH policy which will give PSEAH prominence and make a clear statement of commitment in organisations and to external stakeholders; against the potential negative effect of policy crowding or fatigue in organisations and with partners.

Any of the above approaches would satisfy the Code's Commitment 1.5 and Compliance Indicator 1.5.1 as long as your policy covers all the required aspects of practice outlined in the Verifier. Should your organisation choose to include PSEAH and child safeguarding in a wider safeguarding policy, it would need to meet Code requirements in relation to PSEA (Commitment 1.5) and child safeguarding (Commitment 1.4).

The title of your policy should reflect its scope. Should you choose to have a standalone policy it would commonly be referred to as a Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy. If your policy will also cover harassment you might refer to it as a Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy. If you choose to integrate PSEA requirements within a broader safeguarding policy, it could be referred to as a Safeguarding Policy or Safeguarding Vulnerable People Policy or Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy, assuming your organisation maintains its standalone child protection policy.

INTRODUCTION / STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

An introductory policy statement should clearly state your organisation's commitment to the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. It may be appropriate to link this commitment to your organisation's vision, mission, and values.

The policy statement is an opportunity to recognise that the nature of development and humanitarian initiatives can exacerbate inequitable power dynamics within the communities we work with and therefore requires vigilant attention to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards. The policy statement should reflect your organisation's commitment to non-discriminatory and respectful behaviour, where misconduct is not accepted, where power is not abused and vulnerabilities and power inequality are not exploited.

The policy statement should commit your organisation to ensuring that safeguarding measures are embedded, accessible and clearly communicated to staff, partners, vulnerable adults and their communities, in languages and formats they understand.

You could also consider linking your organisation's commitment to other recognised international conventions, standards or policies such as those of the UN, the IASC or the CHS.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

This section is not mandatory, but ACFID's members may consider outlining the principles that underpin and guide its policy. Doing so can serve to provide a clear and succinct statement of the principles that are important to an organisation and on which it will not waver. The principles will need to be carefully considered by each organisation and may differ amongst organisations. Common principles that often underpin a commitment to PSEAH and are reflected in the IASC MOS-PSEA and the DFAT PSEAH Policy include:

- Zero tolerance of inaction of incidents of SEA
- Shared responsibility
- Gender Equality
- Accountability and transparency
- Victim/survivor-centred

SCOPE OF APPLICATION

Clearly outline who is included in the scope of the policy i.e. who the policy will apply to. This would commonly include:

- Governing body members, staff, volunteers, representatives, and contractors
- All visitors to project sites
- Implementing partners

For example:

Governing body members, staff, volunteers, representatives, contractors and partners are expected to comply with the principles and reporting requirements specified in this Policy.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

ACFID members commonly work through in-country partners. Partners work directly with communities and primary stakeholders where the risk of SEAH is highest. They play a vital role in PSEAH by consulting with communities, ensuring awareness of expected behaviours and complaints mechanisms, managing the behaviours of their staff and responding to complaints or incidents. Your policy must be extended to your partners as required under ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 1.5.1](#).

This section should outline how the policy will apply to partners. This may involve defining different types of partners with varying risk levels depending on your operating model and how compliance with the policy will be assessed, implemented and monitored with partners. Ideally you should be working with or supporting your partners to develop their own PSEAH policy which is aligned with the requirements set out in the ACFID Code of Conduct. This will depend on the operating model and types of partners you may have – at a minimum they will be included in the scope of your policy.

Outline how PSEAH will be incorporated into your partnership processes. This could include reference to consultation with partners to develop shared understandings of expectations, due diligence or partner capacity assessment processes (as required under ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 5.1.2](#)), the provision of training for partners, partner agreements (as required under ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 5.2.1](#)) and ongoing monitoring of their compliance.

If your organisation is DFAT funded, it is a policy requirement that your organisation extends its PSEAH policy requirements to its downstream partners.

POLICY LINKAGES

Draw a link between this policy, which addresses the sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of adults and your organisation's Child Safeguarding Policy, which addresses any exploitation and abuse of children.

Also draw a link to other related policies such as your Anti-bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy; Whistleblowing Policy; Complaints Policy; Recruitment Policy; Gender Policy; and organisational Code of Conduct.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Specify mandatory standards of conduct that relate to PSEAH such as:

- prohibiting any form of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
- reporting any suspected or alleged cases of SEA perpetrated by anyone within scope of the policy in connection with official duties or business
- maintaining an environment in which beneficiaries, volunteers, staff, contractors and other representatives know expected behaviours and how to raise complaints and concerns.

In addition, consider cross-referencing your Code of Conduct which sets out a broader set of expected staff behaviours that are linked to safeguarding (as required under ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 9.4.1](#)).

Include a statement that failure to comply with these standards is grounds for disciplinary action, may be considered as gross misconduct and may result in termination. Also consider including a statement that conduct that is criminal will be reported to the relevant authorities, both in Australia and countries where you work, where it is safe to do so and is in accordance with the wishes of the victims/survivors.

Ensuring that PSEAH expectations are included in agreements with partners is also a requirement under ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 5.2.1](#) – so consider referencing your commitment to communicating PSEAH expectations to partners in this section of your PSEAH Policy.

If your organisation is DFAT funded, it is a policy requirement that your organisation has appropriate and enforceable standards of conduct. These need to apply to all staff and downstream partners while engaged in the delivery of DFAT business according to risk contexts.

DFAT specifically prohibits transactional sex and fraternization for all non-national individuals while engaged in the delivery of DFAT business in very high-risk contexts.

(See DFAT Guidance Note for assessing risk www.dfat.gov.au/pseah)

RECRUITMENT

Outline a commitment to recruitment and screening processes when engaging new personnel that verify the integrity of the applicant. Reference checking and vetting for former misconduct of all staff and volunteers is a requirement under the ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 9.3.1](#).

Refer to associated HR policies or manuals which outline recruitment processes such as undertaking verbal referee checks, undertaking a recent police check, working with vulnerable people check or location specific equivalent.

If your organisation is DFAT funded, it is a policy requirement that your organisation has robust PSEAH recruitment and screening processes for all personnel/consultants working in high risk or very high risk organisations or contexts. (See DFAT Guidance Note for assessing risk - www.dfat.gov.au/pseah).

COMMUNICATING THE POLICY

Publish your PSEAH Policy on your organisation's website. This is a requirement under ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 7.3.4](#).

Outline a commitment to providing an induction on PSEAH to all personnel and partners, including expected standards of conduct, the consequence of failure to fulfil those standards of conduct, the mechanisms to report alleged incidents of SEAH, and where to seek further information about safeguarding across the organisation.

Outline a commitment to providing training on PSEAH for all personnel and partners on a regular basis. This is linked to a requirement under ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 9.4.2](#).

Outline a commitment to developing communications materials about PSEAH, expected staff behaviours, and complaints processes for communities in appropriate language and media. This is linked to a requirement under ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 7.3.4](#).

If your organisation is DFAT funded, it is a policy requirement that PSEAH training is conducted for personnel, including downstream partners and individuals that deliver DFAT business in high risk and very high risk contexts. (See DFAT Guidance Note for assessing risk - www.dfat.gov.au/pseah)

REPORTING

Provide contact details for your organisation's PSEAH focal person. Appointing a focal person is a requirement under ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 1.5.1](#). These details should identify the role or position within the organisation rather than the name of the person, as this will remove the need to revise the policy should this person leave your organisation. If there are multiple focal persons, for example in different countries, this should be noted here.

A focal person provides a key role in raising awareness throughout your organisation and in coordinating, supporting and advising on the development and implementation of your PSEAH policy and practices. It is important that this focal person is able to receive and handle sensitive and confidential information.

Outline the reporting mechanisms. Provide details for how staff and partners should report allegations of SEAH incidents. At a minimum, this should include a dedicated phone number and email address. Outline the commitment to assuring the confidentiality of the reporting mechanism, options for making anonymous reports, and the need for overseas staff, partners and primary stakeholders to easily access and use the mechanism.

The detail of your reporting process could be included in your policy document or it could be outlined in a linked procedural document.

Outline a commitment to developing materials that promote reporting mechanisms in languages and media that are appropriate and understandable to communities and contexts where your organisation is working.

RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT

Your policy should oblige all people and partners defined under the policy's scope to report any suspected or alleged incidents of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment or policy non-compliance. You may consider referencing your organisation's Whistleblowing Policy which should encourage people to report on concerns without fear of reprisals.

The policy should outline your organisation's commitment to reporting alleged SEA incidents that involve a criminal aspect to the correct local law enforcement agency where it is safe to do so and is in accordance with the wishes of the victims/survivors.

When applying this policy in other countries, ensure that your organisation understands its local legal reporting obligations. You may consider referencing applicable laws in this policy.

The policy should also oblige your organisation to report any suspected or alleged incidents of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment or policy non-compliance to your senior management and governing body. Where ever possible this should de-identify the victim/survivor, consistent with a survivor-centred approach. This is a requirement under ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 7.4.4](#).

If your organisation is DFAT funded, the policy should outline its obligation to:

Mandatory and immediate (within two working days of becoming aware of an alleged incident) reporting by all staff and DFAT partners of any alleged incident of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment related to the delivery of DFAT business. This includes any alleged incident that poses a significant reputational risk to DFAT. For example, an allegation against a staff member of a partner organisation.

Mandatory reporting (within five working days) by all staff and DFAT partners of any alleged Policy non-compliance; for example, failure to adhere to the PSEAH Policy Minimum Standards or principles.

The DFAT PSEAH Policy also requires that reporting and investigation processes must include engagement of and reporting to senior management and executive boards. This requirement applies to all risk levels i.e. low, medium, high and very high. (See DFAT Guidance Note for assessing risk - www.dfat.gov.au/pseah)

MANAGING REPORTS

It is an ACFID Code of Conduct requirement under [Compliance Indicator 7.3.3](#) that ACFID's members have a documented, complaints handling policy and a documented investigation procedure.

In this section, you may consider referring to your Complaints Handling Policy and Investigation Procedure, or you may prefer to outline how reports of SEAH will be managed and investigated.

You could consider referring to:

- An incident notification form that is used to document an alleged SEAH incident
- A mandatory time period by which an alleged SEAH incident is referred to a designated investigation point in the organisation
- A commitment to protecting the privacy of alleged perpetrators, victims/survivors, and whistleblowers
- Referral to your Child Safeguarding Policy for reports of abuse or exploitation of individuals under the age of 18 years
- A referral process for reports of alleged incidents that do not fall within the scope of the policy (e.g. incidents conducted by an employee of another organisation or a community member)
- Referral of alleged SEAH incidents that involve a criminal aspect to the correct local law enforcement channels where it is safe to do so and is in accordance with the wishes of the victims/survivors.

- Procedures for undertaking an internal investigation of an alleged SEAH incident
- Support offered to complainants/victims/survivors. This might include medical, social, legal and financial assistance, or referrals to such services

If your organisation is DFAT funded, it is also a requirement that the PSEAH policy, or equivalent, documents how SEAH incidents will be managed, reported and investigated. This requirement applies to all risk levels i.e. low, medium, high and very high. (See DFAT Guidance Note for assessing risk - www.dfat.gov.au/pseah)

SAFE PROGRAMMING / RISK ASSESSMENT

Understanding the risk of SEAH and designing mitigation strategies is a vital part of PSEAH. Your policy should outline your commitment to safe programming and SEAH risk management.

There is always a possibility of inflicting unintended harm, particularly in relation to vulnerable populations. To ensure that these risks are mitigated, your policy should outline commitments which will:

- Ensure protection and safeguarding are always considered in all risk assessments. This is a requirement under ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 4.2.2](#). The verifier for this Compliance indicator requires a risk framework, risk management plan or approaches which assess and address risks for initiatives, including from a protection/safeguarding perspective. This could be done at the organisational, contextual and program levels through the inclusion of explicit prompts or criteria that relate to the risks associated with protection and safeguarding of vulnerable people.
- Ensure that due diligence and/or capacity assessments of partners include an assessment of partners' implementation of key safeguarding and risk policies including the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. This is a requirement under ACFID Code of Conduct [Compliance Indicator 5.1.2](#).

The detail of this could be included in your policy document or it could be outlined in a linked procedural document. See the [Good Practice Guidance](#) on Risk Areas and Safeguarding Risks in the Good Practice Toolkit for guiding questions and further information on undertaking a PSEAH risk assessment.

If your organisation is DFAT funded, it is a requirement that you assess the level of risk for SEAH occurring and apply the DFAT PSEAH Minimum Standards accordingly. You should refer to the DFAT Risk Guidance Note (www.dfat.gov.au/pseah).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Consider including definitions of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment in your PSEAH Policy. The following definitions have been determined by the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee:

- **Sexual exploitation:** Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes. It includes profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from sexual exploitation of another. (**Source:** the UN Secretary General's Bulletin on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.)
- **Sexual abuse:** The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. (Source: the UN Secretary General's Bulletin on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.)
- **Sexual harassment:** Unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature that can include indecent remarks or sexual demands.
- **Transactional sex:** The exchange of money, employment, goods, services or other benefit for sex, including sexual favours.
- **Safeguarding:** Actions, policies and procedures that create and maintain protective environments to protect people from exploitation, harm and abuse of all kinds.

If your organisation is DFAT funded, you may wish to consider DFAT's definitions as included in its PSEAH policy. These are consistent and acceptable for compliance with ACFID's Code of Conduct.

POLICY MANAGEMENT

Include a section at the beginning or end of your policy that shows:

- the date of policy approval
- the body that approved the policy
- the version number of the policy
- the planned date or schedule for policy review (e.g. every 2 years)
- the languages the policy will be translated to ensure it is understood by key stakeholders.



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Photos

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Page 2: Pulali, Bangladesh, Pulali is attending a workshop for pregnant mothers at a BRAC run birthing centre in Koral slum, Bangladesh. Photo: Conor Ashleigh / Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Page 6: Women in Port Vila, Vanuatu, march in support of ending violence against women, 2008. Photo: Conor Ashleigh / Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Page 11: Student at Shree Dharmasthali Lower Secondary School, Pokhara, Nepal. Photo: Jim Holmes for AusAID / Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade


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