



Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy

Policy Objective:

The primary objective of this policy is to establish a culture of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) within the framework of the World Association for Sexual Health (WAS). This policy aims to ensure that all WAS employees and associated personnel understand their roles, responsibilities, and expected standards of conduct, thereby fostering a safe environment free from SEA through proactive prevention and robust response mechanisms.

Targeted Audience:

This policy is applicable to all WAS employees, participants in events such as congresses and meetings, and associated personnel.

Effective Date:

14 February 2024

Mandatory Revision Date:

General Assembly 2025

Policy Statement:

1.1. SEA is a violation of universally recognized international legal norms and standards and is strictly prohibited within the WAS. This includes all forms of sexual harassment.

1.2. The WAS maintains a policy of zero tolerance towards SEA, expecting all employees, congress and meeting participants, and associated personnel to uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. This includes providing humanitarian assistance and services that uphold the rights of beneficiaries and vulnerable members of local communities.

Scope of Application:

2.1. This policy applies to all WAS congress and meeting participants, employees, and associated personnel, both on and off duty.

Definitions of SEA:

3.1. 'Sexual exploitation' refers to any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes.

3.2. 'Sexual abuse' encompasses the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

3.3. 'Sexual harassment' includes any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Commitment to PSEA:

4.1. The WAS is committed to maintaining a safe environment free from SEA through a comprehensive PSEA framework, which includes robust prevention and response measures.

4.2. This framework reaffirms the WAS's commitment to the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13) and to implementing the IASC Six Core Principles relating to SEA.

Six Core Principles:

(Adapted for the purposes of this PSEA policy)

5.1. SEA by WAS employees and associated personnel constitutes acts of gross misconduct and are grounds for termination of employment or association.

5.2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is strictly prohibited.

5.3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex is prohibited, including assistance due to beneficiaries.

5.4. Any sexual relationship between WAS employees or associated personnel and beneficiaries that involves improper use of rank or position is strictly prohibited.

5.5. Employees must report concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse, exploitation, or harassment through established mechanisms.

5.6. All WAS employees and associated personnel are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents SEA, including sexual harassment.

PSEA Framework:

6.1. Prevention:

6.1.1. Vetting: The WAS systematically vets all prospective job candidates according to established screening procedures, including assessing their history of sexual misconduct.

6.1.2. Training: Mandatory induction and refresher training on the WAS's SEA policy and procedures are provided to all employees and associated personnel.

6.2. Response:

6.2.1. Reporting: The WAS has safe, confidential, and accessible mechanisms and procedures for reporting SEA allegations, including sexual harassment complaints.

6.2.2. Investigation: Prompt and thorough investigations of SEA allegations are conducted by an ethics committee, comprising an independent member, appointed members of the Advisory Committee and past presidents of the organization, or by referring cases to appropriate investigative bodies.

6.2.2.1. Presumption of Innocence: All accused individuals shall be presumed innocent until proven guilty through the investigation process.

6.2.2.2. Referral to National Authorities: Cases with evidence supporting SEA allegations may be referred to national authorities for criminal prosecution.

6.2.3. Victim Assistance: The WAS has a system to promptly refer SEA survivors, including victims of sexual harassment, to available support services based on their needs and consent.

6.3. Cooperative Arrangements:

6.3.1. All WAS contracts and partnership agreements include a standard clause requiring entities to commit to a zero-tolerance policy on SEA, including sexual harassment, and to implement preventive measures.

6.3.2. Failure to take preventive measures, investigate allegations, or take corrective action against SEA, including sexual harassment, constitutes grounds for termination of any cooperative arrangement.

This PSEA policy is effective from the specified date and shall be subject to mandatory revision on the specified date.