

Sails of Hope (SHO) - Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy

1. Introduction

Sails of Hope (SHO) is a non-governmental organization based in Sudan committed to improving the lives and dignity of vulnerable individuals and communities. We recognize the importance of safeguarding the people we serve and the staff, volunteers, contractors, and partners who help deliver our programs. SHO is fully committed to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and holds itself to the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and respect for all individuals.

This Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy outlines our approach to preventing, addressing, and responding to SEA. It is designed to ensure that all individuals, especially those in vulnerable situations, are protected from any form of exploitation or abuse within our programs and operations.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- **Prevent SEA:** Establish clear expectations and strategies for preventing SEA in all activities conducted by SHO.
- **Define Responsibilities:** Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all personnel and stakeholders in preventing and addressing SEA.
- **Provide a Clear Framework:** Offer guidance for responding to SEA allegations, ensuring that victims/survivors receive appropriate protection and support.
- **Ensure Compliance with International Standards:** Align SHO's practices with the UN's PSEA guidelines, international humanitarian standards, and best practices.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- **All personnel:** Employees, volunteers, contractors, consultants, and any individual engaged with SHO in any capacity (including project partners, sub-contractors, and community-based staff).
- **All programs:** This includes all activities, projects, or initiatives implemented by SHO, whether in collaboration with other organizations, donors, or government entities.
- **All locations:** This policy applies to all SHO operations, both in Sudan and abroad, where SHO operates or is involved.

4. Definitions

- **Sexual Exploitation (SE):** The abuse of a position of power, trust, or authority for sexual purposes. This includes exploiting a person's vulnerability or unequal power dynamics for sexual gain.
- **Sexual Abuse (SA):** Any actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force, coercion, or unequal power dynamics.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or any other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive environment.
- **Survivor:** An individual who has experienced SEA. SHO uses the term "survivor" instead of "victim" to empower and affirm the dignity of the person.

5. Core Principles

Sails of Hope upholds the following principles:

- **Zero Tolerance:** SHO maintains a strict zero-tolerance policy toward any form of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment. Any instance of SEA will result in prompt, serious action.
- **Respect for Rights and Dignity:** Every individual has the right to be treated with respect, dignity, and fairness, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic status.
- **Accountability:** All personnel and partners associated with SHO are responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy. Any failure to comply with its terms will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination or legal action.
- **Confidentiality:** All information relating to SEA allegations and investigations will be handled confidentially to respect the privacy and dignity of survivors and those involved in the process.
- **Non-Retaliation:** SHO ensures that individuals who report SEA, or who cooperate in investigations, are not subject to retaliation. Survivors and whistleblowers will be protected against any form of negative consequences.
- **Survivor-Centered Approach:** SHO will prioritize the well-being of survivors, ensuring they have access to appropriate services (medical, psychological, legal, etc.) and support throughout the process.
- **Community Engagement and Awareness:** SHO will promote awareness of SEA and related protection issues among all stakeholders, including beneficiaries, staff, and community members.

6. Expected Standards of Conduct

All staff, volunteers, contractors, and partners must adhere to the following standards of conduct:

- **Professional Behavior:** Treat all individuals with respect, avoiding any behavior that could be perceived as exploitation or abuse.

- **Avoid Conflicts of Interest:** Staff and partners must not engage in any personal or professional relationships that could create a conflict of interest or an opportunity for exploitation.
- **Prohibition of SEA:** Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment are strictly prohibited in all forms. This includes not engaging in any transactional sexual relationships with beneficiaries or anyone under SHO's care.
- **Duty of Care:** A duty to safeguard and protect the individuals served by SHO. Staff must exercise their responsibilities with care, ensuring their actions do not harm, exploit, or abuse beneficiaries.
- **Respect for Boundaries:** All staff must respect professional and personal boundaries, avoiding any actions that could be construed as inappropriate or exploitative.

7. Prevention Strategies

SHO will employ the following strategies to prevent SEA:

- **Rigorous Recruitment and Screening:** All prospective staff, volunteers, and contractors will undergo thorough background checks, including vetting against databases that identify individuals with a history of SEA. References will be checked for previous SEA violations.
- **Mandatory Training:** All personnel, including new hires and partners, must undergo comprehensive training on PSEA, including prevention, reporting, and handling SEA cases. Ongoing refresher training will be provided to maintain awareness and accountability.
- **Code of Conduct:** A clear, written code of conduct will be implemented and signed by all staff and partners. This code will outline unacceptable behavior and the consequences of violating the policy.
- **Risk Mitigation Measures:** Regular assessments will be conducted to identify potential SEA risks in all project sites and programs. Mitigation measures will be put in place to minimize risks.
- **Community Engagement:** Educational initiatives will be undertaken with communities, including beneficiaries, to raise awareness about their rights, the consequences of SEA, and available reporting mechanisms.

8. Reporting and Responding to SEA

SHO commits to ensuring that survivors and witnesses of SEA can report incidents in a safe, confidential, and accessible manner. Key elements include:

- **Clear Reporting Channels:** Multiple, confidential, and accessible channels will be provided for individuals to report SEA (e.g., hotlines, email, anonymous reporting platforms).
- **Protection of Survivors:** Upon receipt of a report, SHO will take immediate steps to protect the survivor's safety and well-being, including referral to appropriate support services (medical, psychological, legal).

- **Investigation and Accountability:** All SEA reports will be taken seriously and investigated promptly. Investigations will be impartial, fair, and adhere to international standards. Individuals found to have committed SEA will face appropriate disciplinary measures, including possible termination, legal consequences, and exclusion from future employment or involvement with SHO.
- **Collaboration with Authorities:** SHO will cooperate with national authorities, law enforcement, and international agencies in the investigation and prosecution of SEA cases, as appropriate.
- **Documentation and Transparency:** All cases of SEA will be documented and handled transparently. Regular reporting will be provided to key stakeholders, donors, and relevant authorities, while maintaining confidentiality.

9. Accountability and Disciplinary Measures

- **Zero Tolerance Enforcement:** Violations of this policy will be met with immediate and decisive action, which could include dismissal, suspension, or legal action, depending on the severity of the offense.
- **Disciplinary Action:** All SHO personnel are held accountable for adhering to this policy. Disciplinary action will be taken for violations, including the potential for termination of employment or contracts.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

- **Regular Reviews:** This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. SHO will take feedback from staff, beneficiaries, and stakeholders into consideration during these reviews.
- **Ongoing Monitoring:** PSEA compliance will be regularly monitored, and necessary adjustments will be made to enhance prevention and response efforts.

11. Contact Information

For any questions, concerns, or to report SEA incidents, please contact:

- **PSEA Focal Point:** [Insert contact details]
- **Confidential Reporting Line:** [Insert contact details]
- **Email Address:** [Insert contact details]

12. Conclusion

Sails of Hope is committed to a robust, survivor-centered approach to prevent and address sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. By implementing this PSEA Policy, SHO upholds its responsibility to protect those we serve, create a culture of accountability, and foster a safe and dignified environment for all.