

ARSDO Afghanistan PSEA Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1. About ARSDO

Afghanistan Relief and Sustainable Development Organization (ARSDO) founded and registered with the ministry of economy Afghanistan in 2017 under the registration number of (4190).

Over Years, ARSDO has become an institution of continuous learning and develop a sound learning curve from our tireless experience in education, health, livelihoods and social networking. Which bring assurance in our integrated development work and provides quality at door steps of our primary actors. Similarly, we have developed an acumen in resolution of community issues.

ARSDO has adopted an integrated approach towards community development and over the years it has muster up its strengthen from community outreach. ARSDO has developed well-coordinated network among communities and Key stakeholders to bring quality work at grass root level and our primary actors enjoys the fruits of Integrated programme

1. Our Vision

Rights for All; A just & equitable society, where communities are prosperous and resilient.

2. Our Mission

To educate and strengthen communities for a better & decent living and be resilient enough to fight poverty.

1.2. Purpose of the PSEA Policy

ARSDO maintains a strict zero-tolerance stance towards sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). We are committed to ensuring that our staff, associates, partners, and any representatives involved in our work do not engage in any form of sexual exploitation or abuse. This policy is particularly focused on safeguarding vulnerable individuals, including adults, women, and children, who are at heightened risk.

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on maintaining a safe environment for all communities we serve. It delineates the roles and responsibilities of all ARSDO staff, associates, and partners in preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse. The policy includes specific definitions of prohibited behaviors and outlines the procedures for reporting and investigating any incidents. By adhering to these guidelines, ARSDO aims to uphold the highest standards of protection and integrity in our operations.

1.3. Accountability Statement

ARSDO is firmly committed to enforcing this policy and maintaining a zero-tolerance stance on any form of sexual exploitation and abuse. This PSEA policy applies to all ARSDO staff, associates, and partners, who are required to adhere to its provisions and understand the consequences of any breaches. ARSDO may, where necessary, enhance these standards in line with legal or local requirements. Compliance with this policy and the Code of Conduct will be confirmed through formal acknowledgment. Mandatory training on this policy is required for all ARSDO staff, associates, and partners. The Board of ARSDO holds ultimate responsibility for the implementation and enforcement of this policy. It is incumbent upon all representatives of ARSDO to report any concerns regarding sexual exploitation and abuse. ARSDO takes all concerns and

complaints seriously and will initiate a comprehensive investigation into any violations of this policy, with disciplinary and potentially legal actions taken as appropriate.

1.4. Framework Principles

Safeguarding

ARSDO is dedicated to protecting all community members from sexual exploitation and abuse, regardless of ability, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexuality, or culture. We uphold the principle that all safeguarding processes should be survivor-led whenever possible and appropriate, ensuring that survivors are central to the complaint process.

Shared Responsibility

Effective implementation and improvement of PSEA policies require collective responsibility from everyone at ARSDO. A lapse in adherence at any level reflects a failure across the organization. Each individual is accountable for contributing to a safe and supportive environment.

Effective Communication

ARSDO is committed to clear and accessible communication with all staff, associates, and partners. We strive to foster a positive culture where PSEA responsibilities are well-understood and effectively communicated in straightforward language.

Continuous Improvement

We emphasize ongoing assessment and feedback to enhance our policies and practices. This includes quarterly incident reviews, regular safeguarding audits, and periodic policy updates and refresher training to address emerging needs and lessons learned.

Dignity and Respect

ARSDO promotes a work environment where dignity and respect are paramount. We uphold a non-judgmental approach when addressing the concerns and complaints of survivors, ensuring that all individuals are treated with empathy and respect.

Zero Tolerance

ARSDO enforces a strict zero-tolerance policy towards any form of sexual exploitation and abuse. Any breach will be met with decisive action to maintain the highest standards of safeguarding.

Confidentiality

We are committed to maintaining confidentiality in all safeguarding matters. Information will only be shared outside the Safeguarding Committee when absolutely necessary to ensure the safety of the individuals involved.

2. PSEA Reporting Structure for ARSDO

2.1. Reporting Channels

Executive Director: Oversees overall PSEA enforcement. Reports of serious allegations should be directed to the Executive Director, who will coordinate investigations and necessary actions.

HR Head: Handles PSEA training and confidential staff-related concerns. Reports about staff or associate issues should be directed to HR.

Procurement Head: Ensures compliance with PSEA in procurement activities. Concerns involving suppliers or procurement processes should be reported to the Procurement Head.

Finance Head: Oversees financial transactions and compliance with PSEA. Financial concerns or misuse should be reported to the Finance Head.

2.2. Reporting Process

- a. **Hotline:** For immediate and confidential reporting, use the PSEA Hotline (Section 6)
- b. **Initial Report:** Reports can be made via the hotline, directly to the relevant Head, or escalated to the Executive Director if necessary.
- c. **Investigation:** The HR Head will coordinate investigations, with oversight from the Executive Director.
- d. **Action:** Based on the investigation, appropriate actions will be taken and implemented.
- e. **Follow-Up:** The Executive Director will ensure actions are effective and provide updates as needed.
- f. **Review:** Post-investigation, the policy and procedures will be reviewed for improvements.

This streamlined process ensures that all concerns are addressed promptly and effectively, reinforcing ARSDO's commitment to preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse.

3. Policy Implementation

This policy is designed to guide ARSDO staff through understanding sexual exploitation and abuse definitions, governance, and responsibilities. It includes procedures and resources for reporting complaints, the format for reporting, and the management of these complaints.

3.1. Governance

The Executive Director of ARSDO, together with the Management Team, holds ultimate responsibility for the PSEA policy and framework. They will receive summaries of reported incidents and follow-up actions during Executive Team meetings and Board meetings to ensure systematic management and oversight.

3.2. ARSDO's Obligations

ARSDO is committed to ensuring that no individual experiences sexual exploitation and abuse and will not tolerate such behavior from staff, associates, or partners. To uphold this commitment, ARSDO will:

- Foster a safe culture for both beneficiaries and staff.
- Address complaints and concerns promptly through the Safeguarding Committee, taking each complaint seriously.
- Educate staff, associates, and partners on how to file complaints.
- Maintain a zero-tolerance stance towards sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Build a culture of dignity, respect, and empowerment to encourage reporting.

- Inform staff that sexual exploitation and abuse are grounds for termination and potential legal action.
- Provide clear information on reporting complaints and investigation procedures.
- Ensure that all relevant parties have access to the PSEA policy and related safeguarding documents.

3.3. Staff Responsibility

All staff, associates, and partners must adhere to this policy and report any suspicions of sexual exploitation and abuse. They are required to sign the Code of Conduct and acknowledge that they have read and understood the policy.

3.4. Manager Responsibility

Managers and Directors are accountable for implementing this policy. They must support and develop systems that ensure all involved parties understand appropriate behavior, how to raise concerns, and the actions taken in response.

3.5. PSEA/GBV Focal Point

The designated PSEA/GBV Focal Point is responsible for:

- Monitoring and recording PSEA concerns.
- Ensuring timely referrals to relevant authorities.
- Updating PSEA training for all staff.
- Reviewing and updating the policy annually if necessary.
- Implementing the policy throughout the organization and providing PSEA and GBV training.
- Ensuring proper monitoring and recording procedures.

3.6. Executive Board

The Executive Board ensures the effective implementation of the policy and associated procedures, and that all individuals linked with ARSDO are supported and equipped to fulfill their responsibilities.

3.7. Confidentiality of Complaints

ARSDO is committed to protecting the confidentiality of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations to preserve investigation integrity and protect individuals from further harm or retaliation. Information obtained during investigations will not be disclosed except as legally required. Concerns regarding confidentiality will be addressed sensitively, and records will be kept confidential. Information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

4. PSEA Description and Commitments

At ARSDO, all staff, associates, and partners are required to adhere to the PSEA (Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) policy. This policy is designed to ensure that everyone involved in ARSDO's operations conducts themselves in a manner that protects beneficiaries and maintains the highest standards of ethical behavior. Below are the core commitments related to sexual exploitation and abuse that must be followed:

The following behavior are considered sexual misconduct and are strictly prohibited:

	Sexual exploitation (SE)	Sexual Abuse (SA)	Sexual Harassment (SH)
Who?	- Us + Beneficiary	- Us + Beneficiary	- Us + Us
What?	-Abuse of vulnerability, Differential power, or trust -victim' sexual activity generates benefits	-physical intrusion of a sexual nature -Use of force or coercion	-Unwelcome advance or conduct of sexual nature -Creates an intimidating environment or becomes a condition of employment
Example?	- Offering money, gifts, or a job in exchange for sex. - Withholding due services or blackmailing for sex. - Hiring prostitutes. - Threats of sexual exploitation	-Unwanted kissing, touching, grabbing or rubbing. -Threats of an unwanted sexual Act. -Raping or attempted rape. - Any Sexual activity with a child.	-Touching, kissing or speaking inappropriately to a colleague at work. -Attempted or actual sexual assault. -Raping or attempted rape.

Sexual Activity with Children and Vulnerable Adults: Engaging in any sexual activity with children (persons under 18) or vulnerable adults is strictly prohibited, regardless of local age of consent laws. A mistaken belief about the age of the child does not constitute a defense.

Child Marriage: Child marriage, defined as marriage to anyone under 18, is prohibited. Any staff, associate, or partner involved in such practices is in violation of the PSEA policy, as individuals under 18 cannot legally consent to marriage.

Sexual Activity with ARSDO Beneficiaries: Sexual activity with any beneficiary of ARSDO is prohibited due to inherent power imbalances. A beneficiary is defined as anyone receiving services or support from ARSDO or its partners.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment, including unwelcome advances or requests for sexual favors, is prohibited.

Sexual Violence: Any acts of sexual violence, including intercourse, sexual touching, and threats, are strictly forbidden.

Physical/Emotional Abuse: Physical and emotional abuse, as detailed in the Safeguarding Policy, is prohibited. This list may be updated, and any changes will be communicated by the Safeguarding Committee. Additional details can be found in the Safeguarding Policy.

Consequences: Violations of the PSEA policy will result in disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment or contract and/or referral to law enforcement authorities.

4.1. Communication and Training

ARSDO is committed to ensuring that all staff, associates, and partners are aware of and comply with the PSEA policy. This includes:

1. Providing targeted training for staff with specific responsibilities related to the policy and complaint handling.
2. Offering awareness-raising training for all staff, associates, and partners to ensure they understand how to report concerns.
3. Proactively communicating the zero-tolerance message.
4. Ensuring all staff are trained in the policy, including its definitions and reporting procedures.

4.2. PSEA Reporting Procedures

Detailed procedures for reporting incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse are outlined in the associated procedures document.

4.3. Failure to Report

The Code of Conduct mandates that all staff, associates, and partners report any PSEA concerns. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action.

4.4. Support for Survivors

Survivors will receive support regardless of the outcome of investigations, which may include specialist psychosocial counseling and access to other necessary support services.

5. Background Checks

At ARSDO, ensuring the safety and integrity of our operations is paramount. To uphold our commitment to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, ARSDO implements rigorous background checks for all partners, subcontractors, and employees. This section outlines the procedures and commitments associated with these background checks.

5.1. Employee Background Checks

Background checks are conducted on all potential employees before hiring. This includes verification of past employment, educational qualifications, and criminal record checks.

Process:

- Candidates will be required to provide relevant documentation and consent to background checks.
- Checks are conducted in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, ensuring that any findings are relevant to the role and the safety of the community.

Frequency:

- Initial checks are performed before hiring, with periodic reviews for ongoing employees as deemed necessary, especially when employees are promoted or assigned to new roles.

5.2. Partner and Subcontractor Background Checks

Background checks are mandatory for all partners and subcontractors to ensure they meet ARSDO's safeguarding standards.

Process:

- Partners and subcontractors must provide documentation and consent to background checks.
- ARSDO evaluates their policies and past performance, including any previous allegations or breaches related to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Evaluation:

- Assessments are based on the partner's or subcontractor's history, including legal compliance and adherence to safeguarding practices.
- Only partners and subcontractors who meet ARSDO's stringent criteria will be engaged.

5.3. Monitoring and Compliance

Regular monitoring and compliance checks are conducted to ensure that all parties continue to adhere to safeguarding standards throughout the duration of their engagement with ARSDO.

- Any issues or concerns identified during background checks will be addressed promptly. This includes taking necessary actions if any risks or violations are found.
- Records of background checks will be securely maintained to ensure transparency and accountability. Access to this information will be restricted to authorized personnel only.

5.4. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All background check information will be handled with the utmost confidentiality to protect the privacy of individuals involved.

Data Protection:

- ARSDO complies with data protection regulations to ensure that personal data collected during background checks is stored securely and used only for its intended purpose.

By implementing these background check procedures, ARSDO reinforces its commitment to safeguarding and maintaining a safe environment for all stakeholders.

5.5. Whistleblowing

ARSDO is committed to a transparent and supportive environment for reporting concerns related to sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Our whistleblowing policy ensures that all staff, associates, partners, and subcontractors can report issues confidentially and without fear of retaliation. Reports can be made via a confidential hotline, dedicated email address, or in person to designated PSEA focal points. We guarantee the protection of whistleblowers' identities and strictly prohibit retaliation against those who report in good faith. Each report will be acknowledged and investigated impartially, with appropriate actions taken based on the findings. Support, including counseling services, will be provided throughout the process, and all records will be securely maintained and reviewed regularly to uphold the effectiveness of the policy.

6. How to Raise a Formal Complaint or Report an Incident?

All staff and representatives who become aware of possible violations of this policy by ARSDO staff must report alleged prohibited conduct immediately through one of ARSDO's reporting channels:

- ARSDO PSEA Focal Point: Executive Director
- ARSDO's complaint mechanism email address & Phone number:
complaints@ARSDO.com

Phone: +93 730000000