

# POLICY ON THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE



## 1. OBJECTIVE OF THE POLICY

World Accord's (WA) mission is to cultivate communities that thrive. In pursuit of this mission, the organization carries out assistance programs and strives to build capacities, among disadvantaged communities, through forging partnerships.

In doing so, WA builds relationships based on the values of respect, solidarity, collaboration and respect. Yet it cannot be denied that there are power inequalities within this work, and WA is well aware of its duty to protect the populations with whom it works.

WA also strives to create safe workplaces and programs by providing an abuse-free environment.

The purpose of this policy is to combat harassment, exploitation and sexual abuse, including all forms of sexual misconduct.

## 2. THE ORGANIZATION'S COMMITMENTS

WA strongly confirms that it does not tolerate any form of harassment, exploitation or sexual abuse within the organization or any of the projects or programs it carries out.

WA is determined to provide harmonious work environments where collaboration, individual respect and the principles of gender equality take pride of place, where the staff, volunteers, partners, sub-contractors and consultants neither suffer nor commit abuse or misconduct.

WA commits to taking the appropriate measures to protect the integrity of its staff, volunteers, partners and the communities it supports.

We have a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to any form of harassment, exploitation or sexual abuse, and will take the appropriate corrective measures against any confirmed incidents.

WA, through its network, can provide, if these exist in the communities, access to psychological support and a safe, confidential space for victims and survivors.

## 3. APPLICATION

This policy applies to all of the organization's staff (including interns, and service providers) and to all its volunteers and partners. It aims to combat all exploitation and sexual abuse committed against the people targeted by WA's interventions, and to prevent any form of harassment or abuse of power within the organization, including during external activities with which WA is affiliated.

## 4. DEFINITIONS <sup>1</sup>

**Psychological harassment:** any vexatious behaviour in the form of repeated and hostile or unwanted conduct, verbal comments, actions or gestures, that affects a person's dignity or psychological or physical integrity and that results in a harmful work environment for them.

Vexatious behaviour is humiliating or abusive behaviour that violates a person's dignity or causes them torment. Vexatious behaviour refers to the effect on the recipient, regardless of the intention of the offending person.

A single serious incidence of such behaviour that has a lasting harmful effect on an employee may also constitute psychological harassment.

**Sexual harassment:** vexatious behaviour of a sexual nature.

This includes but is not limited to the following: advances, invitations, inappropriate requests or asking for favours; comments, insults, lewd jokes, inappropriate comments about a person's body or appearance; unnecessary physical contact, indecent looks or other inappropriate gestures; threats, implicit or explicit retaliation (refusal of a promotion, imposition of disciplinary measures, dismissal) or other injustices associated with a rejected request for sexual favours; promises of benefits or awards in exchange for sexual favours.

**Sexual exploitation:** any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

**Sexual abuse:** the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. Any sexual activity with a child<sup>2</sup> is considered sexual abuse.

**PSEA (Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse):** a term used by the United Nations and the nongovernmental organization (NGO) community that refers to the measures taken to protect vulnerable people from sexual exploitation and abuse committed by their own employees and any associated personnel.

## 5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### **Members of the Board of Directors and senior management**

- Must adhere to the ethical values and rules of WA and sign the Code of Conduct
- Are the custodians of this policy
- Ensure that this policy is distributed to all of the organization's stakeholders
- Commit to protecting victims/survivors and offer them appropriate support and assistance measures
- Support managers in prevention and in managing reports

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<sup>1</sup> Sources: Québec's *Act respecting labour standards* and contribution agreements with the Government of Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Persons under age 18

- Provide support and advice to managers in their interventions and in corrective and disciplinary measures
- Provide the human and financial resources necessary to ensure that the organization is following through on its commitments
- Determines which type of intervention to carry out (mediation or inquiry) when a report is made

#### **Managers**

- Must adhere to the ethical values and rules of WA and sign the Code of Conduct
- Ensure that the organization's values and ethics are transmitted to staff
- Make sure their staff are aware that each person is responsible for upholding a healthy, respectful working environment
- Stay vigilant and attentive so as to identify and act on risk factors
- Promptly react to any situation that comes to their attention and immediately report it in keeping with internal procedures
- Identify, in conjunction with the Director of Human Resources, corrective and/or disciplinary measures to apply
- Oversee the ongoing training of stakeholders
- Manage assistance programs
- Consult with specialized resources for support, as needed

#### **Employees and volunteers (including interns and service providers)**

- Must adhere to the ethical values and rules of WA and sign the Code of Conduct
- Demonstrate behaviour that is conducive to an environment free of harassment or any other form of exploitation or abuse
- Respect their colleagues and all types of people with whom they interact in their work
- Participate in cooperative activities (training, awareness raising, communities of practice) for the prevention of harassment, exploitation and abuse

#### **The designated person in charge of applying the policy in a country**

- Helps inform local staff (including interns and service providers), volunteers and partners of this policy
- Receives reports/complaints
- When necessary, designates a person to intervene locally, such as a mediator or an investigator
- Coordinates cooperative activities (training, awareness raising, communities of practice)

#### **Partner organizations**

- Must adhere to the ethical values and rules of WA and sign the Code of Conduct
- Contribute to the prevention of harassment, exploitation and sexual abuse, in cooperation and conjunction with WA
- Participate in cooperative activities (training, awareness raising, communities of practice) put in place by WA for the prevention of harassment, exploitation and abuse

## 6. REPORTING MECHANISMS

WA makes reporting and complaint mechanisms available to staff, volunteers and any person associated with a project or program, so they can inform the organization of any inappropriate behaviour or report any incidents of harassment, exploitation or sexual abuse.

- ✓ Written reports or complaints can be submitted directly to the Director of Human Resources - [HR@worldaccord.org](mailto:HR@worldaccord.org), including the details of the allegations, the name of any alleged victims, the name of the alleged perpetrator, a description of the incident(s) and the date(s) on which it or they occurred, and the names of any witnesses.
- ✓ A report/complaint can be made with a manager or a country representative who is responsible for applying this policy. They will gather the information listed above and send it to the Director of Human Resources - [HR@worldaccord.org](mailto:HR@worldaccord.org).
- ✓ Complaint mechanisms for beneficiary communities: two key persons per project will be designated (one within the community and the other within the project staff) to monitor and report potential cases of harassment, exploitation and sexual abuse. Community members can also, at their convenience, report cases directly to WA staff members, project leads, country directors and regional directors.

## 7. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. All reports/complaints will be treated with diligence and complete discretion.
2. Information about complaints processing remains confidential and is only used to determine any corrective measure that should be taken.
3. Persons who make use, in good faith, of the mechanisms at their disposal shall not be blamed in the event that the report proves to be unfounded.
4. Conversely, complaints that are deemed to be unfounded and made in bad faith will likely be considered as serious misconduct and may result in disciplinary action.
5. Healthy and respectful social interactions, and jokes that are well received without making the other person feel uncomfortable, do not constitute harassment.
6. Psychological harassment should not be confused with a personality conflict, or with the normal exercise of a manager's right to manage, such as assigning tasks, evaluating productivity, and applying disciplinary measures. If a manager has not acted in a way that is abusive or discriminatory, their actions do not constitute harassment.
7. Different cultural interpretations must not be an obstacle to proper handling of a report in a victim centred approach.
8. The organization will take all necessary means to protect and support victims/survivors and informants.
9. It maintains high standards for meticulous reference checks on staff and volunteers.

## 8. RESULTS OF A REPORT

When a report is made, the Director of Human Resources and Executive Director (unless the ED is implicated in the report) will assess the situation brought to their attention and determine which type of intervention is needed (mediation or inquiry).

Depending on the context and the nature of the allegations, a mediation process may be proposed. Once an inquiry has been launched, the persons involved or potential witnesses will be interviewed so that their version of the facts can be obtained. The alleged offender will be informed that an inquiry has been launched and will have the chance to give their own version as well. When the inquiry has been completed, the Director of Human Resources will work jointly with the involved director and/or the Executive Director, depending on the circumstances, to decide which actions or corrective measures to take, up to contract termination.

An external resource person may be asked to conduct the mediation or inquiry process in accordance with this policy.

## **9. SUPPORT MEASURES**

Specific measures will be taken to support any victim/survivor, depending on the circumstances. WA offers professional assistance and support to its staff and volunteers, as needed.

## **10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

The Executive Director will maintain a record of reports and will review it with WA's Board of Directors once a year.

*This policy meets the contractual obligations issued by Global Affairs Canada and adheres to the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) Leaders' Pledge on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct. [CCIC Leader's Pledge](#).*

Approved by the Board of Directors – December 23, 2020