

## **Forum of Federations Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**

*“The mission of the Forum is to strengthen inclusive and responsive governance, including pluralism and gender equality, in federal, decentralized and transitioning countries.”*

### **1. Background and Purpose**

As an international governance and development organization, placing human rights and dignity at the center of its work, committed to the wellbeing of all beneficiaries, particularly children, and to upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Forum of Federations (the Forum) recognizes its duty of care to all the people it works with.

Observing this duty, the Forum works hard to provide an environment free of discrimination and harassment, where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity, can contribute fully and have equal opportunities.<sup>1</sup> All people the Forum works with have the right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The organization is committed to actively preventing these types of misconduct. This extends to all Forum projects in all countries in which it works.

The Forum has a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of sexual misconduct. It ensures that all allegations concerning sexual misconduct are investigated and perpetrators held to account, including through dismissal and/or prosecution. The Forum will offer victims of sexual misconduct the support they need. Under this policy, resolution regarding concerns raised in relation to sexual misconduct will be reached and the outcome known within 30 days whenever possible.

This policy specifically refers to cases of sexual misconduct committed against beneficiaries of Forum projects, as these individuals are deemed to be at risk due to perceived or actual inequalities of power.

### **2. Scope**

- This policy applies to all Forum of Federations headquarters and country office employees, as well as board members, volunteers, interns, consultants, and affiliated personnel, such as the staff of partner organizations and individual and corporate contractors.

### **3. Definitions**

---

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the Forum of Federations Operational Policy Manual, 4.19.12.

### 3.1. Children

For the purpose of this policy, all persons under the age of 18 years are considered children, regardless of differing local legislations.

### 3.2. Vulnerable Persons

For the purpose of this policy, vulnerable persons are considered as persons who either identify themselves as unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation, or who are at a higher risk of being harmed or exploited due to: their gender; their mental or physical health; their ethnicity; their religious identity; their sexual orientation; their economic or social status; or disabilities. Persons who are survivors of disaster or conflicts are also considered vulnerable. Under this policy, vulnerable persons deserve the same level of protection as children.

### 3.3. Sexual Exploitation

For the purpose of this policy, the term “Sexual Exploitation” refers to 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.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.4. Sexual Abuse

For the purpose of this policy, the term “Sexual Abuse” refers to the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.5. Acronyms

For the purpose of this policy, “SEA” refers to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, whereas “PSEA” refers to protection thereof.

## 4. Core Principles<sup>4</sup>

All Forum of Federations employees and affiliated personnel are expected to comply with the following core principles. They reiterate existing obligations resulting from the Forum’s Code of Conduct and Canadian law. The principles detailed below are not exhaustive, and other behavior considered as SEA may also be grounds for disciplinary action.

---

<sup>2</sup> Definition taken from the UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13).

<sup>3</sup> Definition taken from the UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13).

<sup>4</sup> Principles taken from the UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13).

- (a) Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal.
- (b) Sexual activity with children is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.<sup>5</sup>
- (c) Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior, is prohibited.
- (d) Sexual relationships between Forum staff and beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of the Forum and are strongly discouraged.
- (e) Where a Forum staff member develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual exploitation or sexual abuse by a fellow worker, he or she must report such concerns via established reporting mechanisms.
- (f) Forum staff are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Managers at all levels have a particular responsibility to support and develop systems that maintain this environment.

## 5. Operating Standards and Responsibilities

### 5.1. All Forum of Federations Employees and Affiliated Personnel

#### General Responsibilities:

- All Forum employees and affiliated personnel must be particularly sensitive to cases of violation of the core principles, as beneficiaries of Forum projects, especially children and vulnerable persons, may be reluctant to report SEA due to perceived or actual power imbalances.
- All Forum employees and affiliated personnel are required to report to their supervisor or the PSEA Focal Point<sup>6</sup> when they have reason to believe that behavior that they consider SEA, or any other behavior that they believe violates standards of this policy, has occurred or is occurring. Reports can be filed anonymously.
- Forum employees and affiliated personnel must immediately disclose if they have been convicted of an offence that relates to SEA. This can be grounds for disciplinary action, even if the offence was not related to job duties. Employees and related personnel must disclose

<sup>5</sup> As defined in 3.1., all persons under the age of 18 are considered children.

<sup>6</sup> The PSEA Focal Point's contact details can be found at the end of this policy.

convictions that occurred before this policy came into effect, as well as any which occurred before they began working with or for the Forum.

## 5.2. Senior Managers, Country and Regional Directors, Supervisors and the PSEA Focal Point

### General Responsibilities:

- Senior Managers, Country and Regional Directors, Supervisors and the PSEA Focal Point are responsible for communicating the objectives of this policy, creating an environment that prevents SEA and taking appropriate measures to achieve this where necessary.
- Even in the absence of a formal report, Senior Managers, Country and Regional Directors, Supervisors and the PSEA Focal Point must act against all forms of SEA that they become aware of. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.
- A high standard for vetting new staff will be applied with regard to potential sexual misconduct, including requesting references from former employers.

### PSEA Focal Point's Responsibilities:

- The PSEA Focal Point is responsible for taking all measures necessary to ensure that the standards of this policy are met.
- The PSEA Focal Point will identify themselves as the PSEA Focal Point to all Forum employees and affiliated personnel and answer all questions that may arise concerning PSEA.
- The PSEA Focal Point works towards establishing subsidiary PSEA Focal Points, e.g. country-specific, where necessary.
- The PSEA Focal Point establishes and maintains mechanisms to monitor and counter SEA.
- The PSEA Focal Point provides awareness-raising and PSEA training sessions for Forum and affiliated personnel annually and wherever and whenever they determine there is need.
- The PSEA Focal Point will document and report annually the number of alleged and confirmed cases of SEA, including the actions taken in addressing them, to the public and the board.
- The PSEA Focal Point regularly reports to Senior Management the measures taken in their capacity as PSEA Focal Point.
- The PSEA Focal Point conducts an annual review of the complaints mechanism for SEA and discusses findings with Senior Management.

### Responsibilities concerning allegations of SEA:

- When an allegation of SEA is made to either a supervisor or the PSEA Focal Point, they are required to assist the victim with filing a formal complaint, or if the allegation is made anonymously, file a formal complaint themselves. Following the submission of a formal complaint, a formal investigation will be initiated according to the complaint procedure detailed in the Forum Code of Conduct.<sup>7</sup>
- Senior Managers, Country and Regional Directors, Supervisors and the PSEA Focal Point are obliged to protect the complainant from the threat of retaliation by the alleged offender or any other party.

### 5.3. The Forum of Federations

#### General Responsibilities:

- The Forum of Federations will distribute this policy to all Forum employees and affiliated personnel (as defined in the scope of this policy) and obtain their signature. Furthermore, the Forum will include this policy in all future contracts with Forum employees and affiliated personnel.
- The Forum will distribute this policy to all partners and contractors and obtain their signature. The Forum will make clear that if they or their employees and affiliated personnel do not adhere to this policy, this will form grounds for termination of the agreement with that partner or contractor.
- The Forum will publish this policy on its website to ensure accountability and to guarantee that it is accessible to all potential victims of SEA.
- The Forum will communicate its stance on SEA and incident-reporting options to beneficiaries of the Forum's projects.
- The Forum will appoint one employee as PSEA Focal Point and support the PSEA Focal Point with the resources required to carry out the respective responsibilities.

#### Responsibilities concerning raised allegations of SEA:

- The Forum of Federations will inform Global Affairs Canada within 48 hours of the PSEA Focal Point becoming aware of credible allegations of SEA raised under the purview of international assistance activities funded by Global Affairs Canada.<sup>8</sup>
- The Forum will provide a contact person for the complainant of the complainant's preferred gender.

---

<sup>7</sup> Please refer to the Forum of Federations Operational Policy Manual, 4.19.8.

<sup>8</sup> Further information about what to report on and whom to report to can be found on Global Affairs Canada's website: [https://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_development-enjeux\\_developpement/sexual\\_exploitation-exploitation\\_sexuels/expectations-attentes.aspx?lang=eng](https://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/sexual_exploitation-exploitation_sexuels/expectations-attentes.aspx?lang=eng).

- During and after an investigation, the Forum will offer victims the financial, legal and medical support they might need.
- The Forum will not disclose the name of the complainant or the alleged offender to anyone, except for the purpose of investigating the complaint or taking disciplinary measures.
- When misconduct is found, training will be conducted for all staff on the prevention of and protection from SEA to prevent such events from recurring.

## 6. Associated Policies

The Forum of Federations Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse is complementary to all Forum of Federations and Country Office policies, particularly the Forum of Federations Operational Policy Manual including the Code of Conduct. Furthermore, it is complementary to all other policies of organizations that are within the scope of this policy.

### **PSEA Focal Point:**

Mr. Charles Cloutier  
 Chief Operating Officer  
 Forum of Federations  
 411-75 Albert Street, Ottawa ON, K1P 5E7  
 Tel: (613) 244-3360-202  
 Fax: (613) 244-3372  
 Email: [cloutier@forumfed.org](mailto:cloutier@forumfed.org)

Anonymous complaints can be sent to [complaints@forumfed.org](mailto:complaints@forumfed.org). Incoming emails are automatically stripped of all metadata. The emails are monitored by the PSEA Focal Point. Please make sure that no personal information is included in the actual email.

## --- Acknowledgement and Agreement ---

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Forum of Federations Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and that I have read it. I fully understand the provisions of the policy and I acknowledge and accept that my continued employment or engagement will be dependent upon my compliance with the principles and obligations set forth in the in the policy. I also understand that I have an obligation to prevent and respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

---

Date and Name

Signature

Forum of Federations Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Child Protection (PSEA)  
 Last updated and approved:  
 Effective from: