

Safeguarding Against Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse (SHEA), Child Abuse, and Child Neglect

South Saharan Social Development Organisation Safeguarding Policy: Addressing Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse (SHEA) Child Abuse, and Child Neglect

1. Purpose

This policy aims to create a safe and respectful environment, raise awareness, and provide mechanisms for reporting and responding to safeguarding concerns; and establish a framework that ensures the safety, well-being, and dignity of all individuals involved with South Saharan Social Development Organisation. South Saharan Social Development Organisation is committed to ensuring the safety, well-being, and dignity of all individuals engaged in its programs, projects, and partnerships.

2. Definitions

Agent - Any individual, including a director, an officer, or an independent contractor, authorized to act on behalf of an organization.

Beneficiary - Includes any direct person or entity who receives funds or other benefits including training or assistance as a result of the activities being implemented through the grant/subaward funded by USAID through Chemonics.

Best Interest of the child - Refers to the guiding principle that prioritizes the well-being, safety, and development of children in all decision-making and actions concerning them. It involves taking into account their rights and physical, emotional, and social needs.

Child - A person younger than 18 years of age regardless of age of majority in Nigeria.

Child abuse - Comprises any intentional or negligent action that causes harm to a child's physical, emotional, or psychological well-being. It includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect, all of which undermine a child's safety and development.

Child neglect - refers to failure to provide for a child's basic needs in the absence of the child's parent or guardian when the care of the child is associated with the award activities.

Emotional child abuse or ill-treatment - Any harm to the psychological well-being or emotional stability of a child caused by acts, threats of acts, or coercive tactics.

Employee - Any individual who is engaged in the performance of this award as a direct employee, consultant, or volunteer of the recipient or any sub-recipient.

Exploitation - constitutes any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, including for the purposes of profiting monetarily, socially, or politically. When carried out for a sexual purpose this constitutes sexual exploitation.

Physical child abuse - Any intentional acts or omission resulting in injury, pain, or suffering, visible or not, without necessarily causing harm, risk of harm to a child's health or welfare, or death.

Safeguarding - The responsibility of organizations to make sure their staff, operations, and programs do not harm beneficiaries or expose them to, sexual harassment, exploitation and physical or emotional abuse by staff and associated personnel. This encompasses safeguarding risks that may be caused by program design and implementation; as well as harm experienced by staff in the workplace.

Sexual harassment - Refers to unwelcome and inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. This includes advances, comments, or behaviors that compromise the dignity and well-being of individuals.

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 - An actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. When carried out against a child by an adult, such conduct is considered sexual abuse even in the absence of force or unequal or coercive conditions.

Survivor - An individual who is, or has been, sexually exploited or abused.

Survivor-centered approach - An approach in which the survivor's rights, wishes, safety, and well-being remain a priority in all matters and procedures.

Zero tolerance - Implies all allegations are assessed, investigated as needed, and appropriate action is taken.

3. Scope

Per the Mandatory Standard Provision entitled, "Safeguarding Against Exploitation, Sexual Abuse, Child Abuse, and Child Neglect", this document outlines the policies and procedures South Saharan Social Development Organisation has in place to prevent, detect, and respond to allegations of exploitation, sexual abuse, child abuse, and child neglect among all individuals involved in its operations and programs, including employees, agents, interns, sub-recipients, and others who come in contact with beneficiaries.

4. Commitment to Preventing, Mitigating, and Responding to Safeguarding Concerns, including SHEA, Child Abuse, and Child Neglect.

Safeguarding Requirements

Consistent with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Six core principles related to SHEA ([IASC Six Core Principles | IASC / PSEA \(interagencystandingcommittee.org\)](#))¹, South Saharan Social Development Organisation commits to promoting and maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all program participants and community members.

South Saharan Social Development Organisation will ensure that all South Saharan Social Development Organisation staff and associated personnel and collaborators adhere to the highest ethical standards in their interactions with project beneficiaries and maintain a culture of zero tolerance for SHEA, child abuse, and child neglect by prohibiting:

- All its employees, agents, interns, and other associated personnel or collaborators who come in contact with beneficiaries from engaging in, supporting, or advancing SHEA, child abuse, and child neglect.
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) regardless of the defined age of majority or age of consent in Nigeria and any misconceptions about the child's age.
- All forms of transactional exchanges, such as money, employment, goods, services, or assistance owed to beneficiaries, for sex or any other form of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behavior.

¹ Created by United Nations General Assembly [resolution 46/182](#) in 1991, the **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the longest-standing and highest-level humanitarian coordination forum** of the United Nations system. It brings together the executive heads of 19 organizations and consortia to formulate policy, set strategic priorities and mobilize resources in response to humanitarian crises.

Consistent with the Keeping Children Safe Standards, (www.keepingchildrensafe.global) South Saharan Social Development Organisation commits to preventing and responding appropriately to harm to children in all aspects of our activities, from recruitment and awareness to reporting mechanisms and child-friendly survivor support services. We will take action to promote the rights and well-being of all children, including:

- Ensuring that all staff and associated personnel are aware of this policy and their responsibility to uphold our commitment to child protection.
- Raise awareness among program participants, community members, including children about appropriate behaviors to expect from staff and how to report concerns.
- Incorporating child safeguarding into existing risk assessment processes, where appropriate; and mapping of local children services for referral, as needed.
- Seeking feedback from program participants and communities on the effectiveness of our actions to meet the standards and improvements needed.

5. SHEA Prevention Responsibilities

South Saharan Social Development Organisation is committed to:

- Ensuring adherence to this policy and taking immediate disciplinary action against any individual who violates the policy or intentionally ignores or fails to act upon allegations of SHEA, child abuse, child neglect, or other forms of harm. Employees or any individual who violates this policy may face disciplinary actions, including suspension, termination, or legal consequences.
- Implementing safe recruitment practices, including transparent screening, hiring, and referencing for subsequent employers.
- Raising awareness among staff on prevention and response to SHEA, child abuse, and child neglect.
- Ensuring that all staff and associated personnel or collaborators understand their responsibility to report any allegations, concerns or suspicions of SHEA, child abuse, and child neglect.
- Ensuring that all beneficiaries understand and know how to report allegations, concerns, or suspicions of SHEA by staff members or associated personnel and collaborators.
- Responding to safeguarding allegations, suspicions, or concerns received, using a “survivor-centered approach” that empowers survivors by prioritizing their safety, dignity, needs, wishes, and well-being.
- Prioritizing the “best interests of the child” in addressing child-focused safeguarding allegations
- Implementing measures to prevent unauthorized access, disclosure, or misuse of beneficiary information.

6. Survivor-centered approach

South Saharan Social Development Organisation is committed to providing support to survivors of SHEA and child abuse, including referrals to existing psychosocial and other assistance within their community.

7. Reporting and Response Mechanism

South Saharan Social Development Organisation has in place an appropriate context-friendly safe and confidential reporting mechanism for receiving safeguarding concerns which includes the following:

- All employees are required to report a violation or potential violation of this policy to Blessing Uchendu, blessing@southsaharan.org; +2348066813242 within 24 hours of witnessing or receiving information of the policy violation.
- Failure to report a policy violation can lead to disciplinary action.

South Saharan Social Development Organisation will take appropriate action in case of violation of the policy, including immediately notifying and cooperating with the donor or implementing partner on investigations if the violation occurs in the performance of a donor-funded award.

8. Compliance and Monitoring

South Saharan Social Development Organisation will ensure compliance with this policy through regular monitoring, site visits, and ongoing engagement with program participants and communities including the following:

- Assign one senior employee as the Safeguarding Officer or designate a Safeguarding Focal Point (SFP)
- Post policy one-pagers and/or other communication materials in the office(s) to raise awareness about the policy, particularly on staff expectations, reporting, mechanisms, etc.
- Update HR policies to incorporate safe recruitment practices, as needed
- Distribute policy-related-pamphlets to employees
- Integrate safeguarding questions as part of regular check-ins with staff and beneficiaries
- Review the safeguarding policy during staff meetings including how to report a potential violation

9. Publicly Available

The policies in this document are publicly available as follows:

- Incorporation into website www.southsaharan.org , if available, for easy online access by stakeholders and the public
- Posted in hard copy in a publicly facing part of **South Saharan Social Development Organisation's** office space
- Included as an annex to all employment agreements and agreements with volunteers, interns, etc.
- Dissemination of this policy and/or other relevant awareness materials in community outreach events to raise awareness and inform individuals on how to report concerns
- Public announcements, when applicable, including posting on community bulletin boards

10. Acknowledgement

By signing this document, South Saharan Social Development Organisation acknowledges, understands, and agrees to abide by the guidelines outlined in this policy; and commits to upholding the principles set forth, demonstrating compliance and contributing to a safe and respectful environment for all employees and beneficiaries.

Dr. Stanley Ilechukwu

Executive Director

Name (Print)

Title

November 3, 2024

Signature

Date