



Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Abuse and Exploitation

PSHEA Policy

PSHEA POLICY

POPI

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POPI Stands for Safety and Respect: A Commitment to Zero Tolerance

At POPI, we believe in fostering a safe and secure environment for everyone. Our guiding principle is a **zero-tolerance approach to Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse (PSHEA)**. This commitment extends to protecting both vulnerable communities and individuals, including children, regardless of background. We believe in equal protection for all, irrespective of gender, age, culture, abilities, beliefs, or race.

The PSHEA policy is more than just a document; it's a foundation for mutual respect and integrity within POPI and the communities we serve. We've meticulously designed it to empower our team members. It clearly outlines your role, responsibilities, and expected conduct regarding PSHEA. We trust you to uphold these standards consistently.

Our Commitment Extends Beyond Work Hours

This policy applies to everyone associated with POPI, both during and outside of working hours. It's a shared responsibility. Through our actions, we actively demonstrate our unwavering commitment to the well-being of all.

Thank you for your dedication to POPI's mission and for your continued support in maintaining a safe and respectful environment for everyone.



Murshed Alam Sarker

Executive Director, POPI
February 2024

1. Introduction: Policy Statement

POPI is dedicated to ensuring a safe workplace environment for all employees, free from any form of discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment. We uphold a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment and are committed to promptly investigating all reported incidents seriously. Any individual found guilty of sexually harassing another will face disciplinary action, potentially leading to dismissal.

All complaints of sexual harassment will be treated with respect and confidentiality, and no one will face retaliation for speaking up. We are committed to promoting gender equality and fostering a gender-sensitive workplace environment. Our goal is to ensure that all staff and individuals with whom we interact are treated with dignity and respect, free from discrimination, harassment, or abuse of any kind.

Protection from sexual harassment and the right to work with dignity are fundamental human rights recognized globally in various international treaties and labor standards, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the International Labour Organization's Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention.

Bangladesh, as a signatory to several international human rights treaties, including the ICESCR and CEDAW, is committed to upholding these rights. The country has also ratified key International Labour Organization conventions, including Convention No. 111. Additionally, Bangladesh has adopted the National Women Development Policy 2011, affirming its dedication to protecting and promoting women's rights and eliminating discrimination against them.

The Constitution of Bangladesh explicitly guarantees equality before the law, prohibits discrimination based on sex, and ensures equal rights for women in all spheres of public life. It also provides mechanisms to combat violence against women, including guidelines on sexual harassment prescribed by the High Court Division of the Supreme Court.

POPI practices zero tolerance against violence against women in all its forms, both within the organization and in its programs. We strive to create an environment where all staff and stakeholders can work and interact with each other respectfully and sensitively.

While anyone can experience sexual harassment, POPI recognizes that women are often more vulnerable to such victimization. Discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, are frequently accompanied by the abuse of power or authority. Victims may hesitate to report harassment, especially when it involves someone in a position of authority, fearing reprisal.

POPI is committed to implementing preventive and remedial measures to address workplace harassment. As part of this effort, we have developed this policy to empower staff and stakeholders to safeguard their sexual rights, report incidents, and seek redress in cases of harassment in the workplace.

2. Target Audience

This policy is relevant to every individual associated with POPI, whether directly as an employee or in any other capacity representing our organization. This includes employees, board members, directors, coordinators, managers, officers, agency workers, seconded workers, community mobilizers, volunteers, interns, agents, contractors, external consultants, third-party representatives, suppliers, and business partners. The policy applies at all times, regardless of whether individuals are working or not, every day of the year.

3. Purpose

The purpose of the POPI PSHEA policy is to ensure that all POPI employees and affiliated personnel make ethical decisions both professionally and personally, thereby safeguarding everyone against Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse (SHEA) by POPI staff and related individuals. This policy extends protection to women, men, girls, boys, persons with disabilities, and older individuals with whom POPI interacts. By adhering to the POPI PSHEA Policy, all staff and representatives will have clear guidelines for expected behaviour. POPI emphasizes its dedication to PSHEA, ensuring the organization's protection through the implementation of this policy. While recognizing that no document can offer absolute protection, mandatory adherence aims to mitigate risks.

4. Scope

This is a comprehensive organizational policy that extends to all personnel associated with POPI, including Board members, advisors, employees, community mobilizers, interns, volunteers, consultants, and contractors, regardless of their location. POPI will collaborate with partners who share the same commitments outlined in this policy, offering support to ensure its implementation within the framework of their respective organizational, cultural, and legislative contexts. The following behaviours are defined as gross misconduct and are strictly prohibited:

- Sexual exploitation: Taking advantage of individuals through coercion, manipulation, or abuse for sexual purposes.
- Sexual abuse: Engaging in non-consensual sexual acts or subjecting individuals to unwanted sexual advances, coercion, or threats.
- Sexual activities with minors (under 18 years old): Engaging in any form of sexual activity with individuals who are under the legal age of consent.
- Sexual activities with sex workers: Engaging in sexual activities with individuals who engage in sex work, regardless of consent.
- Non-contact or online sexual exploitation and abuse: Using online platforms or technology to sexually exploit or abuse individuals.
- Sexual harassment: Subjecting individuals to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates a hostile or intimidating work environment.

5. Goal

The aim of the PSHEA policy is to demonstrate POPI's dedication to preventing and safeguarding individuals from SHEA. This encompasses harm stemming from:

- The behaviour of individuals affiliated with POPI and its partners.
- The planning and execution of programs and activities supported or sponsored by POPI.

This PSHEA policy outlines expectations and obligations for POPI staff to mitigate and minimize the risk of SHEA, and to address any incidents of SHEA that may arise in connection with POPI's activities or personnel.

6. Consequences of Misconduct

Instances of SHEA perpetrated by POPI employees and affiliated personnel are considered severe misconduct and may result in termination or dismissal from employment. If a POPI employee or affiliated personnel becomes aware of or suspects SHEA by a colleague, whether within the same organization or not, they must report their concerns through the designated reporting channels.

7. PSHEA Framework

The PSHEA policy and practices are geared towards eradicating Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse within the realms of development, humanitarian work, and advocacy, involving both POPI personnel and other stakeholders. It ensures that any allegations of SHEA are promptly and appropriately addressed.

7.1 Prevention

POPI's main goal is to ensure that no such reprehensible acts occur in any shape or form. The following outlines the preventive measures:

7.1.1 Safe Recruitment

POPI is committed to recruiting staff, volunteers, and representatives safely. Recruitment processes include thorough background checks and addressing Safeguarding and equality requirements.

7.1.2 SHEA relation training and awareness raising

All POPI employees and related personnel are required to undergo formal induction upon recruitment and periodic refresher trainings on various aspects of PSHEA. These trainings cover, at a minimum, the following:

- Definition of SHEA
- Prohibition of SHEA

Required actions for employees and related personnel, such as promptly reporting allegations and referring survivors for support.

Furthermore, POPI is dedicated to incorporating PSHEA messaging into its ongoing internal and external communications to enhance awareness.

7.1.3 PSHEA/Safeguarding Focal Point(s)

The Executive Director of POPI appoints a PSHEA Focal Point at the Head Office, as well as PSHEA Focal Points in various project and field offices. These individuals are tasked with monitoring compliance with the policy, receiving complaints, conducting investigations, and assisting POPI Management in responding to investigation reports. Additionally, the focal points will oversee the induction of newly recruited staff/volunteers and provide regular orientation to ongoing staff/volunteers, in collaboration with POPI Management and Field/Project Offices.

7.1.4 Work Culture

Every POPI employee and affiliated personnel must establish and uphold an environment that prevents SHEA while facilitating the implementation of this policy. POPI Management, as well as Managers/Coordinators across all levels, bear a specific responsibility to foster and enhance systems that sustain such an environment.

7.2 Reporting

POPI has established secure, confidential, and easily accessible complaint mechanisms and procedures for personnel, beneficiaries, and communities, including children, to report allegations of SHEA. Additionally, POPI is committed to ensuring that partners and beneficiaries are informed about these provisions. Mandatory reporting serves to underscore the gravity of the issue, emphasizing that PSHEA is a fundamental aspect of POPI's work. Any allegations of SHEA or other violations of this policy must be promptly reported to the relevant authorities at the POPI Head Office in Dhaka. All parties involved must ensure confidentiality and the safety of those making the claims.

POPI has established dedicated channels for reporting complaints, including an email address (complain@popibd.org) and a mobile number (+88 0171 33 88 606), which are managed by the PSHEA focal point at POPI Head Office in Dhaka. POPI encourages individuals to file complaints promptly after an incident occurs. Complaints must be submitted within **6 months** of the incident to ensure a thorough and efficient investigation and to prevent distortions of evidence.

7.3 Confidentiality

POPI is committed to safeguarding the confidentiality of SHEA allegations to the fullest extent possible. This is crucial to maintain the integrity of the investigation and prevent any potential embarrassment, discrimination, harassment, or retaliation. Any confidential or sensitive information obtained by staff members or related personnel during an investigation will not be disclosed to others unless mandated by Bangladeshi law. Any concerns individuals may have regarding the confidentiality of information they provide will be handled with utmost sensitivity, and information will not be disclosed to others unless absolutely necessary.

7.4 Investigation

POPI has established a comprehensive process for investigating allegations of SHEA. This process ensures that all allegations are promptly and professionally investigated, either in accordance with POPI's Whistleblowing and Complaints Mechanism or by referring cases to the relevant investigative body if the perpetrator is associated with another entity. Investigations are conducted using appropriate interviewing techniques, especially when involving children. External professional investigators will be engaged as needed. POPI is committed to providing survivors with comprehensive support and protection, including necessary medical, psychological, and rehabilitation assistance, covered by the organization's expenses.

7.4.1 POPI's Sexual Harassment Complaint and Redress Committee

Committee Composition:

- The Committee consists of three members, with **at least one being female**.
- The Committee elects a Convener and a Member Secretary during its first meeting.

Purpose of the Committee:

- **Receive and Investigate Complaints:** The Committee receives sexual harassment complaints, conducts investigations, and recommends appropriate actions based on POPI's policies and relevant laws.
- **Ensure Fair Process:** The Committee follows established procedures for receiving and investigating complaints. This includes hearing arguments from both parties and requesting relevant documents or witnesses.
- **Confidentiality and Independence:** The Committee prioritizes confidentiality, impartiality, and independence in its work. Information about cases and identities of parties remain confidential unless legally required or when both parties waive confidentiality.

7.4.2 How to File a Complaint:

- Complaints can be filed in writing (email or letter) or verbally (in person or over phone) directly with the Convener.
- Anonymous complaints are not accepted.
- Complaints should be filed within 30 working days of the alleged incident.

7.4.3 Investigation Process:

- Upon receiving a complaint, the Committee gathers information from both parties, witnesses, and examines evidence.
- The Committee prioritizes a respectful and sensitive environment when recording the complainant's testimony.
- The Committee aims to complete the investigation within 30 working days, with an extension possible to a maximum of 60 working days.

7.4.4 Outcomes and Appeals:

- The Committee prepares a report with findings, analysis, and recommended actions. Decisions are based on the majority vote of the committee.
- Complaints against the Executive Director are reported directly to the Governing Bodies.

- The Executive Director or Governing Body communicates the outcome and decision to both parties.
- If dissatisfied, the complainant may appeal to the Executive Director or Governing Body.

7.4.5 Additional Considerations:

- False Complaints: Filing a malicious complaint may lead to disciplinary action.
- Withdrawal of Complaint: The complainant may withdraw a complaint in writing, but the investigation can continue if evidence supports it.
- Expert Assistance: In specific cases, the Committee can co-opt experts or outsource investigations.

7.6 Disciplinary Actions:

Depending on the severity of the offense, staff found guilty of sexual harassment may face disciplinary actions including:

- Letter of Warning
- Deduction of Salary
- Termination
- Dismissal

7.7 Complaints Against Non-POPI Personnel:

Complaints against non-POPI personnel will be brought to their employer's attention. Depending on the severity, they may also be blacklisted from future collaboration with POPI.

7.8 Post Investigation

If an investigation confirms allegations of SHEA, disciplinary actions will be taken promptly. In cases where SHEA is substantiated, POPI will generally terminate the employment of the staff member or affiliated personnel, following a thorough analysis of the specific circumstances, with a particular focus on applying the "do no harm" principles to assess the impact on the survivor's situation. If, upon thorough investigation, there is credible evidence supporting allegations of SHEA, the case may be referred to national authorities for criminal prosecution after conducting a "do no harm" analysis to ensure the protection of the survivor.

7.9 Survivor Assistance

POPI offers support to survivors and victims, including specialist psycho-social counselling, access to Employee Assistance Programs, and other appropriate support options. Survivors and victims can choose whether to avail themselves of these support services.

8 Policy Implementation

To ensure that POPI does not engage individuals who pose an unacceptable risk of SHEA to staff or communities, the following measures will be implemented:

- Incorporating POPI's commitment to Safeguarding (including PSHEA & Child Safeguarding) into position descriptions, recruitment advertisements, and tender documents. These documents, along with other related materials such as the Employee Code of Conduct (CoC) and Child Safeguarding Policy, will be readily available to applicants.
- Providing education and training to personnel on this policy by conducting Safeguarding (including PSHEA and Child Safeguarding) training for staff and volunteers within one year of their commencement, along with refresher training at least annually. The training sessions may be conducted internally or externally and may vary based on the risk profile of their role.
- Collaborating with partners for PSHEA by working together to establish a shared understanding of expectations regarding PSHEA and by developing or enhancing policies and procedures that promote PSHEA. Additionally, including clauses related to PSHEA in all partnership agreements and contracts will be ensured.

9. Whistle Blowing

POPI maintains all complains/whistleblowing with full confidentiality.

Hotline number is 0171 33 88 606.

10 PSHEA Responsibilities

The responsibilities within POPI are outlined as follows:

The POPI Board of Trustees:

- Approves and adopts this policy.
- Supports POPI Management in fostering a strong safeguarding culture.
- Ensures POPI Management implements and reviews the PSHEA policy.

POPI Management led by the Executive Director:

- Designates authority to a delegated director responsible for implementing, monitoring, and reviewing the policy.
- Ensures staff and related personnel understand the policy.
- Takes immediate corrective action upon becoming aware of any issues.
- Organizes training and refresher courses on PSHEA.
- Tracks compliance and addresses challenges in implementing the policy, fostering continuous learning on PSHEA.
- Provides channels for staff and related personnel to raise concerns.
- Ensures recommendations from investigation reports are implemented.
- Regularly reports progress and status of PSHEA initiatives to the POPI Board.

The PSHEA/Safeguarding Focal Point:

- Raises awareness of PSHEA throughout POPI.
- Coordinates, supports, and advises on policy development and implementation.

- Organizes staff and volunteer training in PSHEA.
- Monitors compliance with this and related policies and reports to management.

The Complaints Focal Point:

- Receives and manages complaints, reports, or incidents of SHEA or policy non-compliance.
- Coordinates investigation teams when necessary.
- Collaborates with the PSHEA/Safeguarding Focal Point when required.

All Staff and Personnel:

- Understand and comply with the policy.
- Report any non-compliance with the policy.
- Understand, comply with, and promote the POPI Employee Code of Conduct.
- Report any suspected or actual incidents of SHEA to POPI.

11. Policy Review

Every Three years the policy will be reviewed. However, in exceptional circumstances the policy might be reviewed at some point.

Annex 01

Glossaries

- Board: All members of the POPI Bangladesh Board of Trustees.
- Management: The Executive Director, the Programs Director, the Community Action Coordinators, and the Officer Manager/Accountant (or those acting in these roles).
- Partner: Entities with whom POPI has formal agreements and who implement projects with funding from POPI.
- Perpetrator: A person or group of persons who commit an act of SHEA or any other type of crime or offense.
- Survivor: A person who reports SHEA committed against themselves and is treated as a survivor for security purposes.
- Personnel: POPI employees, volunteers, community mobilizers, interns, contractors, and consultants.
- Safeguarding: Actions, policies, and procedures that create and maintain a culture of safe and protective environments for all, including paid and volunteer staff, contractors, partners, and the communities served by POPI.
- Beneficiaries of Assistance: Individuals who receive assistance as part of emergency relief, development aid, or advocacy support through assistance programs. This includes members of affected populations such as refugees, other vulnerable individuals, and host community members.