

Safeguard Policy: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)



ARS-Bangladesh

Head Office:

ARS- Bangladesh Bhaban House#
230, Kismot Noapara Uposhohor,
Jashore-7400, Bangladesh.
Phone: +8802 477760330
E-mail: info@arsbd.org

Dhaka Office:

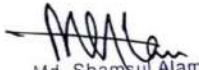
Lake View, Flat # 3B, House# 38
Road# 04, Shamoli, Dhaka-1207.
Phone: +88 02 223314100
E-mail: ed@arsbd.org
development@arsbd.org

ICT Institute & Training Center:

ARS- Bangladesh Complex
Zoghati, Jashore Sadar
Jashore-7400.
Phone: +88 01855 962727
Email: training@arsbd.org

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Md. Shamsul Alam
Executive Director
ARS-Bangladesh



1. Introduction

ARS-Bangladesh is dedicated to fostering development and humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh with the utmost integrity and accountability. Recognizing the profound impact of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) on individuals and communities, ARS-Bangladesh is committed to preventing and addressing SEA in all its operations. This comprehensive policy aims to safeguard beneficiaries, staff, volunteers, and all associated individuals from SEA, aligning with international standards and best practices.

2. Scope

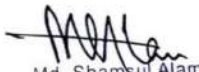
This policy applies to all ARS-Bangladesh employees, volunteers, consultants, service provider, partners, and any other individuals engaged in activities under the organization's umbrella. It extends to all programs, operations, and interactions with beneficiaries, ensuring that all individuals are protected from SEA.

3. Definitions

- a) **Sexual Exploitation:** Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes. This includes, but is not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
- b) **Sexual Abuse:** The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. This encompasses any act of a sexual nature inflicted on someone without their consent or in circumstances where they cannot freely give consent.

4. Guiding Principles

- a) **Zero Tolerance:** ARS-Bangladesh maintains a zero-tolerance stance towards all forms of SEA. Any violation of this policy will result in strict disciplinary action, including potential termination and legal proceedings.
- b) **Respect and Dignity:** All individuals interacting with ARS-Bangladesh have the right to be treated with respect and dignity. This principle underpins our commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment.
- c) **Confidentiality:** All reports and investigations of SEA will be managed with strict confidentiality to protect the privacy and security of all parties involved.
- d) **Accountability:** ARS-Bangladesh commits to thorough investigations of all SEA allegations and to taking appropriate action against perpetrators.


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- f) **Survivor-Centered Approach:** Support and care for survivors of SEA are paramount. The organization ensures that survivors receive appropriate medical, psychological, and legal support.

5. Preventative Measures

a) Recruitment and Screening

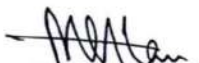
- **Thorough Background Checks:** All prospective employees, volunteers, and partners undergo rigorous background checks, including reference verification and criminal record assessments, to prevent individuals with a history of SEA from joining the organization.
- **Behavioral Interviewing:** Incorporate questions designed to gauge candidates' attitudes towards SEA and their commitment to safeguarding principles during the recruitment process.
- **Probation Periods:** Implement probationary periods for new hires, during which their conduct and adherence to safeguarding policies are closely monitored.

b) Training and Awareness

- **Mandatory Training:** Provide mandatory PSEA training for all staff, volunteers, and partners upon induction and at regular intervals. This training covers the definitions of SEA, the organization's policies, reporting mechanisms, and survivor support procedures.
- **Continuous Education:** Organize regular workshops, seminars, and refresher courses to keep everyone updated on the latest PSEA practices and international standards.
- **Resource Materials:** Develop and distribute comprehensive materials, such as handbooks and brochures, detailing PSEA policies and procedures.

c) Code of Conduct

- **Explicit Prohibition of SEA:** The ARS-Bangladesh Code of Conduct explicitly prohibits any form of SEA. All employees, volunteers, and partners must sign and adhere to this code.
- **Regular Reviews:** Regularly review and update the Code of Conduct to ensure it remains relevant and effective in preventing SEA.
- **Visible Commitment:** Display the Code of Conduct prominently in all ARS-Bangladesh offices and project sites.


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6. Reporting Mechanisms

a) Internal Reporting

- **Multiple Channels:** Establish various confidential reporting channels, including hotlines, emails, and in-person reporting options, to accommodate different comfort levels and circumstances.
- **Designated Focal Points:** Assign trained PSEA focal points at all levels of the organization to receive and manage SEA reports.
- **Clear Procedures:** Clearly communicate reporting procedures to all staff, volunteers, partners, and beneficiaries.

b) Anonymous Reporting

- **Protection of Identity:** Provide mechanisms for anonymous reporting to protect the identity of reporters and encourage more individuals to come forward.
- **Non-Retaliation:** Strictly enforce a non-retaliation policy to ensure that individuals who report SEA in good faith are protected from any form of retaliation or adverse action.

c) Whistleblower Protection

- **Legal Safeguards:** Implement legal safeguards to protect whistleblowers from retaliation. This includes job security, confidentiality, and protection from harassment.
- **Support Systems:** Provide support systems, including counseling and legal advice, for whistleblowers who face retaliation.

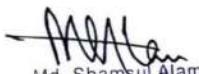
7. Response Procedures

a) Immediate Safety

- **Survivor-Centered Response:** Prioritize the safety and well-being of the survivor immediately upon receiving an SEA report. This includes removing the alleged perpetrator from contact with the survivor and providing immediate medical and psychological support.
- **Safe Spaces:** Establish safe spaces where survivors can receive care and support confidentially.

b) Investigation

- **Independent and Impartial:** Conduct independent and impartial investigations into all SEA allegations. Ensure that investigators are trained in handling SEA cases sensitively and effectively.


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- **Timely Action:** Ensure investigations are conducted promptly to minimize further harm and distress to the survivor.
- **Evidence Preservation:** Implement procedures to preserve evidence while maintaining the confidentiality and dignity of the survivor.

a) Disciplinary Action

- **Proportionate Measures:** Apply disciplinary measures proportionate to the severity of the SEA violation. This may include warnings, suspension, termination of employment, or referral to legal authorities.
- **Transparent Processes:** Ensure transparency in the disciplinary process while maintaining confidentiality to protect all parties involved.

b) Legal Action

- **Collaboration with Authorities:** Cooperate fully with law enforcement and judicial authorities in cases where criminal conduct is identified.
- **Legal Support for Survivors:** Provide survivors with access to legal advice and support to navigate the judicial process.

8. Support for Survivors

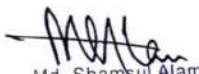
a) Medical Assistance

- **Immediate Care:** Ensure that survivors receive immediate medical care, including treatment for injuries and access to sexual health services.
- **Long-Term Health Services:** Facilitate long-term health services, including follow-up medical care and support for any ongoing health issues resulting from the abuse.

b) Counseling and Support Services

- **Psychological Support:** Provide access to professional psychological counseling and mental health support tailored to the needs of the survivor.
- **Social Support Networks:** Facilitate the creation of support networks, including peer support groups and community resources, to assist survivors in their recovery.

c) Legal Assistance


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 Executive Director
 ARS-Bangladesh



- **Access to Legal Aid:** Ensure survivors have access to legal aid and representation to pursue justice.
- **Support during Proceedings:** Offer support to survivors throughout legal proceedings, including accompaniment to court and assistance with legal documentation.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

a) Regular Reviews

- **Policy Audits:** Conduct regular audits of PSEA policies and procedures to assess their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement feedback mechanisms, including surveys and focus groups, to gather input from staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries on PSEA practices.

b) Impact Assessments

- **Community Impact:** Assess the impact of PSEA initiatives on the communities served by ARS-Bangladesh, ensuring that the policies contribute to a safer and more supportive environment.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Use findings from audits and impact assessments to continuously improve PSEA policies and practices.

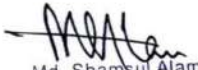
10. Roles and Responsibilities

a) Management

- **Policy Implementation:** Ensure the comprehensive implementation and enforcement of the PSEA policy across the organization.
- **Resource Allocation:** Allocate sufficient resources, including financial and human resources, to support PSEA initiatives.

b) PSEA Focal Points

- **Training and Support:** Train and support PSEA focal points to effectively manage SEA reports and oversee the implementation of PSEA measures.


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 Executive Director
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- **Monitoring and Reporting:** Monitor the adherence to PSEA policies and report regularly to senior management on their effectiveness.

c) All Staff and Associates

- **Adherence to Policy:** Adhere strictly to the PSEA policy and report any concerns or incidents of SEA.
- **Ongoing Training:** Participate in ongoing PSEA training and education to stay informed about best practices and organizational expectations.

11. Communication and Dissemination

a) Policy Access

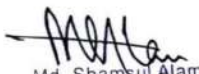
- **Wide Distribution:** Make the PSEA policy accessible to all employees, volunteers, partners, and beneficiaries. This includes digital and physical copies in multiple languages.
- **Regular Updates:** Regularly update and disseminate the policy to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of any changes or new procedures.

b) Community Engagement

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct awareness campaigns in the communities served by ARS-Bangladesh to inform beneficiaries about their rights and the organization's stance on SEA.
- **Feedback Channels:** Establish channels for community members to provide feedback on PSEA practices and report any concerns or incidents.


12. Conclusion

ARS-Bangladesh is unwavering in its commitment to creating a safe environment free from sexual exploitation and abuse. By implementing this comprehensive policy, the organization aims to uphold the rights and dignity of all individuals, ensuring a protective and respectful atmosphere within its operations and the communities it serves. Continuous monitoring, training, and community engagement are integral to maintaining this commitment and fostering an environment where everyone feels safe and respected.


 Md. Shamsul Alam
 Executive Director
 ARS-Bangladesh



Approved by:



Md. Shamsul Alam
Executive Director
Date: 25.09.2020

