**POLICY: PREVENTION OF** **SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE**

Overview

RECIPROCITAS is a Canadian international development organization focused on encouraging the creation of local Mutual Aid groups, raising and broadening the skills level of the Mutual Aid Group members, and increasing civic engagement, solidarity, and reciprocity among citizens who are living in poverty and social exclusions conditions.

We are committed to providing financial participation incentive to self-help groups with a view to building and sustaining civic engagement, solidarity, and reciprocity among vulnerable citizens. We oppose all forms of sexual violence and any abuse of power regardless of age, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or ethnic origin.

We do not tolerate any form of sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, or sexual a abuse from directors, employees, volunteers, consultants, partners, or any other representatives delivering or associated with the delivery of our programs.

We are committed to responding and preventing sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and ensuring that effective action takes place when such things take place.

We are committed to supporting survivors and improving safeguarding capacity and reporting.

Purpose

This policy establishes RECIPROCITAS's approach to preventing and addressing sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse. It is anchored in the U.N. Secretary-General's bulletin on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and is purported to establish and support our commitment to preventing and ensuring effective action when violations occur.

Scope

This policy applies without exception to all RECIPROCITAS employees, volunteers, consultants, directors, partners, mutual aid group members, mutual aid group facilitators, or other representatives associated with delivering our programs during and outside regular working hours. This policy applies in all places except in countries where it contravenes local legislation; in such a case, local legislation prevails. RECIPROCITAS policy always applies if it is stricter than local legislation.

Definition

RECIPROCITAS adopts and follows the U.N. definitions as follows.

* 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.
* Sexual abuse refers to an actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.
* Sexual activity with children (persons under 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Not knowing or mistaking the age of a child is not a defence.

RECIPROCITAS aligns its code of conduct with that of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's six core principles relating to sexual exploitation and abuse and the accompanying eight minimum operating standards.

1. "Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.
2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense.
3. Exchange money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behavior. This includes the exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
4. Any sexual relationship between those providing humanitarian assistance and protection and a person benefitting from such humanitarian aid and protection that involves improper use of rank or position is prohibited. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.
5. Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, they must report such problems via established agency reporting mechanisms.
6. Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment."

Policy

RECIPROCITAS will not tolerate behavior that jeopardizes the security of employees or the organization or brings either into disrepute. It follows, therefore, that employees, volunteers, consultants, partners, mutual aid group members, mutual aid group facilitators, anyone representing RECIPROCITAS should have:

* No sexual contact with children under the age of 18 (mistaken belief of age being no defense)
* No transactional sexual contact with RECIPROCITAS beneficiaries, clients, or staff of RECIPROCITAS partners. Employees, mutual aid group members and facilitators are obligated to report all people or all incidents that they believe contravene it.

RECIPROCITAS managers and corporate leaders must ensure that allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse are investigated, and appropriate disciplinary measures are taken.

RECIPROCITAS also has a duty to provide appropriate assistance to staff members victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Responsibilities

Directors, employees, volunteers and anyone who participate in the delivery of RECIPROCITAS programs have the duty to report incidences of sexual exploitation and abuse being perpetrated by anyone within RECIPROCITAS. Managers, in particular, are responsible for creating and maintaining an environment in which employees, volunteers, and consultants know what RECIPROCITAS expects with what pertains to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Mutual aid group members and facilitators, in particular, are responsible for creating and maintaining an environment in which employees, volunteers, and consultants know what RECIPROCITAS expects from them and feel able to report any suspicious or inappropriate behavior.

Partners

RECIPROCITAS is clear that any partnerships with other organizations for the delivery of its programs are based on mutual respect of its overarching principles, values and beliefs, which are reciprocity, solidarity, integrity and respect.

When RECIPROCITAS employees assess partner capacity to carry out projects should refer and apply this policy on sexual exploitation and abuse to evaluate the partner's ability to meet our requirements in upholding this policy and the RECIPROCITAS Code of Conduct.

Reporting

Anyone has the right to complain about the behavior of those associated with RECIPROCITAS and its programs, including any inappropriate behavior of other employees or volunteers. Any manager who suspects inappropriate behavior should seek advice from their direct supervisor immediately.

Complaints from people external to RECIPROCITAS will be dealt with through the most senior local mutual aid group facilitator, with support from the supervising director at headquarters. We recommend that complaints be made within three months of an incident taking place. We recognize that this may not always be possible or likely with allegations of such a sensitive nature. An investigation can go ahead no matter how long ago an incident occurred and whether the alleged victim wishes to take an active part. (How to Report Guidelines are included as a reference below).

Investigations

RECIPROCITAS will investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving its staff, volunteers, consultants, and partners in a timely and professional manner and will engage experienced investigators or secure investigative expertise as appropriate if needed. Investigations are an internal administrative process that may or may not involve the police or judiciary. Investigations are carried out so that RECIPROCITAS can have the best information possible on which to base its decisions concerning conduct and consequences thereof.

RECIPROCITAS may alert the appropriate authorities if, following an investigation, it is possible that:

* A crime has taken place;
* Confidentiality can be ensured;
* The victim agrees; and
* Those associated with the case will not be subject to further abuse, disrespect, or violence.

RECIPROCITAS reserves the right to act or not to act on any information provided. The organization is not required to disclose its response or the actions resulting from any information provided or reported. The safety of participants and colleagues will prevail. The intentional misreporting of information is subject to disciplinary action.

Victim Assistance

RECIPROCITAS will pursue investigations and take appropriate disciplinary procedures. In addition, victims will receive immediate support as necessary, in line with the wishes and needs of the victim and to levels appropriate locally (and to a level deemed acceptable to appropriate professional staff).

Consequences

Employees who contravene RECIPROCITAS's clearly stated expectations of their sexual conduct will be subject to disciplinary action that may result in dismissal. Volunteers will have their relationship with RECIPROCITAS terminated. Consultants who contravene our expectations will have their contract ended.

Partners must disclose to RECIPROCITAS if their employees contravene the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation policy and the expectations expressed in partnership documentation and must conduct appropriate investigations. Failure to do so may result in the cooperation being withdrawn, and their relationship with RECIPROCITAS may be terminated. In addition, as outlined above (in Investigations), the appropriate authorities, including the police or judiciary, may be involved under certain circumstances.

Training and Learning

RECIPROCITAS will ensure awareness of our policy and our Code of Conduct during orientation for all new and existing staff. Additional training will be implemented as appropriate or as policies are updated.

RECIPROCITAS will keep a record of incident reports from which trends in behavior, investigation outcomes, and problems will be regularly analyzed. Regular reporting of incidents to the Human Resources representative is obligatory. In addition, a regular report of incidents will go to RECIPROCITAS's Executive Director.

**Related Reference Documents**

Force on Prevention and Response to Sexual exploitation and abuse.

1. Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.

2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) 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.

3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behavior, is prohibited. This includes the exchange of assistance that is due to clients [beneficiaries].

4. Sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.

5. Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, s/he must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.

6. Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their codes of conduct. Managers at all levels have a particular responsibility to support and develop systems that maintain this environment.

How to Report Guidelines

If you have decided to make a report, we ask that you provide your name and contact information so that we may better assess the allegations and follow-up with you in addressing your concerns. If you choose not to provide your name or contact information, you may file your report anonymously, but note that anonymous reports are suspect as they have greater potential for abuse and may be subject to legal limitations. Please be sure to include the following information with your complaint:

• All facts describing the alleged event, issue, or matter;

• The name and title of each person involved;

• Dates, times, frequency, and locations;

• Facts relevant to urgency; and

• Documentation, witnesses, or other evidence available to support the allegation, including any laws or policies believed to be breached.

You can use the 5 W's to help remember what to report: Who, What, When, Where, Why Please keep in mind that those who initially read your complaint or investigators may not be familiar with your local context or local laws, so as much detail as you are able to give is helpful. Where to Report RECIPROCITAS encourages all staff members to first speak to their manager or local human resources representative when they have concerns about a policy violation or misconduct. This is typically the best method for addressing problems and allows the appropriate management to take action.

For suspected or alleged sexual exploitation or abuse, the staff is required to report to the most senior local employee or assigned headquarter Program Manager. In addition, all employees who receive such a complaint must notify the H.Q. supervising director as soon as possible for guidance and next steps.

In exceptional cases where a person has been discouraged from reporting to their local manager or may fear for their job or well-being, the ethics@RECIPROCITAS.ngo email is available to bypass those normal channels confidentially. The Executive Director will process all emails sent to this address at RECIPROCITAS's offices in Gatineau, Canada.

Suppose the person reporting to you is at risk of immediate harm, danger or threat as a result of RECIPROCITAS staff or programs. In that case, you should work to find an immediate safety solution for the person reporting. First, contact the senior local RECIPROCITAS employee. As soon as possible, this information must be reported to the Executive Director.