

# WaterAid's Policy Statement on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Assault and Harassment.

October 2019

## Document control

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## Version control

Date	Version	Reason for change	Author

# WaterAid's Policy Statement on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Assault and Harassment.

## Global template for members

At WaterAid we are committed to the safeguarding and wellbeing of all individuals, including the people in communities in which we work, staff, volunteers, contractors, and partners. WaterAid **will not** tolerate its employees, volunteers, consultants, partners or any other representatives associated with the delivery of its work engaging in, or being subjected to, ***any form of sexual harassment, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.***

We believe all people have the right to live their lives free from sexual violence and harassment. We recognise that there are unequal power dynamics across the organisation and in relation to those we serve, and that we face an ***inherent risk*** of some staff exploiting their position of power for personal gain. Everything that we do at WaterAid is guided by our values.

We are committed to investing in Country level ownership of Safeguarding and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Assault and Harassment. We recognise that this means we need to ensure staff understand these principles and their implications and empower staff at all levels to translate the substantive meaning of this policy statement, our commitments and its obligations into language and processes that teams understand, trust and own.

## We commit to:

### 1. Principle 1: Zero tolerance of inaction

- 1.1 Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment are never acceptable. WaterAid recognises that achieving a significant reduction in SEAH is a long-term endeavour. Zero tolerance is not the same as zero incidents. Reports of incidents may increase as organisations improve safeguards. Increasing reports may indicate growing awareness of SEAH and changing attitudes, with

victims/survivors feeling more comfortable to report and organisations more likely to take action. The reporting of incidents and responses is an indicator that the risk of SEAH is being managed appropriately

For this Policy Statement, WaterAid defines zero tolerance as acting on every allegation in a fair and reasonable way with due regard for procedural fairness.

## **2. Principle 2: Strong leadership accelerates culture change**

2.1 Strong leadership is essential for accelerating the pace of change. Leaders set organisational culture. WaterAid expects leaders to set clear expectations and model respectful behaviour in their interactions at work. This will support communities, survivors and whistleblowers to feel safe, report concerns and be assured their allegations are taken seriously. Strong leaders address Sexual Exploitation, Assault and Harassment by taking measures to improve diversity and inclusion. Leaders should encourage scrutiny of their own behaviour and that of senior management.

## **3. Principle 3: Survivor needs are prioritised**

3.1 Action to address SEAH should be underpinned by a “do no harm” approach prioritising the rights, needs, and wishes of the survivor, while ensuring procedural fairness to all parties. This approach:

- treats the survivor with dignity and respect
- involves the /survivor in decision making
- provides the survivor with comprehensive information
- protects privacy and confidentiality
- does not discriminate based on gender, age, race/ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, or other characteristics
- considers the need for counselling and health services to assist the survivor with their recovery<sup>1</sup>.

## **4. Principle 4: Gender inequality and other power imbalances are addressed**

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<sup>1</sup> UN Women, 2011, *Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls: Survivor Centred Approach*, <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/652-survivor-centred-approach.html>

## Procedure

- 4.1 Available data indicates that the majority of SEAH victims/survivors are female and the majority of perpetrators are male<sup>2</sup>. However, there are also other power imbalances at play. Inequalities based on the distinctions of worker/beneficiary; ability/disability; ethnic and Indigenous status; religion; gender identity and sexual orientation; age; health and poverty, can also result in SEAH. The intersection of gender with other forms of inequality can further increase the likelihood of SEAH occurring. Engagement with intended beneficiaries should be based on respect for diversity, promotion of gender equality and social inclusion, accountability, and a strong “do no harm” focus.
- 4.2 To deliver this commitment WaterAid provides the following policies and guidance to staff, volunteers and partners alongside designed safeguarding and child protection training.
- Global Code of Conduct
  - Global procedure for reporting malpractice and breaches to the Global Code of Conduct
  - Global Standard on Child Safeguarding
  - Global Child Protection Reporting Procedures
  - Vulnerable Supporters Policy

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<sup>2</sup> Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, 2018, *Shaping the Path: Independent Review into the Practice and Response of ACFID Members in the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct*, pp.47-60.