

Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH)

1. Introduction

Anglican Overseas Aid (AOA) is committed to protecting the dignity, safety and human rights of all people affected by its work. AOA has an obligation to prevent misconduct and harm to children and adults. AOA advocates and strongly fosters a culture of awareness, prevention, and response that is empowering to vulnerable persons affected by sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH).

2. Purpose and Scope of the application

This policy applies to all Board directors, committee members, employees, contractors, consultants, volunteers, interns, partners and project team members, supporters and prospective supporters visiting AOA programs, and officers of AOA (collectively, "AOA People"). All AOA People are expected to uphold and promote the organisation's values, display behaviour and reflect attitudes that nurture a strong safeguarding culture.

The purpose of the PSEAH policy is to:

- Protect all AOA People as well as community members involved in AOA's work from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.
- State and affirm AOA's commitment to protecting and responding to SEAH through development and humanitarian work and all internal policies, procedures and operations.
- Ensure AOA's Board and senior leaders lead by example, driving behaviours and attitudes that enhance safeguarding.

3. International and National Frameworks

- *The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct*
- *Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995*
- *United Nations Secretary-General's Bulletin, "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse" ST/SGB/2003/13 (9 October 2003)*
- *BOND - 12 Commitments to PSEA*
- *IASC Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA*
- *Core Humanitarian Standard*

4. Definitions

- **Fraternisation:** Any relationship that involves, or appears to involve, partiality, preferential treatment or improper use of rank or position including but not limited to voluntary sexual behaviour. It could include sexual behaviour not amounting to intercourse, a close and emotional relationship involving public displays of affection or private intimacy and the public expression of intimate relations.
- **Protection.** Measures taken to protect vulnerable people from sexual exploitation and abuse by their own staff and associated personnel.¹
- **Transactional sex.** The exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours.
- **Safeguarding.** The responsibility that organisations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programs do no harm to children and vulnerable adults, and that they do not expose them to the risk of harm or abuse. PSEAH and child protection come under this umbrella term.
- **Sexual abuse.** The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. It covers sexual offences, including but not limited to: attempted rape (which includes attempts to force someone to perform oral sex); and sexual assault (which includes non-consensual kissing and

unwelcome touching of a sexual nature). All sexual activity with someone under the age of consent is considered to be sexual abuse.¹

- **Sexual exploitation.** Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes. It includes profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from sexual exploitation of another.
- **Sexual harassment.** A person sexually harasses another person if the person makes an unwelcome sexual advance or an unwelcome request for sexual favours or engages in other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, in circumstances in which a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment can take various forms. It can be obvious or indirect, physical or verbal, repeated or one-off and perpetrated by any person of any gender towards any person of any gender. Sexual harassment can be perpetrated against project participants, community members, citizens, as well as staff and personnel.
- **Victim/survivor.** A person who is, or has been, sexually exploited, harassed or abused.
- **Whistle-blower.** A type of complainant, not the survivor, who is making a report of SEAH.²

5. Guiding Principles

- **Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH).** AOA has a commitment to zero tolerance for acts of SEAH and for inaction to prevent, report or respond to SEAH.
- **Promote inclusion and equity and recognise diversity.** AOA will ensure all actions and decisions are inclusive and equitable, recognising that people may be at increased risk of SEAH due to age, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, displacement, or other factors. Efforts to address barriers to participation, protection, reporting and support, such as language, safety, discrimination and accessibility will be embedded into our practice.
- **Reporting incidents is mandatory.** AOA is committed to act on every allegation in a just and reasonable way with due regard for procedural fairness. Reporting all SEAH concerns is mandatory and must be done immediately (within 24 hours). Reporting and response mechanisms will be clear, accessible and confidential. Reporting mechanisms will ensure that those who raise concerns are protected and that concerns are addressed effectively and in a timely and appropriate manner.
- **Prioritise Prevention.** Investment in the prevention of SEAH, creating safe environments in all contexts, both in the physical environment and online. Actions to prevent SEAH and promote safety are embedded in policies, programs, recruitment, staff training and daily operations to minimise risks.
- **Victim- Survivor approach.** A “do no harm” approach, prioritising the safety, rights, needs, and wishes of the victim-survivor while ensuring procedural fairness to all parties. This approach treats victim-survivors with dignity and respect, keeps them informed, protects their confidentiality and involves them in decision-making. Responses to incidents will be trauma-informed and enable access to support services.
- **Sector minimum standards.** Staying up to date with sector minimum standards as they relate to PSEAH and reviewing their policies and procedures regularly.
- **Adopt an empowering and participatory approach.** Using and strengthening local mechanisms, including their partner mechanisms, for prevention and response to SEAH to meet minimum standards. This participatory approach builds trust, increases relevance and promotes shared responsibility for safeguarding. People in communities, especially women, girls, and other groups in vulnerable situations, play a vital role in safeguarding efforts. AOA will consult these stakeholders when assessing SEAH risk and in developing effective, culturally relevant measures to prevent SEAH.
- **Embed safeguarding into organisational culture and leadership.** The prevention of SEAH is embedded in governance, leadership and organisational culture with clear accountability, leadership commitment, investment of resources and continuous review and improvement of policies and practices.

6. Implementation

6.1 Risk-based approach

SEAH can occur in workplaces and communities in all sectors and countries. AOA will adopt a risk-based approach within all our work that is proportionate to risk but will, at a minimum, apply the Essential Standards in Australia and overseas. The table below provides guidance on risk assessment.

Level of Risk	Examples of activities	Applicable DFAT standards ¹
Very low risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-off delivery of goods or services in a low-risk setting Remote desk-based policy advice or writing 	None or possibly Essential Standards if in development or humanitarian settings
Low to medium risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at public events e.g. food service, delivery of goods Provision of group training, attendance at meetings 	Essential Standards
High Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of programs in development and humanitarian activities. Activities where partners may be in a position of trust, influence, supervision, or authority Infrastructure or construction activities, including WASH 	Comprehensive Standards

AOA recognises that SEAH risks could be increased based on contextual factors. Safeguarding risk assessments will therefore also include an evaluation of factors, including but not limited to:

- The inherent risks of the location
- High risk activities, e.g. male-dominated construction projects, humanitarian or disaster response, cultures where women/girls have very low status
- Interaction with individuals, especially women who are young adults, have a disability, are of an ethnic, indigenous, religious or sexual minority, are experiencing poverty, are sex workers, are part of families impacted by disasters, are displaced, refugees, migrants or asylum seekers, are part of female headed households, are victims/survivors of trafficking and/or other forms of sexual and gender- based violence, are accessing residential/shelter services
- Access to personal information. E.g. one-to-one contact or online contact, sensitive health information • The organisational capability of the partner

6.2 Accountability and culture

- AOA acknowledges the intersecting vulnerabilities that perpetuate the abuse and exploitation of children, women and persons with a disability in particular and the different approaches to safeguarding required for these vulnerable groups.
- AOA will be transparent about its activities. AOA will monitor progress and will demonstrate continuous improvements in safeguarding practices.
- AOA will work with all parties, partners and communities with the aim of eliminating attitudes that permit or excuse sexual misconduct both internally and in programmatic activities.
- AOA People commit to building an environment that aims to prevent SEAH and promotes the implementation of the AOA Code of Conduct (CoC). Managers have a particular responsibility to affirm this environment.
- All AOA People are required to sign the AOA Code of Conduct
- Policy non-compliance and/or breach of the CoC is a serious matter that may give rise to disciplinary action, including suspension, dismissal or legal action. Sexual exploitation and abuse by any party constitutes an act of gross misconduct and is therefore grounds for termination of employment. Any AOA People under investigation may be suspended or stood down until the investigation is completed.
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of local definitions or local customary understandings of the age of majority or age of consent. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense.
- All parties commit to obtain informed consent from children and their care giver/guardian before photographing or filming a child.
- AOA prohibits all forms of transactional sex for all personnel, while on and off duty. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited.

- All forms of sexual harassment, discrimination and victimisation are not tolerated. AOA People are encouraged to report any forms of such behaviour that they are subject to or witness.

6.2 Partnership agreements

An equivalent of the AOA CoC will be agreed upon and signed by each AOA partner organisation, containing a specific statement about child protection, PSEAH and incident reporting. AOA partners are required to develop their own PSEAH policy that meets the requirements of Essential or Comprehensive standards (in accordance with risk assessment). This may be a modified version of AOA's policy if needed.

6.3 Safeguarding Focal Point

- A staff member will be a dedicated focal point responsible for further developing and implementing this PSEAH policy and related procedures and activities across AOA.
- The focal point is responsible for initiating, overseeing and coordinating PSEAH activities for joint program design, and key joint awareness-raising initiatives such as training.

6.4 Community-based complaints mechanisms

- Safe and confidential community-based complaints mechanisms will be developed by AOA and partners and implemented in communities.

6.5 Recruitment

- AOA will follow HR 2 Recruitment Policy to recruit, select and appoint new staff.
- Prior to appointment background screening checks will be conducted which include two verbal reference checks, police checks for each country in which the applicant has lived for 12 months or longer over the past 5 years, and for the country/s of citizenship, working with children or relevant vulnerable persons check. In high-risks contexts additional measures will consist of targeted questions about child and adult safeguarding at all stages of recruitment and onboarding, and include ongoing monitoring of staff behaviour.
- All new appointments must sign the CoC before signing their contract or taking up a position with AOA.
- Employment contracts will prohibit fraternisation (as defined below) while on field deployment and engaged in the delivery of AOA business.
- AOA will collaborate within and beyond our sector to improve employment practices, including background checking, to minimise opportunities for perpetrators to gain access to our programs and to reduce their ability to move between organisations.

6.6 Performance management and review

- Performance management processes include an individual's adherence to the PSEAH policy and AOA CoC, including adoption of acceptable standards of behaviour.

6.7 Training

- Basic PSEAH training will be conducted annually, with all AOA employees required to participate. Comprehensive training will be provided in contexts assessed as high risk.
- PSEAH training will be conducted every 2 years for all Board members.
- Training during induction and prior to deployment on the first field visit is mandatory.
- AOA will work with partners to contextualise training for their location and provide partners with access to safeguarding training annually, in accordance with their risk profile.

6.8 Program Design and Implementation

- AOA commits to mainstreaming protection and safeguarding in a gender-sensitive way throughout the project cycle and to develop 'specialised' activities, where required.
- Inherent SEAH risks, due to the delivery of project activities and partners' systems, controls and capacity to mitigate those risks are assessed and inform project risk assessments. In collaboration with partners, AOA will

develop contextual risk assessments, including identifying SEAH related risks, classifying inherent risks and developing mitigation strategies to reduce or remove SEAH risks. Risk assessments and mitigation strategies are subject to ongoing review, adaptation and effective risk management strategies.

- AOA undertakes policy audits of implementing partners' PSEAH policies and practices, to ensure policies and codes of conduct meet DFAT PSEAH minimum standards, maintaining a continuous reflection and learning practice.
- Periodic assessments of AOA's own and partners' PSEAH practices are also undertaken. The collaborative process is a systematic assessment of PSEAH culture, practice, and the quality of policy implementation.
- All work undertaken as part of the Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO) consortium will follow the CAN DO Standard Operating Procedure including PSEAH obligations.

6.9 Reporting

It is mandatory for all AOA People to immediately (within 24 hours) report concerns, suspicions or allegations of PSEAH by anyone within the scope of this policy in connection with official duties or business of AOA. Alleged victims'/survivors' safety and wellbeing is paramount, and their information will be treated professionally and sensitively.

AOA is committed to ensuring that reporting options are well-publicised and accessible for people of different ages, abilities, identities, and contexts. AOA will work with partners to support the implementation of reporting mechanisms that are physically accessible, culturally safe and age-appropriate.

In Australia, reports should be made verbally or in writing to either the AOA CEO, AOA Board Chair, the Safeguarding Focal Point, or for personnel working at the AOA office, reports can be placed in the AOA Safeguarding Letter Box. Note the Safeguarding Letter Box or mail options can allow the reporter to remain anonymous to AOA.

Overseas reports should be made in writing or via phone to either the AOA Head of International Program, AOA CEO or AOA Board Chair. Note mail and phone options can allow the reporter to remain anonymous to AOA. AOA will ensure the partner's complaints handling system is activated upon receipt of the allegation or report, with regular updates from the partner on the investigation process and outcome to ensure consistency with AOA's due processes and complaint handling principles.

Key Contacts

- Phone: Toll free number (within Australia): 1800 249 880, telephone: (03) 9495 6100 (or +61 3 9495 6100 if outside Australia) and ask for the Safeguarding Focal Point, AOA CEO or AOA Board Chair
- Physical address: 146 Hoddle Street Abbotsford VIC 3067 Australia
- Postal address: Anglican Overseas Aid, PO Box 1339, Fitzroy North VIC 3068 Australia
- AOA's dedicated safeguarding email address: complaints@anglicanoverseasaid.org.au
- Online: <https://anglicanoverseasaid.org.au/>

The GOV 8A Complaints and Incident Reporting Form can be accessed to make a report. The purpose of the Report Form is to report all complaints to assess and determine the next course of action. An anonymous complaint will be accepted, however AOA encourages complainants to disclose their identity in order for a thorough investigation to be undertaken.

Alternatively, reports can be made in accordance with the HR 6 Whistleblowing Policy which is available on AOA's staff intranet and published on the AOA website.

DFAT Reporting Requirements

- For DFAT funded programs, Mandatory and immediate (within 24 hours of becoming aware of an alleged incident) reporting by all personnel within the scope of this policy of any suspected, alleged or known incident of SEAH. This includes any alleged incident that poses a significant reputational risk to AOA.
- All allegations of SEAH incidents should be made using the [DFAT SEAH Incident Notification Form](#) and emailed to seah.reports@dfat.gov.au
- All allegations concerning any form of abuse, exploitation or harassment by AOA People in Australia or during field visits, will trigger an investigation. Personnel under investigation may be suspended or transferred to other duties during an investigation. All investigations will be undertaken by an independent, external investigator. In-

country reports (not related to AOA People) will trigger a risk assessment facilitated by AOA and the partner. The DFAT Post may be contacted for advice on preferred investigation options. This could be the police (if safe) or in-country consultants. AOA will ensure the partner's complaints handling system is activated upon receipt of the allegation or report, with regular updates from the partner on the investigation process and outcome to ensure consistency with AOA's due processes and complaint handling principles. Any person making such a report should NOT:

- Notify the person to whom the claim or allegation relates,
- Seek to independently investigate or substantiate the claim prior to making any notification.

The emphasis is on immediate and mandatory reporting.

If the alleged victim/survivor states within their complaint, that dissemination of the report's contents be restricted, their wishes will be respected subject to the limitations or disclosures outlined above.

Where safe to do so, all alleged SEAH incidents that involve a criminal aspect should be reported to the relevant law enforcement channels. AOA in collaboration with partners will initiate a victim-centred assistance process relevant to the local context. The alleged victim/survivor's needs will be prioritised, including the consideration of referrals to mental and physical health services, where available.

6.10 Response to Reports

When there are concerns that a person is in immediate danger, AOA People in Australia should call the local police immediately. AOA People stationed overseas should contact either the AOA International Program Manager, AOA CEO or AOA Board Chair.

Should AOA receive information to suggest that a person has been harmed, or is at risk of harm, AOA will respond in a professional manner.

All AOA People must create and keep records of all complaints, concerns, safety incidents, disclosures, decisions, and actions taken in relation to a PSEAH complaint or disclosure. Access to these records will be limited to maintain confidentiality and protect the identities of victim-survivors and alleged perpetrators.

AOA will appoint an investigator to investigate all alleged or actual SEAH incidents. AOA may also appoint an investigator to investigate any other breaches of this policy or related policies (e.g. the Code of Conduct).

Investigations will be trauma-informed and conducted in accordance with procedural fairness, ensuring that the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors are the priority.

AOA will cooperate with law enforcement and relevant authorities as required.

Disclosure of personal information will be no more than is necessary. It should be noted, however, that some level of disclosure may be required to afford natural justice to other persons, or to conduct an investigation, or to brief an external investigator, or to report criminal matters to law enforcement authorities, or for any other good reason, in the particular circumstances.

All incidents of SEAH will be reported to the Board, and Safeguarding is a standard agenda item for all meetings of the Development Committee (a sub-committee of the Board).

7. Review

This policy and related procedures will be reviewed no later than October 2028, by the CEO and program staff.