



# **COMMUNITY INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (COMINSUD)**

## **POLICY ON PREVENTION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE**





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### **1. Presentation of COMINSUD**

Community Initiative for Sustainable Development (COMINSUD) is a development organization that works to empower communities towards achieving their development objectives with a vision of a responsive society where the principles and standards of good governance are respected and upheld for a sustainable human and environmental development. It is therefore an organization which seeks to reflect in its activities the ethical values of transparency, accessibility and selfless service for the improvement of livelihood of all people. In all its areas of intervention, COMINSUD serves beneficiaries and affected population with respect to their safety, dignity and rights. In this regard, COMINSUD promotes a zero-tolerance culture for sexual exploitation and abuse and is committed to prevent SEA as staff carry out activities in different projects in their various areas of intervention.

**1.1. COMINSUD Mission:** COMINSUD is a development organization that works to empower communities towards achieving their development goals.

**1.2 COMINSUD Vision:** A responsive society where the principles and standards of good governance are respected and upheld for sustainable human and environmental development.

#### **1.3 Objectives**

- To provide a forum for sharing and exchanging on global and regional contemporary developmental issues towards developing local strategies for action.
- To develop strategies for income generation towards reducing unemployment and poverty, and improving the living conditions of specific target groups.
- To increase the human production capacity by creating opportunities for efficient human resource development and management.
- To collaborate with other organizations carrying out related activities for collaboration, networking and technical exchange.
- To seek support from a wide spectrum of individual and organizations to fund projects identified.

#### **1.4. Strategic Orientation**

- a. Empowering Communities by influencing positive change of cultural and other practices, norms and engaging in grassroots empowerment for transformation
- b. Building Influence by carrying out lobbying, advocacy and being involved in relevant relationships
- c. Sustaining Vibrancy; Continuous learning, adapting to change, attracting and retaining talented and high performing people

- d. Maximizing Efficiency; Operating an effective project management system and structuring resource mobilisation

## **2. Key Definitions linked to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)**

**Sexual exploitation:** Sexual exploitation means 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:** Sexual abuse means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature which can occur, by force, under\*coercive conditions, or under unequal conditions.

**Sexual harassment:** Sexual harassment is any form of unwelcomed sexual behavior that is offensive, humiliating or intimidating which can create a hostile environment. It can include verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature, as well as offensive remarks related to a person's sex.

**Victim:** A victim is a person who is, or has been sexually exploited or abused by employees, any person acting on behalf of COMINSUD or other related personnel of COMINSUD's subcontractors

**Survivor:** A survivor is a person who has undergone one or more multiple forms of gender based violence and is able to carry on with life

**Complainant:** someone who reports an allegation of SEA following the procedure set by the organization. It can be the victim or any other person who is a witness or is aware of what happened

**Perpetrator:** A person who commits the act of SEA to another using their power or position while taking advantage of the victim's vulnerability.

## **3. International Commitment and Core Principles of PSEA that must be respected in COMINSUD**

COMINSUD has made efforts to create and maintain a safe environment, free from SEA, and is taking appropriate measures for this purpose in the communities where it operates, through a robust PSEA framework, including prevention and response measures.

This PSEA framework, affirms COMINSUD commitment to the UN Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13) and to achieving full, ongoing implementation of the IASC Six Core Principles relating to SEA

COMINSUD is committed to promoting and holding its policy on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) following the six core principles of SEA adopted by the **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)** Working group on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. These include:

1. Sexual exploitation and abuse constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for sanction or termination of employment.
2. Sexual activity with children under the age of 18 years is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally as a child under the age of 18 cannot make decisions and there is lack of consent. There is a lack of defence if the perpetrator claims not to know the age of the victim.
3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating or exploitative behavior is prohibited.

4. Sexual relationships between humanitarian workers (those providing assistance and protection) and beneficiaries (persons benefiting from such assistance and protection) that involves the misuse of power or position are prohibited.
5. Where a COMINSUD staff develops any concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker must be reported through the appropriate reporting channel set up by COMINSUD
6. Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promote the implementation of their code of conduct. Leadership has the responsibility to and develop systems which maintain this environment.

#### **4. Policy Objective**

The policy enhances a zero-tolerance for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) for all COMINSUD employees and related personnel and that roles, responsibilities and expected standards of conduct in relation to SEA are known within COMINSUD. Strengthens and maintains a safe environment, free from SEA, by taking appropriate measures for this purpose, internally and in the communities where COMINSUD operates, through robust prevention and response work.

#### **5. Policy statement**

SEA violates recognized international legal norms and standards which are unacceptable behaviors and prohibited conduct for all humanitarian workers.

COMINSUD knows and understand that SEA constitutes extreme forms of abuse of power that take advantage of the vulnerability of the people COMINSUD is meant to serve within the affected population. Employees therefore, are expected to uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct at all times and to provide humanitarian assistance and services in a manner that respects and fosters the rights of beneficiaries and other members of the local communities. COMINSUD has put in place a wide range of **measures** to prevent and respond to SEA

#### **6. Scope of the policy**

COMINSUD's policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse sets out its approach to prevent and respond to SEA. The policy applies to all staff, including management and board members, Field staff, community mobilisers, volunteers, interns and sub-contractors and any person acting on behalf of COMINSUD carrying out an activity both on-and off-duty.



## **7. COMINSUD's framework on the promotion of PSEA**

### **7.1. Prevention Actions**

#### **7.1.1. Awareness Raising**

Raise awareness on SEA to affected population, especially in all areas of intervention, to staff, community mobilisers, volunteers, interns, sub-contractors, other activities in which COMINSUD participates in, and any person acting on behalf of COMINSUD. The affected population should be sensitized as they need to know all about sexual exploitation and abuse, be aware of their rights, existing reporting channels and how to use them so as not to be victims of SEA

#### **7.1.2. Recruitment of staff and engagements with other contracting partners**

COMINSUD staff upon recruitment must sign a code of conduct committing to carry out their duties and conduct themselves both in public and private life with competence, integrity, impartiality, independence and discretion. Staff should also agree to promote a harmonious working environment based on mutual respect and understanding, free from discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse, with respect for diversity. Staff should also undertake to be accountable for their actions, decisions and commitment in the performance of their functions. In addition, calls for application and tenders must carry SEA messages to raise awareness.

All contracts and engagement letters must carry a clause on sexual exploitation and abuse standards set out in the UN Secretary General 's bulletin special measures for prevention on sexual exploitation and abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13) and the consequences of carrying out any acts of SEA

#### **7.1.3. Trainings**

Ensure all staff go through a training course on Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse(PSEA) composed of a set of lessons designed to raise awareness about sexual exploitation and abuse, become familiar with a range of measures to combat SEA, understand what the impact of SEA on victim is, and the consequences for COMINSUD personnel who commit SEA.

New staff also go through a training course on PSEA composed of a set of lessons designed to raise awareness about sexual exploitation and abuse, become familiar with a range of measures to combat SEA, understand what the impact of SEA on victim is, and the consequences for COMINSUD personnel who commit SEA.

Carry out refresher talks or presentations on PSEA during meetings, trainings, workshops and sensitization events to staff, community mobilisers, any person acting on behalf of COMINSUD and the affected population. Time should be allocated and support made available to the topics on SEA that will be used during these events

Mainstream PSEA in all activities carried out by COMINSUD or activities that COMINSUD participates in within the affected population

## **7.2. Response Actions**

### **7.2.1. Complaint mechanism for reporting SEA**

Create a reporting channel which is functioning and accessible. This channel has a SEA focal point, contact number and reporting forms where victims of SEA can be promptly referred for assistance according to their informed consent. Report in a timely manner all suspicions, concerns or cases of SEA following the requirements applicable and procedures established by COMINSUD to ensure safety and protection of the complainant or the victim.

A complain and feedback committee should be set up by COMINSUD to manage allegations on SEA and take decisions as per the allegation presented. A feedback will be provided to victims or complainant of the procedure used to process SEA allegations or complains and the decisions arrived at.

### **7.2.2. Investigation**

COMINSUD has a process for investigation of SEA allegations in place and shall properly and without delay conduct an investigation of SEA by its employees or related personnel or refer to the proper investigative body if the perpetrator is affiliated with another entity.

### **7.2.3. False information**

Staff must not circulate information they know is incorrect or misleading. COMINSUD must consider any intentionally false, malicious statement, misrepresentation or accusation against any personnel or any person acting on behalf of COMINSUD as serious misconduct.

### **7.2.4. Confidentiality**

COMINSUD must take measures to guarantee the confidentiality of all information on SEA which they receive. Staff must not share information which is meant to be confidential or retain information that is useful. Information should pass through the appropriate channel for managing these complains

### **7.2.5. Investigations and sanctions**

COMINSUD will process all allegations on SEA and respond accordingly and in a timely manner. Sanctions will be given depending on the results of the investigation. Some allegations will be sanctioned internally by the complaint and feedback committee within the organization while others will be referred externally following legal procedures

### **7.2.6. Referral to national/international authority**

If, after proper investigation, there is evidence to support allegations of SEA, these cases will be referred to national/international authorities for further action.

### **7.2.7. Victim assistance**

COMINSUD has a system to promptly refer SEA survivors to available services, based on their needs and consent.

## **7.3. Cooperative arrangements**

All COMINSUD contracts and partnership agreements include a standard clause requiring contractors, suppliers, consultants and sub-partners to commit to a zero-tolerance policy on SEA and to take measures to prevent and respond to SEA.


The failure of those entities or individuals to take preventive measures against SEA, to investigate allegations thereof, or to take corrective action when SEA has occurred, shall constitute grounds for termination of any cooperative arrangement

#### **8. Responsibility of management**

COMINSUD's leadership adheres to the commitment of supporting the prevention of SEA in accordance with the core principles of SEA. They will support to create an organizational culture that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse in all aspects, that is raising awareness, trainings, contracting, follow up and sanctioning. The leadership must set an example of accountability, integrity, dignity and respect through their personal conduct.

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**BOARD CHAIR**



**CHAMBI JULIE**

