POLICY ON PROTECTION

FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (PSEA)

Revision: December 2024

Gruppo per le Relazioni Transculturali
Via Molino delle Armi, 19 - 20123 Milano
Tel. 0226681866 - E mail grt@grtitalia.org
Codice Fiscale: 80120910155

POLICY ON PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (PSEA)

Policy Statement

GRT recognizes the right of all individuals to be treated with dignity and respect and to be protected from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). GRT acknowledges the power imbalances inherent in its work and is committed to mitigating risks through strong policies and accountability measures. SEA erodes integrity and damages trust, affecting the organization's ability to achieve its mission.

All GRT employees and representatives must always uphold the highest ethical standards and adhere to this PSEA Policy. The organization is committed to maintaining an environment that prevents SEA and ensures that incidents are promptly and effectively addressed.

Representatives include all employees of the organisation, whether internationally or locally recruited, regardless of the type or duration of the contract, including board members, volunteers, interns, consultants as well as individual and corporate contractors of these entities and related personnel, such as non-GRT entities, and their employees, and individuals who have entered into partnership, sub-grant or sub-recipient agreements with GRT.

Related Policies and Procedures

All GRT employees and representatives must also comply with related policies, including but not limited to:

- GRT Code of Conduct
- GRT GBV Prevention, Mitigation, and Response Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines GRT's commitments to preventing and responding to SEA, ensuring protection for those the organization works with and taking decisive action when needed. It aligns with international standards and legal obligations, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines on SEA and protection from sexual harassment and it is in accordance with GRT duty of care obligations and relevant criminal laws, to make decisions about how to respond to complaints and concerns raised.

Definitions

Aligned with the UN Secretary General's Bulletin (ST/SGB/2003/13), the definitions are as follows:

- **Sexual Exploitation**: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including but not limited to monetary, social, or political gain from the sexual exploitation of another.
- **Sexual Abuse**: Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or coercion.
- **Sexual Harassment**: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature in the workplace or related professional environments.

Scope

This policy applies to all GRT employees and representatives, including volunteers, interns, consultants, board members, and contractors. It is applicable in all locations where the organization operates and extends to work-related travel, meetings, and events, regardless of local laws or practices. This policy also extends to implementing partners, suppliers, and all third-party service providers engaged in GRT operations.

Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

GRT has a **zero-tolerance policy** toward SEA. Violations constitute gross misconduct and may result in immediate dismissal and termination of contracts. GRT may also refer cases to relevant authorities for criminal prosecution where applicable, in the abuser's country of origin, as well as the host country. To ensure any risk of harm is fully considered prior to referral to external authorities, all cases where this is potentially appropriate must be referred to legal advisors for guidance.
Under no circumstances will sexual exploitation and abuse be tolerated in GRT's programs, regardless of cultural or social norms.

Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Standards
The Standards below apply to all GRT employees and its representatives. They set out the standards of conduct and behaviour required in personal and professional life. The standards below do not represent an exhaustive list.
All employees and representatives of GRT <u>will</u>:

1. Always treat all people with dignity and respect.
2. Abide by the provisions, standards and commitments laid out in this Policy.
3. Undertake required awareness raising and other training related to this Policy.
4. Report any concerns or suspicions about a breach of this Policy according to the prescribed channels and in a timely manner.
5. Create and maintain an environment that prevents SEA.

All employees and representatives of GRT <u>will not</u>:

6. Engage in sexually exploitative relationships, nor request any service or sexual favour from participants of GRT programmes, children or others in the communities in which GRT works, in return for protection or assistance.
7. Have sex or engage in sexual activities with programme participants. This is because there is an inherent conflict of interest and potential for abuse of power in such relationships.
8. Engage in sexual activity with a child who is any individual under the age of 18. This applies regardless of the local age of consent, i.e. the local or national laws of the country in which the employee or representative works or regardless of the age of consent in the home country of the GRT employee or representative. Ignorance or mistaken belief of the child's age is not a defense.
9. Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour. Sexual acts with paid sex workers are always prohibited, regardless of the local or national law or habits and practices concerning sex work or prostitution in the country.

Prevention Measures

GRT is committed to proactive prevention of SEA through:

- Mandatory SEA training for all staff, partners, and contractors before engagement and refresher training at regular intervals.
- SEA clauses in contracts with implementing partners, suppliers, and contractors to ensure compliance with PSEA standards.
- Rigorous hiring processes, including background checks and reference screening to prevent known perpetrators from being rehired.
- Annual policy reviews and integration of SEA prevention into performance appraisals and organizational audits.
- Appointment of PSEA focal points at leadership level to oversee compliance and respond to concerns promptly.
- Risk assessments and mitigation strategies embedded in all program design and implementation processes.

Reporting Concerns

GRT requires all employees and representatives to report in good faith any concerns or suspicions or retaliation related to SEA immediately through the prescribed channels. The obligation to report includes concerns or suspicions involving any other humanitarian worker, regardless of whether s/he is an employee or representative of GRT.

Reports may be made through:

- Direct reporting to designated PSEA focal points or to immediate supervisor.

- Internal confidential reporting systems – if the GRT staff member knows or suspects that his/her immediate supervisor and/or the PSEA focal point is directly or indirectly involved in the matter.
- Anonymous complaint mechanisms available to all beneficiaries and staff.
- Community-based complaint mechanisms to ensure accessibility for affected populations.

All supervisors who receive from the supervisees reports about SEA allegations, concerns or suspicious related to SEA shall promptly report to one of the following:

- The PSEA focal point
- The internal confidential reporting system by submitting duly completed confidential report of SEA or retaliation related to SEA, if the supervisor knows or suspects that the PSEA focal point is directly or indirectly involved in the matter.

PSEA focal points who receive any report or complaint of SEA allegations, concerns or suspicions or retaliation related to SEA from any source, including from the local referral complaint mechanism, shall promptly submit a duly completed Confidential report of SEA or retaliation related to SEA to the internal confidential reporting system.

Any individual making a report in good faith is protected against retaliation. Retaliatory actions, including intimidation, discrimination, or harassment, are strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. Failure to report known SEA violations is considered a breach of duty and may lead to consequences, including termination.

Reporting standard. Knowingly and deliberately filing a false or malicious statement under the present Policy may constitute grounds for disciplinary measures.

Confidentiality and data protection. Any person who has knowledge of an SEA report or complaint must respect the sensitivity of the matter and the need to protect the identities, privacy and reputation of the alleged offender, complainant, reporter, alleged victim and any witnesses. Report forms and all related information and documents will be kept and transmitted through the internal reporting system in strictly confidential manner. The obligation of confidentiality continues after the matter has been closed. Failure to respect such confidentiality may result in disciplinary measures.

Handling Concerns

All allegations of SEA will be addressed promptly, professionally, confidentially, and with sensitivity. GRT commits to fair and thorough investigations led by trained professionals, ensuring the rights and dignity of all involved. The organization will:

- Utilize trauma-informed approaches when interviewing survivors and witnesses.

- Engage professional investigators where necessary to ensure impartiality and effectiveness.
- Maintain strict confidentiality, sharing information only on a need-to-know basis.
- Implement protective measures to safeguard survivors, whistleblowers, and witnesses from potential harm or retaliation.
- Take disciplinary measures, including termination and legal action, where substantiated.
- Take managerial action, including mandatory training, counselling or other appropriate corrective measures.
- Close the case if there is no or insufficient evidence of PSEA.
- Ensure due process during all proceedings, including the right of the alleged offender to be informed of the allegations against him or her, to be given the opportunity to respond to those allegations and to request review of or appeal any decision taken against him or her.
- Compose the investigation teams giving regard to the extent possible to gender, geographical and other relevant considerations.
- Refer any complaints about SEA allegations, concerns or suspicions to the national authorities for appropriate action.
- Complaints, concerns or suspicions about SEA committed by a person who is not a GRT staff member may also be referred to local law enforcement authorities and/or reported to the employer of such person.
- The Human Resource Manager ensures that all disciplinary measures or alternative measures imposed pursuant to, or as a result of, the present Policy are promptly recorded in the relevant personnel or administrative file.

Support for Survivors

GRT will provide non-financial assistance and support to complainants and victims of SEA as deemed necessary and appropriate on a case-by-case basis.

A preliminary assessment of the victim's or complainant's needs arising directly from SEA or alleged SEA should be conducted as soon as possible. The assistance provided to complainants shall aim at fulfilling needs that cannot await the substantiation of a claim.

The nature and duration of assistance may vary. This assistance may include immediately needed services (e.g. medical care, psychological counselling, legal advice, provision of shelter, food, clothing, security). Assistance provided to victims is not intended to serve as compensation and shall not be considered, in part or whole, as compensation for damages or injury caused by SEA.

If assistance is deemed necessary and appropriate, GRT will rely on existing local services, such as those already available to the victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership and Management

- **GRT Board of Directors**:
    - Ensure sufficient resources are allocated for SEA prevention and response.

- Oversee policy implementation and conduct reviews every two years.
- Create a positive organizational culture to support a safeguarding environment which will help preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Protect the credibility and reputation of GRT via effective oversight of this Policy and its implementation.
- Agree on protocols with regulatory and donor bodies for the handling and reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse information and cases.
- Role model the standards of conduct and behaviour required by this Policy.
- Ensure compliance with global safeguarding standards.

- **Managers & Supervisors**:
  - Ensure staff understand and comply with this policy.
  - Apply and maintain mechanisms and managerial systems to support the implementation of this Policy including effective supervision, awareness raising, prevention, reporting, and responding.
  - Role model the standards of conduct and behaviour required by this Policy.
  - Maintain reporting mechanisms and enforce accountability.
  - Integrate SEA prevention into program design and risk assessments.
  - Discuss PSEA, as appropriate, as part of the Staff Evaluation System process.

- **All staff and representatives**:
  - Read and ensure that they understand the present Instruction.
  - Comply with the policy and Code of Conduct.
  - Report in good faith any suspected SEA allegations, concerns or suspicions or retaliation related to SEA that they have witnessed, or know of, by other GRT staff members, employees or other personnel of GRT Contractors, any other person working on GRT projects, or by people employed by or working for other organizations.
  - Complete mandatory SEA training.
  - Cooperate fully with those responsible for investigating a report or complaint about SEA.
  - Ensure that confidentiality and the Data Protection Principles are respected.
  - Participate in safeguarding training and adhere to confidentiality guidelines.

Contractors & Partners

- SEA prevention clauses will be included in all agreements with partners, contractors, and suppliers.
- Failure to comply may result in contract termination and reporting to authorities.

Organizational Commitments

GRT commits to:

- Embedding SEA risk assessment in all program designs.
- Creating a culture which supports safeguarding and prevents sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Developing organisation-specific strategies, policies, procedures and action plans to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Aligning this Policy across all organisational systems, policies and procedures, including but not limited to recruitment and selection, induction and orientation, performance management, reward, and learning and development. Specific job / role responsibilities for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse will also be captured in job descriptions.
- Seeking to prevent perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse from being hired, rehired or redeployed by GRT and other organisations within the international development and humanitarian sector. This could include the use of background and criminal reference checks.
- Maintaining transparent reporting and data tracking mechanisms.
- Collaborating with external organizations to enhance SEA prevention efforts.
- Ensuring SEA-related training is systematic and ongoing.
- Publishing yearly statistics on SEA-related complaints and responses.
- Strengthening safeguarding mechanisms across all programs.
- Taking swift and appropriate action, including legal action when required, against GRT employees and representatives who commit sexual exploitation and abuse and/or breach the Standards required by this Policy.

Annex 1: Statement of Commitment on Eliminating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

The six core principles relating to sexual exploitation and abuse were adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group in July 2002. GRT notes that these principles have been incorporated into organization-specific codes of conduct, rules and regulations and are thereby binding on personnel.

GRT recalls that these standards were promulgated to further protect the most vulnerable populations, especially women, girls and boys, and recognize that in countries where GRT operates, conditions such as poverty, weak rule of law and displacement and the destruction of community structures due to conflict, increase the vulnerability of communities to sexual exploitation and abuse, including human trafficking, by our personnel and others.

GRT further recalls that creating and maintaining a living and working environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse is both an individual and organizational responsibility.

GRT notes that the management culture of an organization, the equal representation of women and men at all levels of the organization and the adequacy of the living and working environment all contribute to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

GRT underlines the importance of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and stress the need for swift, decisive action when such acts do occur. It also notes the specific duties of managers in this regard.

GRT re-affirms its goal of achieving full implementation of these principles as a matter of urgency and commit to:

1. Incorporate GRT standards on sexual exploitation and abuse in induction materials and training courses for the personnel.

2. Prevent perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse from being (re-)hired or (re-)deployed. This could include use of background and criminal reference checks.

3. Ensure that complaint mechanisms for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse are accessible and that focal points for receiving complaints understand how to discharge their duties.

4. Take appropriate action to the best of GRT's abilities to protect persons from retaliation where allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse are reported involving our personnel.

5. Investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in a timely and professional manner. This includes the use of appropriate interviewing practice with complainants and witnesses, particularly with children.

6. Take swift and appropriate action against GRT's personnel who commit sexual exploitation and abuse. This may include administrative or disciplinary action, and/or referral to the relevant authorities for appropriate action, including criminal prosecution.

7. Provide basic emergency assistance to complainants of sexual exploitation and abuse.

8. Regularly inform GRT's personnel and communities on measures taken to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. Such information should be developed and disseminated in-country in cooperation with other relevant agencies and should include details on complaints mechanisms, the status and outcome of investigations in general terms, feedback on actions taken against perpetrators and follow-up measures taken as well as assistance available to complainants and victims.

9. Engage the support of communities and governments to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse by GRT's personnel.

Six Core Principles Relating to SEA

1. Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are grounds for termination of employment.
2. Sexual activity with children (person under the age of 18) is strictly 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 of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to 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, he or she must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.
6. Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

Annex 2: Standard PSEA Clause for Contractors

GRT Contractors warrant that they shall:

(a) Take all appropriate measures to prohibit and prevent actual, attempted and threatened sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by its employees or any other persons engaged and controlled by it to perform activities under this Agreement ("other personnel"). For the purpose of this Agreement, SEA shall include:

1. Exchanging any money, goods, services, preferential treatment, job opportunities or other advantages for sexual favours or activities, including humiliating or degrading treatment of a sexual nature; abusing a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes; and physical intrusion of a sexual nature whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

2. Engaging in sexual activity with a person under the age of 18 ("child"), except if the child is legally married to the concerned employee or other personnel and is over the age of majority or consent both in the child's country of citizenship and in the country of citizenship of the concerned employee or other personnel.

(b) Strongly discourage its employees or other personnel from having sexual relationships with GRT beneficiaries.

(c) Report timely to GRT any allegations or suspicions of SEA, and investigate and take appropriate corrective measures, including imposing disciplinary measures on the person who has committed SEA.

(d) Ensure that the SEA provisions are included in all subcontracts.

(e) Adhere to the above commitments at all times. Failure to comply with clauses (a) to (d) shall constitute grounds for immediate termination of this Agreement.

Annex 3 - Confidential Report of SEA or retaliation related to SEA

To PSEA Focal Points and supervisors: *please complete this form to the best of your knowledge and ability and ensure that it is submitted in a timely way*.

I. Information about Complainant or Reporter
- Name of Complainant or Reporter:
- Contact details (including address, phone and email):
- Age: Sex:

II. Incident of SEA or retaliation
- Date and time of incident (start/most recent dates):
- Location of incident:
- Detailed description of incident:
- Witnesses (names and contact details) and facts witnessed:
- Describe the physical / emotional state of complainant:

III. Information about alleged offender
- Name:
- Employer and job title:
- Contact details (including address, phone and email):
- Age: Sex:
- Physical description:

IV. Complainant assistance
- List contacts by the Complainant/Reporter (e.g., medical, psycho/social, police)
- Does the Complainant need and want medical assistance or has s/he sought treatment and, if so, where and from whom
- Who is responsible for ensuring a safety plan for the Complainant
- Describe any security measures put in place for the Complainant
- Describe any referrals and advice about assistance provided to the Complainant

V. Additional information
- Date complaint/report first received and by whom:
- Does the Complainant/Reporter know about GRT's process for handling complaints?
- Has the Complainant consented to share the complaint with the alleged offender?
- SEA Report completed by:

VI. Provide any other relevant information

_____ _____

Name Date and location

KEEP SEA INFORMATION STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL