

Leaders' Pledge on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct

The Leaders' Pledge on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct represents our shared commitment as Canada's global development and humanitarian leaders to:

- ▶ ensure the full implementation of preventative practices and policies that will protect our staff, volunteers, collaborators and the communities we serve; and
- ▶ respond appropriately to all reports and incidences of sexual misconduct.

This Leaders Pledge is rooted in shared values of inclusiveness, partnership and accountability. It prioritizes approaches and responses that are survivor centred, trauma-informed and that ensure safety and support for all parties involved.

As leaders, we recognize our duty of care to all the people we work with and that preventing and addressing sexual misconduct, including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, is an essential part of our responsibilities. We understand that the power imbalances inherent in our work can amplify vulnerability to sexual misconduct, in particular for groups who experience multiple forms of discrimination in society. We are committed to creating safe and respectful workplaces and programs that promote gender equality, respect for diversity and human rights, and are free from gender-based violence. We will ensure this by addressing and responding to all abuses of power, holding ourselves and others to account, and protecting the vulnerable.

This pledge is our collective engagement to continue to learn and to improve our organizational cultures, policies and practices with respect to sexual misconduct, both within our organizations and programs, and in collaboration with our partners.

As the leaders of Cooperation Canada members and other organizations, we commit to the following:

- ▶ Foster and maintain an institutional culture where all forms of sexual misconduct are unacceptable.
- ▶ Improve our collective ability to recognize and tackle power imbalances and gender inequalities that can enable sexual misconduct, including intersecting forms of discrimination.
- ▶ Aim to create work environments free from sexual misconduct by and of civil society organization staff, volunteers and contractors within our organizations and the countries in which we operate.

- ▶ Provide support to survivors/victims of sexual misconduct and ensure survivor-centred approaches and trauma-informed responses.
- ▶ Implement a zero-tolerance policy for inaction on any good-faith suspicions, reports or incidents.
- ▶ Ensure all allegations are investigated in a timely, confidential, safe and sensitive manner that is centered on the safety, agency, needs and rights of victims/survivors, and ensure that perpetrators are held to account, including through dismissal and/or prosecution, where appropriate.
- ▶ Strengthen existing organizational policies and practices, and create new ones as necessary, to prevent and address sexual misconduct.
- ▶ Empower local actors and communities by collaborating with our partners to develop and strengthen both local and existing approaches and practices.
- ▶ Encourage greater sectoral cooperation and transparency on the development of measures aimed to prevent perpetrators of sexual misconduct from gaining re-employment within the Canadian sector.
- ▶ Benefit from each other's and our partners' experiences and strengths, and identify joint solutions, including by sharing and building knowledge and capacity around survivor/victim-centered approaches and trauma-informed responses.
- ▶ Promote this pledge and provide support to ensure that the entire sector is accountable for its commitments.

Towards these commitments we will implement the following:

Culture and leadership

- ▶ Collaborate to identify, support implementation of, and monitor best practices for prevention and safeguard, effective response, accountability mechanisms and transparency regarding incidents of sexual misconduct.
- ▶ Provide appropriate on-going training to all staff and volunteers to:
 - Ensure a shared understanding of policies, procedures and safeguarding mechanisms around sexual misconduct.
 - Promote a better understanding of how power imbalances, intersectional forms of discrimination and gender inequalities can increase the vulnerability to sexual misconduct.
- ▶ Ensure that all staff and volunteers accept and understand their responsibilities with respect to reporting all forms of inappropriate behaviour, even if they are not the target of the behaviour.
- ▶ Ensure that safeguarding mechanisms are properly resourced, including funding, time and space, and collectively advocate for funders to recognize their responsibility to resource this work with us.

- ▶ Conduct an organizational assessment every two years using a comprehensive and recognized tool—such as the Cooperation Canada Organizational Assessment Tool (OAT), or a comparable framework.
- ▶ Demonstrate ongoing commitment to the Leaders' Pledge through a brief annual submission on progress, including confirmation of Board engagement (see **Annex A**).

Policies and practices

- ▶ In line with a survivor/victim-centered approach, inform relevant authorities where appropriate, and cooperate fully in all investigations when sexual misconduct is reported.
- ▶ Protect informants' safety within mechanisms for reporting sexual misconduct, by providing clear, transparent, and accessible reporting systems that:
 - Maintain, wherever possible, confidentiality for informants and whistleblowers.
 - Ensure freedom from reprisal or punishment for individuals and communities involved in reporting.
 - Support our partners to take all appropriate measures to prevent and address sexual misconduct of and by their staff, including by working together to learn and build their capacity to fulfill the above commitments within their own organizations and operations.
 - Examine and strengthen ways to empower communities in which we work to report all incidents of sexual misconduct.
- ▶ Work together to ensure that safeguards are integrated throughout the employment cycle, from the recruitment stage (proper vetting) and start of employment through regular training and performance to the post-employment phase.
- ▶ Conduct periodic reviews of our policies and practices to ensure they are up to date and integrate new approaches or mechanisms.

Collaboration and learning

- ▶ Enable staff and volunteers to share learning and struggles within a respectful, confidential and safe environment.
- ▶ Seek to align with global approaches, share best practices and maximize efficiency through streamlined efforts and the use of collective tools, networks and approaches such as the Common Approach to Protection from SEAH (**CAPSEAH**) where appropriate.
- ▶ Continue to identify other actions and opportunities to improve our understanding and practices for the prevention of and response to sexual misconduct within our work, both as individual organizations and as a collective sector.

We recognize that these are a demanding set of commitments, and that it will take time for all member organizations to make the institutional and cultural changes necessary to meet this high standard. We are resolved to work together to ensure that Canada's development and humanitarian sector is a global leader in the prevention and response to sexual misconduct.

Annex A

Annual Accountability Mechanism

The pledge is not an endpoint. It is an ongoing commitment to lead—and to be held accountable.

Signing the pledge means committing to bold, sometimes uncomfortable, conversations about power and accountability. It also means asking ourselves—regularly and transparently—some hard questions.

Annual Accountability Mechanism

Signatories demonstrate ongoing commitment to the Leaders' Pledge through a brief annual submission on progress—comprised of five questions.

- 1 Has your organization completed an assessment of its PSEAH policies and practices in the last 3 years, using a tool such as the Cooperation Canada Organizational Assessment Tool or comparable framework?
- 2 Does your organization provide appropriate training to all staff, volunteers and consultants to ensure shared understanding of policies, procedures and responsibilities regarding safeguarding mechanisms around sexual misconduct?
- 3 Does your organization have established reporting, response systems and procedures for sexual misconduct, including anonymous and confidential reporting, and fair and confidential investigative procedures to respond to all allegations of sexual misconduct?
- 4 Do performance appraisal systems for managers include their responsibility to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct?
- 5 Does the senior leadership report annually to the Board on PSEAH progress, risks and challenges?

Fostering a Culture of Continuous Learning and Improvement

The Annual Accountability Mechanism goes beyond compliance. It is about who we are as leaders—and the organizational cultures we shape. By completing this brief, organizational self-assessment, once per year, we are fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement on PSEAH within our organizations and across the sector.

Cooperation Canada may use the aggregated data to report, periodically, on the sector's progress on PSEAH; all organizational responses will remain strictly confidential.