



Wide Horizons’ Bullying, Sexual Harassment and Abuse Policy & Guideline

Reviewed: 30/05/2022

Date of Next Review: 31/03/2023

Safeguarding Officer: Aung Than (widehorizons.safeguarding@gmail.com)

I. Goal and Guiding Principles of Policy

Wide Horizons’ Bullying, Sexual Harassment and Abuse Policy & Guideline (BSHAPG) aims to demonstrate the commitment of the organization to prevent and address bullying, sexual harassment and abuse of authority of stakeholders who are directly or indirectly served by Wide Horizons.

All forms of bullying, sexual harassment and abuse of authority are explicitly forbidden. In addition, staff are forbidden from dating, having physical/romantic relationships, or making advances with academic and work-placement students. Such behavior or conduct is against the basic principles of equality and fundamental rights of those affected and is contrary to the principles and values of Wide Horizons as stated in the Staff Policy, Staff Rules and our mission statement.

Wide Horizons (WH) promotes the respect and protection of all its employees, partners, and primary stakeholders against all forms of emotional, physical and sexual misconduct and/or aggression. Everyone has a right to their physical and mental integrity, while those in breach will be held accountable. Employees of Wide Horizons or any other person involved in our activities responsible for such behavior or conduct shall be subject to disciplinary measures and/or termination of contract.

II. Rationale

Wide Horizons has developed this policy based on both the legal and moral responsibility of the organization to protect all our stakeholders. This policy had been adapted from Helvetas’ REGULATIONS ON MOBBING, SEXUAL HARASSMENT & ABUSE OF AUTHORITY 2018 policy after working with them on the Gulf of Mottama Project between 2019-2021

There are eight guiding principles all staff must recognize as part of this policy:

Zero tolerance

Wide Horizons prohibits all forms of bullying, sexual harassment, and abuse of authority.

Protection

All employees of Wide Horizons or any other person involved in our activities have a right to work in a harassment-free and respectful environment.

Prevention

Wide Horizons consciously promotes a positive work environment to prevent inappropriate behavior in the workplace.

Reporting

Wide Horizons establishes appropriate reporting mechanisms to deal with a suspicion on bullying, sexual harassment and/or abuse of authority and prevent retaliation related to the reporting of allegations of harassment.

Disciplinary Action

Wide Horizons is committed to address inappropriate behavior by or towards its employees. If a case of bullying, sexual harassment and/or abuse of authority is proven, involved employees or any other person contracted by Wide Horizons are to be disciplined following the process in the discipline procedure.

Neutrality

Measures to deal with inappropriate behavior will be based on principles of fairness and impartiality.

Confidentiality

Stakeholders who express a suspicion of inappropriate behavior are protected. Information concerning a suspicion is confidential. The presumption of innocence applies to suspicious persons.

Adequate information

All persons directly involved are informed openly about cases of bullying, sexual harassment and/or abuse of authority while protecting the stakeholders who reported the inappropriate behavior.

Policy Implementation

The Wide Horizons Program Manager is accountable for ensuring that this policy and any investigation of suspected abuse remains in accordance with national laws, including reporting to and cooperating with relevant law enforcement authorities when abuse may result in criminal charges against the accused. In case the Program Manager is involved in the harassment or abuse, then a delegate from the Senior Management Team is empowered to establish a committee to investigate the case. The Senior Management Team will have the overall responsibility to oversee and ensure the policy's implementation.

III. Definitions

3.1. Bullying

Bullying means to pick on, pester and exclude a person or a group systematically and to harass a person repeatedly and over a longer period of time at work. Bullying can be expressed in verbal or non-verbal attacks (including gestures, leering and staring) which affect the physical or mental health as well as the self-esteem of the person(s) concerned.

3.2. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is an action with sexual references unwelcome to the person addressed. It can happen between peers, between a supervisor and subordinate level, between members of the opposite or same sex, between an older and younger person among others.

Sexual harassment can be expressed in the following ways (non-exhaustive list):

- remarks about physical advantages or weaknesses or about sexual orientation
- suggestive remarks and looks.
- sexist talk and jokes, in any form of verbal, written or non-verbal communication
- sharing suggestive material over email or social media
- ambiguous invitations and advances
- making bodily advances or leering
- making advances together with promises or threats of advantages or disadvantages

3.3. Abuse of authority

Abuse of authority means the improper use of a position of influence, power or authority by an individual against another colleague or group of colleagues, stakeholders or beneficiaries. This is particularly serious when an individual misuses his/her influence, power or authority to negatively influence the career or employment conditions (including - but not limited to - assignment, contract renewal, performance evaluation or promotion) of another. It can include a one-off incident or a series of incidents. Abuse of authority may also include misuse of power that creates a hostile or offensive and/or submissive work environment, which includes - but is not limited to - the use of intimidation, threats, blackmail or coercion.

3.3.1 Staff-Student Relationships

Staff are forbidden from dating, having physical/romantic relationships or making advances with academic and work-placement students. Any action concerning inappropriate staff/student relationships is considered an abuse of authority and will result in the staff member being placed on the discipline steps, or immediate termination of contract without notice.

Staff are expected to maintain professional student-teacher relationships at all times and must behave in an appropriate and culturally sensitive way. For the protection of the staff and the students, staff should refrain from being alone with students unless on school business (community or clinic visits, etc.). They should refrain from entering the dorms of the opposite sex without supervision and students may not visit a WH staff house unless approved by the WH Team.

Staff should also maintain professional boundaries with all students at all times, which includes physical contact, verbal communication and communication over the phone, email or social media. They should refrain from showing favoritism to specific students, avoid giving snacks to / spending time with students unequally. Staff should report any instances where the professional boundaries might be seen to be crossed.

Staff should be transparent when being off campus with individual students. When leaving WH campus with a student and tell the program coordinator you are leaving, the purpose

and who you are going with. The whole WH Team should be informed when plans / social activities happen off the WH campus in order to maintain transparency with the whole staff.

VI. Reporting and Reaction Protocol

- Any incidents, comments, or suspicions of harassment abuse by employees of Wide Horizons or its partners¹ will be immediately reported to **Safeguarding Officer** (widehorizons.safeguarding@gmail.com) or a member of the Senior Management Team for a thorough investigation.
- Action will be taken by the **Safeguarding Officer** and/or the Senior Management Team and it is their duty to ensure the complaints are addressed.
- The **Safeguarding Officer** and/or Senior Management Team may seek legal advice, the advice of the Social Services or Police in deciding whether a formal referral to the authorities is necessary. If it is decided that external reporting should *not* take place then there must be a clear rationale for that decision which should be recorded. The decision not to report in such circumstances should be unanimously approved by the relevant management personnel. The process leading to the decision making should be well documented and all factors and responses kept on file.
- Wide Horizons will also consider involving local authorities to ensure the protection of all stakeholders and criminal prosecution where this is appropriate.

7. Consequences of Misconduct

- Wide Horizons' Program Manager will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of harassment or abuse should be temporarily suspended pending the investigation. The Program Manager will assess all individual cases to decide whether a staff member or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be carried out sensitively.
- If it is determined that anyone associated with Wide Horizons violates the Sexual Harassment and Abuse Policy, the organization will take immediate disciplinary action which could include dismissal from duties, transference to other duties, reporting to local authorities and/or dismissal from the organization.
- Should an employee of a partner organization² present a risk to the safety and wellbeing of children, Wide Horizons will assess the agreement held between Wide Horizons and the partner. Depending on the outcome, the contract may be terminated, and funding withdrawn.

V. Changes to this document

Authority to alter the Bullying, Sexual Harassment and Abuse Policy & Guideline rests with the **Program Manager** (widehorizons.myanmar@gmail.com) and final approval will be sought from the Senior Management Team. All team members are encouraged to provide input and suggestions but may not alter or change any part of the document without agreement.

¹ This refers to organization who have a formal partnership agreement with Wide Horizons, such as a sub-grant agreement

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The Bullying, Sexual Harassment and Abuse Policy & Guideline will be reviewed every year and updated as required, and the availability of updated versions will be communicated to staff. It is the individual employee's responsibility to ensure they are complying with the most current version of the policy.

Annex 1: Statement of Commitment



STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO WIDE HORIZONS' BULLYING, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ABUSE POLICY

I, _____, have read and understood the standards and guidelines outlined in this Bullying, Sexual Harassment and Abuse Policy. I agree with the principles contained therein and accept the importance of implementing harassment policies and practice while working with Wide Horizons. I understand that if a complaint is brought regarding the harassment of any kind while engaged in Wide Horizons activities, the allegation will be thoroughly investigated in cooperation with the appropriate authorities.

Print Name _____

Job Title _____

Signature _____

Date _____