


# Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy and Guidelines

## ADRA Austria

	Date:	Signature Board Chair
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Revision 2		
Revision 3		
Revision 4		

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This PSEA Policy and Guidelines are a set of binding decisions applying to ADRA Austria's operation.  
For reasons of readability, no gender-specific wording has been used; the masculine form also stands for female persons.

## Table of Contents

1	Terms and Definitions.....	3
2	Policy statement .....	3
3	What is sexual exploitation and abuse? .....	4
4	Policy Scope .....	4
5	Partner Organizations.....	4
6	Why we need a sexual exploitation and abuse policy .....	4
7	Core principles.....	4
8	ADRA Austria's Policy Commitments .....	5
9	Prevention .....	5
10	Reporting and Complaints Mechanisms .....	6
11	Support Services .....	6
12	Policy Review .....	7
	ANNEX A: ADRA Austria PSEA Declaration statement and Code of Conduct.....	8
	ANNEX II: Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (SEA) Reporting Template.....	10

## 1 Terms and Definitions

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**Community-Based Complaints Mechanism:** A system blending both formal and informal community structures, by which individuals are able and encouraged to safely report incidents of SEA. Local communities are involved in developing the system so that the structure is both cultural and gender sensitive. The selection of different mechanisms and multiple entry points will allow both staff and community participants opportunities to report at the organizational or community level in ways which are both convenient and familiar to them.

**Safeguarding:** Preventing acts of sexual misconduct from being perpetrated by members of the aid world, whether against members of the local community or actors delivering aid.

**Sexual Abuse:** Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

**Sexual Assault:** Sexual activity with another person who does not consent. This definition also includes sexual touching. Keep in mind that minors at law do not have legal capacity to consent to sexual activity with anyone who is the age of majority.

**Sexual Violence:** Acts of a sexual nature against a person without their consent and that cause such a person to engage in an act of a sexual nature by force, by threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression, or abuse of power, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment or such a person's incapacity to give genuine consent.

**Sexual Harassment:** Prohibited conduct in the community and in the work, context committed against staff, interns, volunteers, project participants, service providers and any other related stakeholders. Involves any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another.

**Survivor-Centred Approach:** An approach that creates a supportive and conducive environment in which the survivor's wishes are respected, their safety ensured, and they are treated with respect and dignity.

**Whistle-Blower:** A staff member, intern, volunteer, or anyone who reports misconduct, including sexual exploitation or abuse, may be entitled to protection under specified agency terms. (*Refer to ADRA Austria's Complaints and Response Mechanism Policy*)

## 2 Policy statement

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ADRA Austria is an international humanitarian and community development organization focused on empowering and protecting the most vulnerable of humanity. ADRA Austria seeks to identify and address social injustice and deprivation in developed and developing countries, serving people without regard to their ethnic, political, social, sexual orientation, or religious association, and investing in the potential of individuals through community development programs and initiatives.

ADRA Austria staff are expected to always uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct and integrity to protect vulnerable persons from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). SEA inflicts harm on those we are obligated to protect, while at the same time jeopardizing the credibility of the agency. All ADRA Austria staff and related personnel are required to behave irreproachably with members of the community, fellow staff, and taking particular care with the most vulnerable groups: minors, women, the elderly, marginalized members of society, and persons with disabilities.

ADRA Austria aims to implement efficient policies, procedures, and systems to prevent and respond to SEA and commits to create a zero-tolerance culture against complacency and impunity that would affect members of the community, ADRA Austria staff and all affiliated stakeholders.

### 3 What is sexual exploitation and abuse?

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SEA is any actual or attempted abuse against a person who is in a position of vulnerability, and of differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

### 4 Policy Scope

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This policy applies to and is mandatory for our policy adherents who are defined as all ADRA Austria board members, full and part-time staff, volunteers, interns, consultants, contractors, all persons acting voluntarily on behalf of ADRA Austria, any current or potential suppliers of any sort of goods, services, or works, and all other people not included in the above-mentioned categories who have signed a contract with ADRA Austria.

### 5 Partner Organizations

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All our partners will develop, implement, and adhere to their own SEA policies, in accordance with the signed memorandum of agreement with ADRA Austria, and their policies will be in compliance with the scope of this policy. In the absence of their own PSEA Policy, this policy must be incorporated by reference into their contracts and accepted by the signing party.

### 6 Why we need a sexual exploitation and abuse policy

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ADRA Austria demonstrates God's love and compassion to all persons, and consequently is responsible for and committed to the safety and wellbeing of all people in its programs. ADRA Austria is committed to keeping the prevention and response to SEA at the centre of all its humanitarian and community development programs. ADRA Austria's position and programming is consistent with the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), Sphere standards, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines on gender equality and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### 7 Core principles

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ADRA Austria abides by the IASC's six core principles on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: -

- a) SEA by humanitarian workers and related personnel constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary actions and/or termination of an employment contract within the applicable and current regulations.
- b) Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence and in no way shall ignorance of the age of the person be accepted as a justification. Specifically, ADRA Austria's Child Protection Policy further sets the principles and operationalizes procedures and guidelines for guaranteeing children's safety and protection in all domains of ADRA Austria's programming.
- c) Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange for assistance that is due to community members.
- d) Sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and members of the community are strongly prohibited since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian work.
- e) When humanitarian workers or related personnel develop concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse by an individual, whether the individual works for ADRA Austria or other organizations, partners, suppliers, or other related stakeholders, they are mandated by a legal and moral duty of care. They must report such concerns through the means and tools available within the agency's



reporting mechanisms. The management must be informed about all the concerns and suspicions, including rumours, in good faith, regarding SEA.

- f) All humanitarian workers (including volunteers) are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents SEA and promotes the implementation of the Code of Conduct. Managers at all levels have responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

## 8 ADRA Austria's Policy Commitments

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ADRA Austria is dedicated to fulfilling IASC's core principles through the implementation of the following commitments in relation to prevention, reporting and complaints mechanisms, and provision of services for survivors of SEA

## 9 Prevention

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To prevent and mitigate the risk of SEA, ADRA Austria commits to:

- a) Ensure robust recruitment screening, vetting and referencing process for all personnel, particularly for persons who will have any direct or indirect contact with children by emphasizing clauses on PSEA throughout the employment cycle including job advertisements, job descriptions, performance contracts, written and verbal interview questions, and by carrying out thorough employer and professional references, background, and police checks.
- b) Ensure all new and existing employees sign declaration statements on PSEA and ADRA Austria's code of conduct annually (Annex A). The acceptance of the PSEA Policy by signature of a declaration form is a condition for undertaking any relation with ADRA Austria.
- c) Have clear and concise policies on SEA and sexual violence in the workplace written in languages that can be understood by everyone in the organization, implementing partners, and the public, clearly indicating who it applies to and consequences of violation.
- d) Provide a Code of Conduct that establishes, at a minimum, the obligation of all the staff and collaborators, including volunteers, not to exploit, abuse or otherwise discriminate against community members and consequences for violations are in place and duly known to the intended recipients.
- e) Circulate the Statement of Ethical Values (*Refer to ADRA Austria Ethical Code of Conduct*) to all ADRA Austria staff, volunteers in contact with beneficiaries and its affiliates. The Statement of Ethical Foundations should contain the mission, vision, declaration of values and principles, set of rights, duties and responsibilities that it holds with whomever collaborates with ADRA Austria or benefits from its projects or programs.
- f) Promote awareness of staff and related personnel on the Core Principles contained in this policy, the related principles included in ADRA Austria's staff Code of Conduct, Statement of Ethical Foundations, and provide at least an annual training session on PSEA and sexual violence in the workplace for new and existing staff recognizing and responding to risks and concerns at regularly scheduled intervals. Additionally, ensure provision is made for annual refresher training opportunities for staff and partners and remedial measures put in place to address any misconduct brought forth. In addition, develop regular and repeated messaging at all levels of the organization on the importance of PSEA, our values, our ethics, prohibited conduct, how to report incidents, and consequences of violations.
- g) Include written expectations with respect to preventing and responding to SEA in all our project agreements, contracts, memoranda of understandings etc.
- h) Provide capacity building for implementing partners and project staff, including the capacity to respond to SEA, the commitment to develop and implement policies and strategies to ensure effective and transparent monitoring of PSEA measures, guidelines and SEA reports.

- i) Appoint a dedicated PSEA person that is responsible to ensure provision of adequate training to staff at the national and field level, stay current with cutting edge information on PSEA, develop and review policies and procedures, conduct research and disseminate findings to partners and stakeholders, and who will monitor the implementation of the PSEA policy and procedures.

## 10 Reporting and Complaints Mechanisms

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ADRA Austria commits to:

- a) Develop an appropriate reporting mechanism for complaints with respect to SEA arising from the field and within ADRA Austria for varied end users that is sensitive to cultural, diversity and gender. The reporting mechanism will link to and build on existing structures to create one system for handling feedback and complaints. (*Refer to ADRA Austria's Complaints and Response Mechanism Policy*).
- b) Set reminders and ensure regular online training for multiple staff members, to receive reports, speak to survivors, help act as survivor advocates, effectively and efficiently process complaints on SEA<sup>1</sup>.
- c) Set protocols to enable transparent processing of complaints of SEA in a timely manner, including the immediate suspension of the alleged perpetrator from the activities with direct impact on communities, or staff until the investigation is concluded. (*Refer to ADRA Austria's Complaints and Response Mechanism Policy*)
- d) Set protocols to inform appropriate local and national authorities responsible for conducting investigations of SEA allegations with respect to criminal cases. (*See Annex II: ADRA Austria SEA Reporting Template*)
- e) Ensure that members of the community and staff know where and how to report cases of SEA and what sort of assistance they can expect to receive in both national and international programs through the ADRA Austria website.
- f) Adhere to the principles of survivor-centred approach by promoting confidentiality, transparency, respect, safety, anonymity, and seek informed consent from all complainants of SEA. Additionally, ensure the protection of the victim, the complainant, and the whistle-blower of SEA after having verified and confirmed the reported facts either by internal or external investigation.
- g) Take appropriate disciplinary action including immediate termination of employment and referral for criminal prosecution and legal action, where appropriate, against the person who commits SEA, in accordance with the national law's reporting and responding system.
- h) Develop procedures which encourage people to report on concerns without fear of reprisals or victimization at the organizational and community level such as having multiple reporting channels where complaints can be raised, assure privacy and confidentiality. (*Refer to ADRA Austria's Complaints and Response Mechanism Policy*).

## 11 Support Services

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ADRA Austria commits to:

- a) Provide safety and security to project staff, interns, volunteers, community participants and other relevant stakeholders who are survivors of SEA regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability to ensure they are not at increased risk of exploitation or abuse or pose a risk to others.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Training website: <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/training>

- b) Provide referral for medical and psychosocial assistance to survivors of SEA to include, psychosocial counselling, peer support, victim advocacy, medical treatment (pregnancy prevention, medication for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) kits, and legal assistance.
- c) Conduct timely and transparent administrative investigations by developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for conducting investigations, including principles for referring to local authorities, hiring permanent investigators trained on SEA and related types of misconduct, or using a list of trusted and vetted investigators when they are needed. (*Refer to ADRA Austria's Complaints and Response Mechanism Policy*).
- d) Foster, nurture and work with local authorities to ensure criminal accountability and prosecution of perpetrators by providing evidence, testimonies, and/or being available when required.
- e) Promote organizational learning by ensuring that we learn from our efforts both successes and failures and those of others in the sector and by ensuring feedback is reflected on and acted upon.

## **12 Policy Review**

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This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years.

## ANNEX A: ADRA Austria PSEA Declaration statement and Code of Conduct

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (insert name) agree that in the course of my work and/or association with ADRA Austria,

I will:

- Treat all community members with dignity and respect, consistent with the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, disability, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, birth or other immutable personal characteristics.
- Encourage vulnerable groups, employees, and volunteers to speak up about issues that affect them.
- Comply with local, national and international laws on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in accordance with ADRA Austria's reporting process and applicable national laws.
- Advise my supervisor of my involvement in any situation where my actions could be misinterpreted as SEA.
- Advise my supervisor if I am involved in any situation which would be likely to bring the organization into disrepute, and
- Advise my supervisor if I am alleged to have committed or am being investigated for SEA in the field or at ADRA Austria.
- Conduct myself in such a manner that supports the religious beliefs and teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

And I will not:

- Engage in any act of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, sexual violence or any other form of humiliation, degrading, or exploitative behaviour.
- Engage in any sexual activities with children or vulnerable populations. Mistaken belief of the age of a person is not a defence.
- Use children or adults to procure sexual services for others.
- Use inappropriate language – including language of a profane, offensive, discriminatory, demeaning, abusive or sexual nature when speaking.
- Engage in behaviour to shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade any community participants of our projects.
- Marry a person under the age of 18 (or such greater age as may be set out in applicable local laws).
- Act in a sexually provocative manner or engage anyone in any form of sexual activity, including paying for sexual services.
- Engage in any sexual intimacy or any other sexual activity with any of the community participants.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle, or touch anyone in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- Condone or participate in, behaviour with anyone which is illegal, unsafe, or abusive.
- Discriminate against or favour a particular community member to the exclusion of others.
- Use my position of power and trust to take advantage of any community member or vulnerable person(s).
- Engage in the exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex for prostitutes for myself or for others.
- Request or require any sexual favours in exchange for any assistance provided to community members such as food or other items.
- Visit brothels or any other places designated as off limits whether on or off duty.

### Statement to be signed by all ADRA Austria staff

I confirm that I have read and understood ADRA Austria's Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Code of Conduct.

I agree to comply with the Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy and Code of Conduct.

I understand that a breach of the Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy or Code of Conduct may provide grounds for disciplinary action, including grounds for termination of employment with ADRA Austria. I also understand that a breach of the Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy, Code of Conduct or applicable laws could result in criminal prosecution, administrative penalties or other legal proceedings. To the



extent permitted by applicable laws, I agree to indemnify and hold harmless ADRA Austria and its officers, directors, employees, volunteers and contractors from and against any claims, expenses, liabilities, damages, proceedings, actions or causes of action brought against them resulting or arising from my breach of the Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy, Code of Conduct, or applicable laws.

I understand that it is my responsibility, as a person engaged by ADRA Austria, to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that are abusive or exploitative could be construed as such.

I authorize ADRA Austria to undertake any necessary inquiries, including criminal record checks and reference checks, as part of my appointment or recruitment process.

I confirm my willingness to participate in any ADRA Austria training sessions on Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ANNEX II: Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (SEA) Reporting Template

ADRA Austria commits to supporting collective efforts to mitigate the risk of and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) cases in our development and humanitarian projects globally. To ensure transparency and accountability, ADRA Austria commits to report criminal cases to the local authorities for further investigation and prosecution. Cases reported are of ADRA Austria employees, partners contractors, volunteers and of any entity associated with ADRA Austria programs.

**Sexual Abuse:** Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

**Sexual Exploitation:** Any actual or attempted abuse of 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 Harassment:** Any unwanted sexual advance, request for sexual favor, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Incident: Sexual Abuse: ☐ Sexual Exploitation: ☐ Sexual Harassment: ☐

Summary of the Incident:

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Location of Incident:

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Measures taken:

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Reported by:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### NOTE:

All complaints lodged are duly investigated and adequate measures taken. If you are the complainant, it will be necessary to interview you, the alleged harasser(s), and any witnesses with knowledge of the allegations or defences. ADRA Austria will notify all persons involved in the investigation that it is confidential and that unauthorized disclosures of information concerning the investigation could result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

ADRA Austria has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse and is committed to treating all complaints with utmost confidentiality.

For any further inquiries, please contact  
ADRA Austria: Prager Strasse 287, 1210 Vienna - Austria  
Tel: +43 (1) 319 60 43-410 | [www.adra.at](http://www.adra.at)