

**Code of Conduct for Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment
in
Association for equal opportunities Stela Network Skopje**

At Stela, we are committed to fostering an environment that is safe, respectful, and free from all forms of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. This Code of Conduct outlines our organization's principles and guidelines to prevent and address such behaviors. It applies to all employees, volunteers, partners, beneficiaries, and anyone associated with Stela.

Definitions:

a. 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 exploitation is a broad term, which includes acts such as, transactional sex, solicitation of transactional sex and exploitative relationship.

b. Sexual Abuse: Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. "Sexual abuse" is a broad term, which includes acts such as rape, sexual assault, forced prostitution etc.

c. Sexual Harassment: It is defined as any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

1. Zero Tolerance Policy

Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any form within our organization. We are dedicated to creating an inclusive and respectful environment for all.

2. Respect and Dignity

Every individual associated with Stela must be treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, or any other characteristic.

3. Informed Consent and Beneficiary Participation

All interactions with beneficiaries, particularly vulnerable individuals, must be based on informed consent.

a. Stela will prioritize the principle of informed consent in all interactions with beneficiaries. Consent must be freely given, informed, specific, and revocable at any time.

b. Individuals must not be excluded from participation in our programs or activities based on their willingness or refusal to engage in any form of sexual activity.

4. Power Imbalance Awareness

The power imbalance that exists between staff/volunteers and beneficiaries will be recognized and sensitively acknowledged. It will be ensured that this power differential is not exploited for personal gain or advantage, as an implementation measure. A fair and equitable environment for all parties involved will be promoted as a result.

5. Reporting Mechanism

- a. Stela will establish a clear, confidential, and accessible reporting mechanism for individuals to report incidents of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment.
- b. Individuals who report incidents will be treated with respect, and their privacy and confidentiality will be protected throughout the process.

6. Prevention and Awareness

- a. Stela will develop and implement comprehensive training and awareness programs for all staff, volunteers, partners, and beneficiaries to educate them about the risks and consequences of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, as well as the procedures for reporting incidents.
- b. Training sessions will emphasize the importance of consent, respect, and maintaining professional boundaries while engaging with beneficiaries.

7. Prohibition of Relationships:

If a pre-existing relationship between a staff/volunteer and a beneficiary comes to light, steps will be taken to avoid any conflicts of interest or potential for exploitation.

8. Code Compliance Acknowledgment:

All staff, volunteers, and partners associated with Stela will be required to acknowledge their commitment to abide by this Code of Conduct as a condition of their involvement.

9. Duty to Report, Investigations and Follow-up

All employees and volunteers of Stela have a duty to report any suspected or witnessed incidents of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment immediately through the designated reporting channels.

- a. All reported incidents will be promptly and impartially investigated by a designated team or external entity, as appropriate.
- b. Appropriate support will be provided to the victim(s) during and after the investigation process.

10. Sanctions for Violations

- a. Violations of this Code of Conduct will result in appropriate disciplinary actions, including warnings, suspensions, or termination of employment/volunteer engagement, based on the severity of the offense.
- b. For severe violations that constitute criminal acts, Stela will cooperate fully with law enforcement agencies and take appropriate legal actions.

11. Regular Review and Updates

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed regularly to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Necessary updates will be made in response to changing circumstances and best practices. By adhering to this Code of Conduct, we reaffirm our commitment to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment within Stela. We believe that fostering a safe and respectful

environment will enable us to effectively achieve our mission while upholding the highest ethical standards.