

August 30, 2019



COMMUNITY
FORESTS
INTERNATIONAL

10 School Ln.
Sackville, NB E4L 3J9
506-536-3738
info@forestsinternational.org
www.forestsinternational.org

Community Forests International

Code of Conduct on Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

I. Introduction and Context of Work:

Community Forests International (Forests Intl.) is committed to empowering rural communities to thrive with nature. In order to achieve this mission it is imperative that our activities and relationships in communities are free of discrimination, violence, and exploitation. In working to build up communities in Canada and Sub-Saharan Africa, we have created this policy to ensure that women, girls, and other marginalized people are protected from gender-based violence, sexual violence, and exploitation. Our work cannot be successful if our partners, beneficiaries, contractors, and collaborators work in fear.

Forests Intl. has committed to working for gender equality in Canada and Tanzania. In Pemba developing gender-responsive training, working to challenge social norms, and build opportunities for women's economic autonomy. Our Canadian office has a clear harassment policy protecting women employees, and our work in Canada tackles crosscutting issues by building relationships with diverse and underrepresented populations and prioritizing the voices and work of women experts.

Internationally, our activities work at the intersection of gender equality, economic empowerment, and climate resilience. We understand that these challenges create unique and interrelated difficulties that can leave populations vulnerable in multiple ways. Our work and this policy will address frequent power imbalances inherent in international assistance and identify and mitigate risks of retaliation that may come with our work for equality and social change.

This Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in International Assistance policy is intended to supplement international standards and laws to which we adhere in all domestic and international work. This includes Canadian laws regarding sexual harassment, sexual violence, discrimination, and coercion; The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief; and applicable international and local laws and policies in the countries where we work.

II. Key Definitions

(from UN Secretariat Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse)

Sexual Exploitation - any actual or attempted abuse of a 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 Abuse - Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

III. Scope

This policy applies to all Forests Intl. staff, contractors, those conducting project activities on the organization's behalf, and volunteers to be referred to throughout the document as Forests Intl. Staff.

IV. Principles

Community Forests International does not condone Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by any representative and expects staff to adhere to the following principles (adapted from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group, 2002):

1. Forests Intl. Staff will respect and promote human rights without any discrimination and without regard to social status, ethnicity, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, national origin, political affiliation or disability.
2. Sexual exploitation and abuse by Forests Intl. Staff constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment and referral to authorities when local or international laws have been broken.
3. 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.
4. 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 of assistance or wages that are due to beneficiaries.
5. Sexual relationships between Forests Intl. Staff and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged since they can be based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of Forests Intl.'s work and relationships of trust with global partners.
6. Where a member of Forests Intl.'s Staff develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, they must report such concerns via established reporting mechanisms and/or legal channels.
7. Forests Intl. Staff are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of this code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

V. Commitments

Forests Intl. commits to upholding the above principles in all of its work through implementing the following commitments:

Commitments to victims and reporters:

1. No witness to or victim of sexual exploitation or abuse will be penalized or retaliated against for reporting an offense
2. A member of Forests Intl. staff present in Canada or internationally will be assigned to receive complaints and refer them to appropriate channels. A procedure of recording, documenting, and acting on any breaches of this policy will be developed.
3. Anonymity of those reporting sexual exploitation or abuse against themselves or others will be guaranteed to the furthest extent possible.
4. Facilitate receipt of medical, psychological, and legal services according to the expressed desires of a victim.

Commitments of staff and implementers:

5. Senior management commits to ensuring PSEA measures are implemented across the organization.
6. Develop relevant policies, staff training, and designated responsible staff to ensure full implementation of this policy across the organization and its activities.
7. Completing a full code of conduct outlining reporting measures, best practices for investigation, and complete organizational principles regarding harassment, gender, and discrimination.
8. Ensure all programs, policies, and projects are designed to minimize the risks of violence, exploitation, and abuse and take into account that risk levels will vary for members of different at-risk groups. This includes situational risk assessments and mitigating measures if risks for sexual exploitation or abuse seem high.
9. Ensure all employees and contractors receive and sign a copy of the PSEA policy and code of conduct.

VI. Reporting

Forests Intl. has designated a staff person in their Canada office (Anne Herteis – anne@forestsinternational.org) to receive complaints of sexual exploitation or abuse occurring during Forests Intl. projects. Reports may be made anonymously or include a name. Detailed forms and procedures for recording and reporting incidents are currently being developed by Forests Intl. staff and Board. Any incidents found to be credible during investigation (below) will be reported to appropriate national and international bodies, including meeting Global Affairs Canada's expectations for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse in international assistance when applicable.

VII. Investigation

Forests Intl. will undertake investigations of all reports made. These will be undertaken with care and sensitivity of victims, ensuring that all available resources are put in place to support victims and prevent further trauma and re-victimization during an investigation. When an incident is complex or involves potential conflicts of interest with staff and management a third party will be contacted to complete an investigation.

VIII. Enforcement and Disciplinary Action

Forests Intl. will enforce a range of disciplinary measures and sanctions for all substantiated cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, which may include termination and referral to legal authorities when appropriate. In cases involving a perpetrator not employed by Forests Intl. we will take any measures possible to ensure appropriate action is taken consistent with this policy.

IX. Declaration

I _____ (print name) confirm that I have read and understood Forests Intl.'s code of conduct on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. I commit to upholding its principles and commitments (sections IV and V) and I commit to reporting any instances of sexual abuse, violence, exploitation, or harassment I witness in my role. I also understand that a breach of this code of conduct could result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal and / or prosecution.

Name:

Signature:

Date: