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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH) are unacceptable breaches of fundamental human rights and a deep betrayal of UNICEF's core values. The sexual exploitation and abuse of those who are supported by COSEDA, runs counter to all our personal and organisational values. And with our supporting partners and communities, COSEDA strives to improve its fight against SEA and SH.

1.2 Purpose and Scope

This document presents COSEDA's vision for preventing and responding to both SEA and SH and sets out concrete strategies and interventions for creating and maintaining a safe and respectful environment for the people COSEDA serves and for COSEDA staff and related personnel. This includes COSEDA staff members, consultants, individual contractors, volunteers, interns, and professionals on mission.

Protections against SEA and SH target two different but related areas:

- **SEA** is the abuse or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes or the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature by UN personnel, their implementing partners or other aid workers, against the people they serve.
- **SH** is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment by COSEDA personnel, or against any other individual.

2. VISION

2.1 Vision

COSEDA strives to support the rights of individuals and communities it serves to access the necessary protection they deserve without fear of sexual exploitation and abuse; the right of COSEDA staff members and associated personnel to feel supported, respected and empowered to provide assistance in an environment free from sexual harassment; and the right of survivors of SEA and SH to access timely and confidential investigation and effective and safe assistance and support.

2.2 Goals

- An Organisational Culture of zero tolerance:** strives to build and nurture an organisational culture based on Accountability where there is a zero tolerance for SEA and SH, where rights are recognized, promoted and protected and where violations are actively prevented.
- Reporting mechanisms that are safe and trusted:** Empower and support individuals, communities, COSEDA personnel and partners to feel safe to report violations and to feel safe that reports will be handled in a manner that respects due process and other human rights.
- Swift and Credible Investigation and Sanctions:** Ensure a fair process for swift and credible investigations and sanctions for violations by COSEDA personnel, and actively promote swift and fair investigations and sanctions by (as appropriate) vendors, and related partners.
- Survivor-Centred Response:** Provide survivor-centred assistance and support that is timely, predictable, sustainable and adequately resourced.
- Engaging communities in the fight against SEA and SH:** Engage and equip individuals and communities, COSEDA personnel and relevant partners as allies in preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

2.3 Principles

The following principles underpin and inform COSEDA's strategy:

- The communities that COSEDA serves have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to receive assistance without threat of exploitation and abuse;
- COSEDA strives to ensure zero tolerance for SEA and SH. As such, it has a responsibility to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and a responsibility to provide timely, confidential, and effective investigation, assistance and support to survivors;
- All COSEDA personnel have the right to work in an environment free from sexual harassment;
- All COSEDA personnel are expected to act with tolerance, sensitivity and respect for diversity. They have the obligation to ensure that they do not engage in, condone or tolerate behaviour that would constitute sexual harassment.

2.4 Values

COSEDA's core values are central to how it prevents and responds to SEA and SH:

- **Accountability:** COSEDA and its personnel have an obligation to account for organizational and personal behaviour and accept responsibility for their conduct in a transparent manner. maintains transparency and accountability in all its activities
- **Local empowerment and sustainability:** All COSEDA personnel are dedicated to empowering communities it serves to attain their wellbeing in a dignified and respectful manner.
- **Collaboration:** COSEDA personnel strive to foster partnerships with local communities and supporting partners to enhance social and economic development.
- **Equity and Inclusivity:** COSEDA personnel strive to promote equal and inclusive development through active participation of marginalized groups, individuals and communities, to enjoy equal access to resources and opportunities.

3. STRATEGIC FOCUS

3.1 An Organisational Culture of zero tolerance being built through Accountability, Prevention and Gender

Equality

a) Accountability

COSEDA will use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people it seeks to assist. This accountability will drive all COSEDA actions on SEA and SH and will operate on three levels:

- Individual Accountability: All COSEDA personnel are accountable for regulating their conduct at all times in a manner befitting their status as international civil servants, including in their private lives when not at work. They are expected to support an

organisational culture of accountability, local empowerment, sustainability, and equity and inclusivity, that deters violations.

- Leadership Accountability: The Executive Director together with Senior Management are accountable for setting the tone from the top and guiding the organisation in preventing and responding to SEA and SH in all contexts. They will prioritise the resourcing of programmes, teams and structures to enable effective prevention and response measures to be rolled out. They will lead in creating an organisational culture of zero tolerance based on accountability, local empowerment, sustainability, and equity and inclusivity, that deters violations.
- Organisational Accountability: COSEDA as an organisation is accountable to act on complaints – that is, to provide support to survivors; to conduct impartial and confidential investigations.

b) Prevention and Deterrence

COSEDA will strive to strengthen an organisational culture of prevention and deterrence. This will start at the top, where prevention is to be actively promoted through openness, where speaking up and speaking out are encouraged, where difficult discussions are facilitated, and where zero tolerance is demonstrated through consistent and sustained actions, including an active demonstration of COSEDA's core values, starting with COSEDA leadership.

c) Gender Equality

Sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment become possible when there are imbalances of power and opportunities for exploiting such imbalances.

COSEDA Gender considerations are taken into account during recruitment processes. This approach to ensure that both women and men have equal opportunities for employment, which contributes to a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

In addition, COSEDA will invest its resources for integration of gender considerations into all its program interventions to promote participation of women and adolescent girls. These efforts will be conducted in an inclusive and collaborative manner.

3.2 Reporting Mechanisms that are Safe and Trusted

Recognising that reporting procedures in cases of SEA and SH are very different, COSEDA will create an environment where, in both situations, individuals, communities, COSEDA personnel and partners feel safe to report violations and trust that immediate and decisive action will be taken against perpetrators.

In cases of SEA, complaint mechanisms will be safe, gender-sensitive, and appropriate to the context. They will be developed in consultation with affected communities, particularly those most vulnerable, and linked to services for survivors.

In cases of SH (only), COSEDA will be guided by the Policy on Sexual Harassment and in keeping with its Duty of Care to its personnel.

Confidentiality interests and the interests of survivors will be considered before and during all cases and protections from retaliation will be offered.

For both SEA and SH, the Executive Director and Senior Management will actively promote for a conducive environment for personnel and non-personnel to speak up, and consistent with COSEDA organizational values of accountability, local empowerment, sustainability, and equity and inclusivity.

4. OPERATIONALISATION

4.1 Leaders as Champions

COSEDA leadership, from the Executive Director through Senior Management at headquarters, will be equipped to champion prevention, an organisational culture of trust, and workplace practices that promote individual and organisational accountability. Leadership and management practices in COSEA will be grounded in the code of conduct.

4.2 Communication

Clear, timely and open communication is a key enabler of this strategy. COSEDA leadership through the Executive Director, will ensure that there is a dedicated and clear communication plan in place.

Emmanuel Ramba,
Executive Director

