

# Tip sheet



## Safe recruitment

For civil society organisations in South Sudan

This tip sheet covers general safe recruitment practices for civil society organisations (CSOs) in South Sudan. The tip sheet will be useful for all staff involved in any stage of the recruitment process, and especially those involved in Human Resources (HR) department.

### Safe recruitment is key to effective safeguarding

- Safe recruitment means integrating safeguarding elements into every step of the recruitment cycle.
- It helps ensure that employers bring on board people with proven safe behaviours and that risks can be identified and managed from an early stage.
- All CSO staff and volunteers, especially those who have direct contact with vulnerable populations, have the power to carry out Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH).
- Recruiting leaders and staff with a commitment to and an understanding of and willingness to learn about the importance of safeguarding can contribute to a safer organisation culture, safe programmes and can help prevent SEAH. **Read more about safe programming [here](#).**

#### Remember!

- Take a risk-based approach. Identify risks and develop mitigation strategies throughout a recruitment cycle.
- Prioritise safeguarding staff and others over deadlines and other factors. Safe recruitment practices should not be compromised for any reason, including a demand from the donors or urgency to fill up positions.
- Have a clear safeguarding policy and detailed safe recruitment checklist.

## Follow a safe recruitment cycle



## Job description and application process

All job descriptions should:

- List all job related and safeguarding responsibilities expected of applicants. For example: “all staff must be familiar with and adhere to X organisation’s code of conduct and safeguarding policy” or “this role has specific safeguarding responsibilities, including...”.
- Make a reference to the organisation’s code of conduct and safeguarding policy.
- Include a section on the organisation’s commitment to abide by safeguarding procedures and its code of conduct and other related policies. For example, “X organisation is committed to its code of conduct and safeguarding policies and any staff who is found guilty of contravening these will be held accountable accordingly”.
- Include an applicant’s self-declaration statement of all previous misconduct/convictions of sexual related and other issues (including circumstances of termination of past employment).
- For roles that do not require an application (e.g. community mobilisers), a verbal explanation of key roles and safeguarding responsibilities should be given and self-declaration statement and signature obtained (for those who are illiterate, you can gather a thumb print).

## Advertising

- Write up job adverts and make sure to include the organisation's commitment to safeguarding.
- Use different advertising platforms to be able to reach a more diverse and wide population. For instance, radio, newspapers, NGO Forum, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp groups and professional groups.
- For informal jobs, actively speaking to different groups or leaders like the sheik al hila, women and youth leaders within the community or area can help in reaching out to a wide and diverse population.

## Shortlisting applications

- Set in place a shortlisting-criteria that takes into consideration professional requirements. While shortlisting, the committee should not discriminate based on tribe, gender, disability or any other reason.
- Establish a shortlisting committee of at least two people to ensure key information is not missed. The number of people depends on the number of applications received but the minimum should be two and maximum of five.
- For informal jobs advertised through community leaders/groups, the shortlisting committee can comprise at least two community members/leaders. To ensure a fair process and avoid existing community structures causing bias, at least one staff member from the organisation should be in this committee.

## Interviews

- Establish a diverse interview panel that consists of at least two people.
- Carry out interviews for volunteers and for informal workers. Involve community members/leaders in the interview panel for informal workers.
- The interview should be structured to understand an applicant's:
  - **Attitude and values** towards programme participants, vulnerable adults, women, children and young people etc. as relevant to your organisation and programmes. Ask questions on SEAH.
  - **Motivation to work** for your organisation and in the relevant position.
  - **Past behaviour** as this can provide an indication of future behaviour. Ask questions on previous allegations, investigations and/or disciplinary actions relevant to SEAH taken against the candidate.
- Read this [RSH bitesize on safeguarding interview and reference check questions](#).

## Reference checks and vetting

- A person's past behaviour can help with understanding their future behaviour. For all staff, including volunteers, ask for up to five references from previous managers, peers or

individuals in another organisation/profession. It is good practice for human resources staff from the candidate's reference organisation to be involved in writing or signing off a reference. The most recent employer must be among the references. Work on the assumption that two of the five may respond (note that there can be reluctance from previous employers to provide references due to several reasons).

- Reference checks should be gathered through emails, phone calls or virtual meetings. Sometimes references may require to be reminded to respond to emails through phone calls. On other occasions references may be busy or out of network coverage to respond to emails so references can be gathered through phone calls and recorded if possible.
- Ensure that all the reference check questions have been answered in the reference received. **Read this note for example reference check questions.** Follow up on unanswered questions can be made either through emails or phone calls.
- Due to lack of accessible criminal record and also because most SEAH concerns are not reported to police, it is challenging to carry out background checks (vetting) for new staff members. Therefore, other partners like the **Misconduct Disclosure Scheme** can be used for to check information on candidates.

## Contracting

- A contract or an agreement should be issued to a successful candidate for formal/informal staff and volunteers
- The staff/volunteer contract should be shared when the recruiting team are confident that the two reference checks and relevant background checks are satisfactory.
- Clearly written copies of the organisation's Code of Conduct and safeguarding policies should accompany the contract and be signed and filed together. No signed contract is valid unless the code of conduct and safeguarding policies are also signed.
- The contract should include a section where implications of breaching the Code of Conduct or safeguarding policies is made clear.
- A detailed explanation (verbal) of the contents of the contract, code of conduct and safeguarding policies should be made to illiterate staff. They should then be given a chance to ask questions which should be answered and then their approval through a signature or an appropriate alternative obtained.

## Orientation

- Safeguarding should be included in all staff orientations and should be conducted within the first two weeks of employment. Staff should be trained using a comprehensive safeguarding package that should include code of conduct and related policies, SEAH risks, expected behaviour, reporting concerns, confidentiality, receiving complaints and consequences of misconduct - among others.
- Staff should be given the opportunity to ask questions and challenge assumptions in a safe space so they are aware of the behaviour that is expected of them in their work and private lives.
- Safeguarding refresher trainings should also be conducted annually or bi-annually.