



SSI Professional Conduct, Non-Discrimination, and Non-Harassment Policy

Purpose

At the Species Saviour Initiative (SSI), we are committed to fostering a positive, respectful, and inclusive working environment for everyone. People are at the heart of conservation, and our success depends on creating spaces where diverse voices, perspectives, and talents are valued. All SSI Staff and Delivery Partners are required to uphold professional and respectful conduct, free from discrimination and harassment, in every aspect of their work.

Scope

This Policy applies to all SSI employees, interns, fellows, volunteers, and representatives (jointly, “**SSI Staff**”), as well as SSI grantees/awardees, contractors, suppliers, consultants, and their employees, sub-grantees/awardees, and representatives (jointly, “**Delivery Partners**”) engaged by SSI.

Our Principles and Actions

All SSI Staff are expected to contribute to a working environment grounded in mutual respect, professionalism, and effective collaboration. In alignment with SSI’s values and Code of Conduct, SSI maintains a **zero-tolerance stance** against any form of discrimination or harassment by SSI Staff or Delivery Partners.

1. Commitment to Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity

SSI prohibits discrimination based on:

- race, ethnicity, color, nationality, or ancestry
- religion or creed (including religious dress or grooming)
- sex, pregnancy, childbirth, lactation, breastfeeding, and related medical conditions
- reproductive health decisions
- disability (physical, intellectual, sensory, or mental health conditions)
- citizenship status or statelessness
- marital status (including partnerships and civil unions as recognized by law)
- caregiver or family status
- genetic information
- age
- sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression
- medical condition
- military or veteran status
- caste, or any status or characteristic protected under applicable law.

This includes discrimination based on perceived characteristics or association with individuals belonging to any of the categories above.

SSI is committed to ensuring **equal opportunity** based on merit, qualifications, and capability. Recruitment, hiring, promotions, compensation, training, performance evaluations,

transfers, disciplinary action, and all employment-related decisions will be fair, equitable, and merit-based.

2. Commitment to a Harassment-Free Workplace

SSI does not tolerate harassment of any kind, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based on protected characteristics and that:

- interferes with an individual's work performance, or
- creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

This includes actions that may be intended as "harmless" or "playful" but are perceived as unwelcome, disrespectful, or degrading by the recipient or others.

3. Commitment to a Sexual Harassment-Free Workplace

SSI prohibits all forms of sexual harassment. This includes:

- unwelcome sexual advances,
- requests for sexual favors, and
- other verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Sexual harassment is deemed to occur when such conduct interferes with work performance or creates a hostile, intimidating, degrading, or offensive environment.

Even if participation in sexual conversations or activities appears voluntary, it will still constitute harassment if the individual later expresses that the behavior was unwelcome. Additionally, **consensual sexual relationships** may still constitute harassment if they become pervasive enough to negatively affect the work environment or the work performance of others not involved.

4. Compliance Across Physical and Virtual Environments

This Policy applies to **all work-related settings**, including but not limited to:

- field sites, offices, and conservation project locations
- business trips, site visits, conferences, and workshops
- meetings (both in-person and virtual)
- work-sponsored social events
- online platforms, email, and social media communications.

This Policy covers behavior during and outside working hours if such conduct negatively impacts the work environment, SSI's reputation, or the rights and safety of others.

Implementation

All SSI Staff and Delivery Partners must comply with this Policy and ensure that their teams and representatives understand what constitutes discrimination, harassment, bullying, or

inappropriate conduct. SSI is committed to fostering a safe and respectful workplace by strictly prohibiting any behavior that degrades, intimidates, threatens, or harms others.

Prohibited Behaviors

General Misconduct

Conduct that makes any individual feel degraded, threatened, or intimidated is strictly forbidden. SSI will not tolerate disruptive, bullying, threatening, or violent behavior, even if it does not rise to the level of unlawful harassment.

Discrimination and Harassment

Actions or behaviors that could be perceived as discriminatory or harassing will not be tolerated, including but not limited to:

- Using slurs, insults, epithets, disparaging remarks, or jokes toward an individual or group based on a legally protected characteristic under applicable law. This includes remarks intended as “harmless” or “playful” but experienced as offensive.
- Initiating or engaging in hate speech, or promoting violence, harassment, or discrimination, whether in person, on social media, or through other mediums.
- Circulating or displaying written, visual, or graphic materials that show hostility or incite violence against individuals because of their protected status.
- Negative stereotyping or comments about traits linked to protected characteristics, such as cultural dress, accents, names, or physical features (e.g., hair textures or hairstyles).
- Failing to provide reasonable accommodations for religious practices or disability.
- Disclosing someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity without their permission.
- Repeatedly and intentionally misgendering someone.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment of any form is prohibited, including but not limited to:

- Making sexually suggestive or explicit comments, jokes, or innuendos.
- Commenting inappropriately about someone’s appearance, body, or private life.
- Unwanted physical contact, including touching, hugging, patting, or brushing against someone.
- Making obscene gestures or suggestive sounds.
- Displaying or sharing sexually explicit or suggestive pictures, materials, or objects.
- Pursuing or flirting persistently against someone’s will.
- Sexual bribery or applying pressure for sexual activity.

Bullying and Unprofessional Conduct

Bullying, intimidation, and unprofessional conduct are strictly prohibited, including but not limited to:

- Yelling, shouting, using profanity, or making threats.
- Intimidating physical behavior, physical assault, or violent actions.
- Making unreasonable demands that risk health or safety, or placing excessive pressure on time and resources.
- Withholding resources or information necessary for someone to do their job, including intentionally excluding them from meetings or communications.
- Sabotaging or taking credit for another person's work.
- Spreading malicious, false, or harmful statements about others.
- Publicly disclosing private information about another's health, family, or other legally protected personal details.
- Possessing or using weapons or firearms in the workplace.
- Committing safety violations that present risks of serious injury.
- Engaging in conduct contrary to the interests of SSI or that interferes with the rights and safety of others, their property, or SSI's property.

Reasonable Accommodations

SSI is committed to ensuring that all individuals have full access to equal opportunities. To this end:

- **Disability Accommodation:** Qualified employees with disabilities will be provided with reasonable accommodations to enable them to perform essential job functions, as long as doing so does not create an undue hardship on SSI.
- **Religious Accommodation:** SSI will make reasonable accommodations for religious practices and observances unless such accommodation imposes an undue hardship on SSI's operations.

Reporting Concerns

Any SSI Staff or Delivery Partner who experiences, observes, or becomes aware of conduct that, in good faith, they believe violates this Policy must immediately report the possible violation. SSI will promptly and thoroughly investigate all complaints in line with established investigation procedures.

Every effort will be made to protect the privacy of all complainants, reporters, and subjects of a complaint. While SSI cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, information about the complaint and investigation will only be shared on a strict need-to-know basis.

Retaliation is strictly prohibited. No one who raises a concern in good faith, or participates in an investigation, will be penalized, harassed, or otherwise disadvantaged as a result.

Consequences of Policy Violations

If an investigation confirms that a violation of this Policy has occurred by SSI Staff, SSI will take appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, in line with organizational procedures and applicable law.

For Delivery Partners, violation of this Policy or non-compliance with related contractual obligations may result in remedial action, including termination of contracts, suspension of funding, or disqualification from future partnerships with SSI.

Definitions

- **Bullying:** Persistent, malicious, unwelcome, severe, and pervasive mistreatment that harms, intimidates, offends, degrades, or humiliates an individual. Bullying may be verbal, physical, or otherwise. A single act will not normally constitute bullying unless especially severe or egregious.
- **Caste:** An individual's perceived position in a social hierarchy structure that assigns unequal status at birth, often based on notions of purity, occupation, or social standing, and typically restricting opportunities and interactions.
- **Discrimination:** Any unequal treatment, exclusion, or restriction based on legally protected characteristics such as race, ethnicity, national origin, caste, religion, sex (including pregnancy or reproductive health decisions), disability, marital or family status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, citizenship, genetic information, military/veteran status, or other status protected by applicable law. This includes discrimination based on perception or association.
- **Hate Speech:** Any expression—verbal, written, or behavioral—that degrades, vilifies, or incites hostility, hatred, or violence toward an individual or group based on protected characteristics or perceived protected characteristics.
- **Legally Protected Characteristics:** Traits, identities, or statuses protected under national, state, or local law.
- **Reasonable Accommodation:** Necessary and appropriate modifications or adjustments that do not impose undue hardship, designed to ensure equal access and participation for individuals with disabilities or for those with religious practices requiring accommodation.
- **Retaliation:** Any adverse action taken against an individual as a result of good faith reporting of suspected violations of this Policy or participation in an investigation. Retaliation may include unfair treatment, harassment, intimidation, or negative changes to work conditions.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favor, or other verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that interferes with work, is made a condition of employment, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Sexual harassment may occur across or within genders, and may arise even when interactions appear consensual if they are unwelcome, pervasive, or disruptive to the work environment.