

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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The whole text of the present Policy, as well as the documents derived from it, including those in Annexes, have been written in French and English, both versions being deemed authentic, but for legal purposes the text in English is to be given priority of interpretation.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to protect people, particularly children, at risk adults and beneficiaries of assistance, from any harm that may be caused due to their coming into contact with IMPACT. This includes harm arising from:

- The conduct of staff or personnel associated with IMPACT.
- The design and implementation of IMPACT's projects and activities.

The policy lays out the commitments made by IMPACT¹, and informs staff and associated personnel² of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

This policy does not cover:

- Sexual harassment in the workplace – this is dealt with under IMPACT's Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy.
- Safeguarding concerns in the wider community not perpetrated by IMPACT or associated personnel.

DEFINITION OF SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect³.

In the NGO sector, we understand it to mean protecting people, including children and at risk adults, from harm that arises from coming into contact with our staff, our associated personnel, or projects.

A specific definition on child safeguarding is provided in the glossary below.

SCOPE

- All staff contracted by IMPACT.

¹ On 15th October 2018, IMPACT signed on to the [Canadian Council for International Co-operation's \(CCIC\) Leaders' Pledge on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct](#). This commitment represents: *"Our shared commitment as Canada's global development and humanitarian leaders to ensure the full implementation of practices and policies that will protect and respond to our own staff, volunteers, and the communities we serve. As a sector, we recognize our duty of care to all the people we work with, which is further amplified by power imbalances inherent in our work. We are committed to creating safe and respectful workplaces and programs that promote gender equality and are free from gender-based violence, including by addressing and responding to all abuse of power, holding people to account, and protecting the vulnerable..."*. The organization committed to take additional steps to improve policy and practice with respect to sexual misconduct (including sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and sexual harassment), including within their organisations and throughout their interactions with partners, communities, and people with whom they work.

² Associated personnel include but are not limited to the following: consultants; volunteers; contractors; project visitors including e.g. journalists, photographers, donors, etc.

³ NHS 'What is Safeguarding? Easy Read' 2011

- Associated personnel while engaged with work or visits related to IMPACT, including but not limited to the following: consultants; volunteers; contractors; project visitors including e.g. journalists, photographers, donors, etc.

POLICY STATEMENT

IMPACT believes that everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. IMPACT will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by staff or associated personnel.

This policy will address the following areas of safeguarding: child safeguarding, adult safeguarding, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

IMPACT commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through the three pillars of prevention, reporting, and response.

PREVENTION

IMPACT RESPONSIBILITIES

IMPACT will:

- Ensure all staff have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy.
- Design and undertake all its projects and activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with the organisation. This includes the way in which information about individuals in our projects is gathered and communicated.
- Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing, and deploying staff and associated personnel.
- Ensure staff receive training on safeguarding at a level appropriate with their role in the organisation.
- Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

Child safeguarding

IMPACT staff and associated personnel must not:

- Initiate or become involved in sexual relationships with children (anyone under the age of 18 regardless of the legal age in the country of operation). Such relationships will lead to legal consequences and immediate dismissal. Sexual activities with children with consent will be treated in an equal manner. Furthermore, mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense.
- Sexually abuse or exploit children.
- Subject a child to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect.
- Engage in any commercially exploitative activities with children including child labour or trafficking.

- Hire children as ‘house help’ (domestic workers⁴) or for any work that is likely to be hazardous or interfere with the child’s education, or that may be harmful to the child’s, physical, mental, social, spiritual, or moral development.
- Have children stay with them in their home (overnight or for extended periods) especially when there is no other responsible adult around.

IMPACT staff and associated personnel must:

- Conduct themselves in a way that safeguards children and youth from all forms of discrimination, abuse, mistreatment, and neglect.
- Make sure that their work with children is visible to others and generally not spend excessive time alone with children and away from others.
- Report all concerns regarding actual or potential child abuse, mistreatment, or any other violation of this Policy according to IMPACT’s Whistleblower Policy. IMPACT staff will do this trusting that they shall be protected and supported by the organisation.
- Keep data about the children and youth in IMPACT’s projects confidential (e.g. information on their family background, health status, etc.). This principle of confidentiality also applies beyond the point at which staff cease their employment with IMPACT.
- Reveal all information about any charges against them pertaining to child abuse either at the time of joining IMPACT or arising during the time of their employment.

Adult safeguarding

IMPACT staff and associated personnel must not:

- Sexually abuse or exploit at risk adults.
- Subject an at risk adult to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect.

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

IMPACT staff and associated personnel must not:

- Enter into sexual relationships with members of the local community that are part of the project, or are receiving assistance or services from IMPACT, since these relationships are based on inherently unequal power dynamics, and are likely to undermine the credibility and integrity of IMPACT’s work.
- Exchange money, employment, goods, favours, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour. This includes any exchange of IMPACT services that are due to participants in the IMPACT project.

Additionally, IMPACT staff and associated personnel are obliged to:

- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy.
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by an IMPACT staff member or associated personnel to the appropriate staff member as per the procedures outlined below.

⁴ The definition of child domestic work (“house help”) does not include occasional babysitting, gardening, help during school holidays or out of school time.

REPORTING

ENABLING REPORTS

IMPACT will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to staff and the communities we work with.

Any staff reporting concerns or complaints through formal whistleblowing channels (or if they request it) will be protected by IMPACT's Whistleblower Policy.

IMPACT will also accept complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners, and official bodies.

How to report a safeguarding concern

IMPACT staff must report the concern to a direct supervisor or the Executive Director. All IMPACT staff acting in a supervisory capacity are responsible for ensuring a respectful workplace that is healthy and safe by applying and complying with all IMPACT policies, procedures, and work environment arrangements that serve to prevent any safeguarding violations.

Any direct supervisor or other staff member who receives a report of any allegation of a violation of this Safeguarding Policy must forward the report immediately to the Ottawa office.

If an IMPACT staff's complaint involves a direct supervisor, then the incident must be reported to the Executive Director. If the complaint involves the Executive Director, the incident should be reported to an IMPACT Head of Department who will communicate with a member of the Executive Committee of the Board. If a complaint involves a member of the Board, the incident should be reported to the Executive Director or to a member of the Executive Committee of the Board. All reports must be made within 24 hours.

IMPACT will actively intervene at any indication of a possibly hostile or violent situation. This intervention may include calling the appropriate authorities.

RESPONSE

IMPACT will tailor the nature of the investigative process to the particular circumstances of each case. However, the investigation may include:

- interviewing the complainant and the respondent;
- interviewing any witnesses to the conduct;
- gathering and reviewing any relevant documents, telephone, voicemail, data, text messages, and any other electronic record including written statements, notes, emails, and pictures (if applicable);
- making findings of fact and conclusions;

- communicating the findings and conclusions to the parties involved, as appropriate;
- determining the appropriate follow up action;
- communicating the breach of Policy and subsequent steps taken to Board and the donor.

IMPACT will apply appropriate disciplinary measures to staff found in breach of this Policy.

IMPACT will offer support to survivors of harm caused by staff or associated personnel, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation). Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor, and will be provided by IMPACT to the fullest extent possible.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need to know basis only, and should be kept secure at all times.

ASSOCIATED POLICIES

- Code of Conduct
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Data Consent Policy
- Health, Safety, and Security Policy
- Photo and Video Policy
- Whistleblower Policy
- Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Beneficiary

A person who directly receives goods or services from an IMPACT project. Misuse of power can also apply to the wider community with which IMPACT works, and also can include exploitation by giving the perception of being in a position of power.

Child

A person below the age of 18.

Child safeguarding

Child safeguarding is the responsibility that organisations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programs do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organisation has about children's safety within the communities in which they work, are reported to the appropriate authorities⁵.

⁵ Definition from *Child Safeguarding Standards, 2014*.

Examples of when a child safeguarding concern may arise, and that require response⁶:

- The organisation works with adults and not children. The focus of one of the projects is improving women's access to loans and credit in rural areas. This project is very successful as it has provided women with skills, access to markets, and micro-finance opportunities. However during the evaluation of the project, the organisation asks about unintended consequences. A few of the women describe having to leave their children at home alone when participating in the project and they are worried that their children are unsafe at these times.
- A male member of the local staff asks for a few days off to get married. Afterwards, it becomes clear that the bride is under 18.
- The organisation produced a publication for supporters or donors, which featured a photo and story about a girl and her family who were having difficulties in their village. The girl and family had given permission for the story to be published. The week following publication project staff tell HQ that community leaders, who saw the publication, were angry and have driven the girl and her family out of the community.

Harm

Psychological, physical and any other infringement of an individual's rights.

Neglect and negligent treatment

Allowing for context, resources and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child's healthy physical, spiritual, moral, and mental development. It includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm and provide for nutrition, shelter and safe living/working conditions. It may also involve maternal neglect during pregnancy as a result of drug or alcohol misuse and the neglect and ill treatment of a disabled child.

Physical abuse

The use of physical force that causes actual or likely physical injury or suffering (e.g., hitting, shaking, burning, female genital mutilation, torture).

Psychological harm

Emotional or psychological abuse, including (but not limited to) humiliating and degrading treatment such as bad name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)⁷

⁶ Keeping Children Safe's *Child Safeguarding Standards*, 2014. <http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk/>

⁷ The term derives from the United Nations Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13).

The term used to refer to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse of affected populations by staff or associated personnel.

Sexual abuse

The term “sexual abuse” includes all forms of sexual violence, including incest, early and forced marriage, rape, involvement in pornography, and sexual slavery. Child sexual abuse also may include indecent touching or exposure, using sexually explicit language towards a child, and showing children pornographic material⁸.

Sexual activity

Physical contact of a sexual nature.

Sexual assault

Sexual activity with another person who does not consent. It is a violation of bodily integrity and sexual autonomy and is broader than narrower conceptions of “rape”, especially because (a) it may be committed by other means than force or violence, and (b) it does not necessarily entail penetration⁹.

Sexual exploitation

The term “sexual exploitation” means 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. This definition includes human trafficking and modern slavery.

Survivor

The person who has been abused or exploited. The term “survivor” is often used in preference to “victim” as it implies strength, resilience, and the capacity to survive, however it is the individual’s choice how they wish to identify themselves.

At risk adult

Sometimes also referred to as “vulnerable adult”. A person who is or may be in need of care by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

⁸ Definition from Save the Children federation US: *Child Safeguarding Policy 2018*.

⁹ *Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Thematic Glossary of current terminology related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in the context of the United Nations*, 24th July, 2017.