

# Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults



# Policy Applicability Statement

This safeguarding policy is applicable to all individuals and entities involved with Impact Asia Foundation, either directly or indirectly. The following groups are specifically included:

- Members of the Executive Board of Impact Asia Foundation
- The Impact Asia Foundation team: including staff, volunteers, interns, trainees, and individuals engaged in work experience programs
- External service providers engaged by the organization
- Local partner organizations with a formal contractual relationship with Impact Asia Foundation
- Suppliers and vendors
- Any other individuals affiliated with Impact Asia Foundation who may have contact with children or access to sensitive information about them in the course of organizational activities
- Sponsors, donors, and supporters
- Journalists and media representatives
- Visitors to program sites, including anyone accompanying them

All these individuals and groups are expected to fully adhere to this policy and acknowledge their responsibility in maintaining the safety and protection of children. Non-compliance will be taken seriously and addressed in accordance with organizational procedures.

Warm regards,

**Khondker Emdadul Haq**

Trustee & Chairman

Impact Asia Foundation

## Child Safeguarding Policy Statement

At Impact Asia Foundation, we uphold a zero-tolerance approach toward all forms of child abuse and exploitation. Protecting the health, safety, and overall well-being of children—whether they are direct or indirect beneficiaries—is a fundamental aspect of every program we implement.

We recognize the potential risks posed by individuals associated with our work, including staff, donors, and partners, and treat these concerns with the utmost seriousness. The leadership of Impact Asia Foundation, including the Executive Director and Executive Committee, is deeply committed to creating a culture grounded in respect, empathy, and child-centered practices. Our goal is to foster environments where children are treated with dignity and are supported to grow and thrive emotionally, socially, and physically.

Impact Asia Foundation is also firmly guided by the “Do No Harm” principle, ensuring that any action taken in response to suspected or reported abuse is conducted with the utmost care. Above all, the best interests of the child will always guide our decisions and responses.

We are dedicated to the protection of all children, regardless of their background—including nationality, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, or other identity factors.

### Core Principles Guiding Our Safeguarding Commitment:

1. **Non-Discrimination:**

Every child is entitled to their rights without discrimination of any kind. This includes differences in race, gender, language, religion, political beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, social status, or any other distinction related to them or their guardians.

2. **Best Interests of the Child:**

All actions and programs carried out by Impact Asia Foundation are aligned with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), prioritizing the best interests of the child above all.

3. **Right to Life and Holistic Development:**

Every child has the inherent right to life and protection from harm, including violence and self-harm. We understand development in a broad sense—encompassing physical, mental, spiritual, moral, emotional, and social growth.

4. **Right to Participation and Expression:**

Children should have a voice in decisions affecting them at all levels—individually, within families, in organizations, and in broader policy-making. They must be empowered

to understand their rights, recognize abuse, and know how to seek help when needed.

5. **“Do No Harm” Principle:**

In line with international child safeguarding standards, Impact Asia Foundation ensures that our programs, policies, and responses are designed to avoid unintentional harm to children at all stages of engagement.

**Our Shared Responsibility:**

Child safeguarding is a collective responsibility shared by everyone involved in our work. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Staff members
- Board members
- Volunteers
- Interns
- Consultants
- Caregivers and interpreters
- Partner organizations
- Government and non-government representatives associated with Impact Asia Foundation

All individuals connected to our organization must uphold and actively support our commitment to child protection. Training, awareness, and accountability will be central to ensuring that children in our care are kept safe from harm at all times.

**Key Definitions**

The definitions provided below are intended to support the clear understanding of this policy and guide the conduct of all individuals and organizations operating under its scope.

**Children:** As defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a *child* is any human being under the age of 18. The term encompasses all individuals below this age, regardless of their development or maturity level. Protection of children includes the

obligation to provide appropriate supervision and take all reasonable steps to prevent them from experiencing harm.

**Adolescents:** As children enter their teenage years, they may face increased vulnerability to abuse, exploitation, and external influences beyond their immediate family. These risks can arise in educational institutions, peer circles, the broader community, or online environments. Threats may include—but are not limited to—criminal exploitation (such as gang involvement and trafficking), online abuse, sexual exploitation, and extremist ideologies that may lead to radicalization. This spectrum of environmental threats is often referred to as *contextual risk*.

**Vulnerable Adults:** For the purposes of this policy, a *vulnerable adult* is someone who may be unable to care for or protect themselves from harm or exploitation. Factors contributing to increased vulnerability may include, but are not limited to: gender identity or expression, health conditions (including mental health), disability, age, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic background, religion, economic status, geographic location, professional circumstances, or exposure to conflict and crisis.

**Children with Disabilities:** This refers to children who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments. When these impairments interact with barriers in the environment, they may hinder the child's full participation in society and limit their ability to enjoy rights and opportunities equal to their peers.

**Discrimination and Non-Discrimination:** *Discrimination* involves denying equal rights or opportunities to individuals or groups based on stereotypes or prejudices. It has a particularly harmful effect on children, who are especially vulnerable to exclusion. The principle of *non-discrimination* obliges us to actively ensure that marginalized or disadvantaged individuals and groups are granted equal access to their rights and protections.

**Child Protection:** At Impact Asia Foundation, *child protection* is defined as the responsibility to preserve the dignity, safety, and development of children. This includes fostering safe environments that respect children's rights and prioritize their best interests, while also ensuring effective mechanisms for preventing, detecting, and responding to any form of violence, neglect, abuse, or exploitation.

**Child Safeguarding:** *Child safeguarding* refers to the organization's commitment to ensuring that its activities, projects, and programs do not cause harm or increase the risk of harm to children. This includes the implementation of policies, procedures, and good practices aimed at protecting children from violence, abuse, or neglect throughout all aspects of our engagement.

**Positive Treatment of Children:** Impact Asia Foundation defines *positive treatment* as fostering relationships—between children, and between adults and children—that are rooted in deep respect, recognition of individual worth, and the upholding of each child's rights. These relationships are balanced, empathetic, and nurturing, cultivating environments of care and affection that support every child's full development and well-being.

**Child Well-being:** Child well-being is understood as the realization of children's rights and the full opportunity for each child to reach their potential. This includes the development of their talents, abilities, and skills in a supportive environment where they are empowered to grow into who they are meant to be.

**Best Interests of the Child Principle:** This principle holds that in any decision-making or action that affects a child or a group of children, their rights, needs, and best interests must be the top priority. It ensures that children are treated with dignity, that their holistic development is protected, and that their full range of rights is honored. Applying this principle requires continuous assessment of the impact of decisions on children, considering their unique circumstances, context, and perspectives—including any special needs they may have.

**Violence Against Children:** Violence against children involves the intentional use of physical force or power—either directly or as a threat—by or against a child, which results in or risks causing injury, death, psychological harm, developmental issues, or deprivation. This can occur in many forms and contexts.

**Child Abuse:** Child abuse includes a range of harmful behaviors that threaten a child's safety and well-being. Key forms include:

- **Physical Abuse:** The infliction of physical injury through actions such as hitting, shaking, or otherwise harming a child.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Actions that harm a child's emotional development or self-worth, including persistent criticism, threats, rejection, or belittling.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual activity with a child, including inappropriate touching, exploitation, or exposure to sexual content.
- **Neglect:** The failure to meet a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, education, medical care, and emotional support.
- **Bullying and Cyberbullying:** Repeated aggressive behavior that intends to hurt or intimidate, whether in-person or through digital platforms.

**Corporal Punishment:** This refers to any punishment that uses physical force with the intent of causing some degree of pain or discomfort, no matter how mild. Common forms include smacking, slapping, or spanking, whether with a hand or object. Non-physical punishments that degrade, humiliate, scare, threaten, or ridicule a child also fall under this category and are considered incompatible with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Physical Violence Against Children:** Any act that inflicts or poses a risk of inflicting physical harm on a child, whether intentional or as part of disciplinary measures.

**Emotional or Psychological Violence:** Includes actions that cause or threaten emotional harm or distress, such as isolating, degrading, intimidating, harassing, or rejecting a child. This form of abuse can occur in homes, schools, communities, or online environments and has long-lasting impacts on a child's mental health and self-esteem.

**Sexual Violence Against Children:** Sexual violence involves forcing, manipulating, or enticing a child to engage in sexual activities, whether by adults or by other children who hold greater power due to age, maturity, or social influence. This includes any act involving physical contact—either completed or attempted—with or without penetration. It also encompasses non-contact offenses such as sexual harassment, exposing a child to sexual acts or materials, or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

**Sexual exploitation:** Sexual exploitation is another form of sexual violence, involving the use of children in sexual activities in exchange for money, goods (such as food, shelter, or gifts), services, or status. This includes trafficking children for sexual purposes, child sex tourism, the creation and distribution of child pornography (including online), and involving children in live or recorded sexual performances.

**Child Abuse:** Child abuse refers to any act—or failure to act—that infringes upon a child's rights, harms their well-being, or jeopardizes their development. Abuse may be physical, emotional, psychological, or social in nature. Perpetrators can include adults, peers, institutions, or society at large. Abuse is particularly defined by its severity or by its repetitive nature over time.

**Harmful Practices:** Harmful practices are deeply rooted in social norms and traditions that violate children's dignity, bodily integrity, and basic freedoms. Often imposed by families or communities, such practices include child marriage, female genital mutilation, and corporal punishment. *Corporal punishment* refers to the use of physical force to inflict pain or discomfort for disciplinary purposes—commonly by hitting a child with a hand or object. While socially accepted in some cultures, these practices are incompatible with children's rights and the principle of non-violence.

**Neglect and Negligent Treatment:** Neglect occurs when a caregiver persistently fails to meet a child's physical or psychological needs, despite having the means to do so. This lack of care often leads to significant harm in a child's health, safety, and development. It includes failure to supervise, provide nutrition, healthcare, shelter, education, or protection from danger. Neglect can also begin prenatally, such as through substance abuse during pregnancy that puts a child's health at risk.

**Intimidation and Bullying (Including Cyberbullying):** Bullying is defined as repeated, intentional aggression—verbal, physical, psychological, or social—directed at a child by another child or group of children. It often occurs where there is a perceived or actual power imbalance. Bullying may happen in schools, playgrounds, or online platforms (cyberbullying), and it can cause serious harm to a child's self-esteem, mental health, and social development.

**Commercial Exploitation and Child Labour:** Child commercial exploitation involves forcing children to work or engage in activities that benefit others economically, at the expense of the child's health, education, or development. This form of exploitation undermines their rights and places their physical and emotional well-being in jeopardy.

**Institutional Violence Against Children:** Institutional violence refers to any form of abuse, neglect, or rights violations perpetrated by representatives of public or private institutions, including through discrimination or systemic mistreatment. Rather than offering care and protection, such actions further traumatize children and fail to promote their well-being, resilience, and rights.

**Gender-Based Violence:** Gender violence includes any act that causes or threatens physical, psychological, or sexual harm based on an individual's sex or gender identity. It may target children based on societal norms, roles, or inequalities, and can have lasting effects on their safety, development, and mental health.

**Revictimization:** Revictimization refers to the additional harm or trauma experienced by individuals who have previously been victims of violence or whose rights have been violated. This often happens when survivors are required to relive their traumatic experiences—particularly in institutional settings such as investigations or protective processes—and feel blamed, stigmatized, or dismissed by officials, the media, their communities, or even their personal circles. These retraumatizing experiences increase an individual's emotional vulnerability and elevate the risk of further harm or repeated abuse over time.

---

**Roles and Responsibilities in Safeguarding:** At Impact Asia Foundation, safeguarding children is a shared duty that applies to every individual, regardless of their specific job title or role. While child protection is everyone's responsibility, certain roles carry added responsibilities to ensure comprehensive implementation of the safeguarding policy.

### **Organizational Accountability**

- **Executive Board:** Holds ultimate accountability for overseeing and reviewing the safeguarding policy and ensuring it is integrated into all organizational practices.
- **Executive Director & Senior Management:** Charged with leading and coordinating the execution of the safeguarding framework and related protocols across all operational areas.



### **Key Responsibilities of Senior Management Include:**

- Establish and maintain safe environments both within Impact Asia Foundation offices and in the communities where programs are implemented.
- Promote awareness of the Safeguarding Policy and foster a strong organizational culture rooted in safety, dignity, and respect.
- Demonstrate leadership by actively prioritizing child protection in all areas of work and modeling responsible behavior.
- Ensure that safeguarding considerations are embedded into all planning, programming, and operational agendas.
- Allocate sufficient resources, tools, and support systems to facilitate effective implementation of safeguarding procedures.
- Respond appropriately and promptly to any safeguarding concerns, ensuring all cases are handled with care, confidentiality, and urgency.

All staff, including board members, team leaders, and volunteers, will be oriented on child safeguarding protocols to ensure full understanding and consistent application of the policy across the organization.

---

### **Prevention: A Proactive Approach to Safeguarding**

At Impact Asia Foundation, the prevention of abuse is a central pillar of our safeguarding efforts. We are committed to creating and maintaining safe environments for children and vulnerable individuals by implementing robust systems and practices designed to minimize risk and uphold the highest standards of protection.

### **Key Preventative Measures Include:**

- Ensuring that all team members have access to the organization's Safeguarding Policy, fully understand it, and are aware of their individual responsibilities regarding the protection of children and other vulnerable groups.
- Conducting all activities and operations in a manner that actively minimizes the potential for harm to any individual who may come into contact with Impact Asia Foundation, whether directly or indirectly.

- Applying rigorous safeguarding measures throughout the recruitment, onboarding, management, and deployment of staff, volunteers, and other affiliated personnel.
  - Providing comprehensive safeguarding orientation and training tailored to the level of responsibility held by each staff member or associated partner within the organization.
- 

## **Risk Assessment and Management**

Before launching any new project or initiative, Impact Asia Foundation will conduct a thorough risk assessment to identify potential safeguarding risks and develop appropriate mitigation strategies. This process includes:

- Convening relevant stakeholders to analyze foreseeable risks.
- Formulating administrative or operational measures to mitigate identified risks.
- Documenting risks and mitigation strategies in a formal **Risk Register**, which will be monitored, reviewed, and updated on a regular basis to ensure continuous improvement and accountability.

By prioritizing prevention, we aim to cultivate a culture of safety, transparency, and accountability across all areas of our work.