

# **Child Safeguarding Policy**

**(4th Edition, 2023)**

**(Say NO to Abuse of Child & Young People)**



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## Introduction:

This Child Safeguarding Policy and its procedures, which apply to all operations and activities conducted by, or on behalf of, the Resource Development Foundation (RDF) in both our own programs and projects and projects implemented in partnership with any other like-minded organization in the Bangladesh.

The policy reaffirms and strengthens our commitment as an organization towards keeping children safe and protecting them from all forms of harm and abuse. This is an issue of critical importance for RDF and we see that the protection of children, the promotion of their wellbeing and upholding children's rights as the foundation of our work.

### Purpose of the Policy

The aim of the policy and procedures is to regulate how we work as an organization so that the children with which we come into contact (either directly or indirectly) are safeguarded and have their wellbeing promoted, and that our actions, while implementing programmes or institutional activities, do not cause any harm to children and you people.

While the Safeguarding Policy aims to be comprehensive, given the diverse range of settings and operations carried out by RDF, it is likely that there may be circumstances which are not covered or where there is a question about the application of the policy and procedures. In such situations, the Focal Person of Child Safeguarding at HQ in Dhaka (email to: [istiakazad@rdfbd.org](mailto:istiakazad@rdfbd.org)) should be contacted for further advice.

### Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, and procedures contained within it, the following working definitions are used:

#### Abuse

Used in its widest sense and includes physical, emotional/psychological and sexual abuse, neglect and negligent treatment, violence and exploitation in all forms.

#### Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and long lasting effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless and unloved, inadequate, or valued only so far as they meet the needs of another person. It can also involve age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, or causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

- **Neglect**

The persistent failure to meet the child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's physical or cognitive development.



- **Physical Abuse**

This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or care-giver feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child who they are looking after.

- **Sexual Abuse**

Involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening or gives consent. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g., rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic materials or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways/manners.

- **Child/Children**

Refers to anyone under the age of 18 years old, irrespective of the age of majority in their country, or the country where they are located or living.

- **Child Protection Incident**

Refers to when an allegation is made, even if it is un-substantiated, that a child is being abused or is likely to be abused.

- **Partners**

Those who have a contract with Resource Development Foundation and as such are required to comply with child safeguarding/child protection as a condition of the contract, such as NGOs and Community based organizations (CBOs), RDF works as “Co- Implementing Organization”, Member of Consortium for any project, etc. and our suppliers/vendors/other service providers, e.g. consultant, volunteers etc. .

- **Staff**

The term staff refers to anyone who works for or on behalf of Resource Development Foundation (RDF) on a full time or part time basis. As such it includes employed staff, interns, consultants, and members of the Council.



## Principles underpinning our Safeguarding Policy

*Our Safeguarding Policy is based upon a number of principles and beliefs, including:*

1. **All children have equal rights to protection** and to have their wellbeing and participation promoted.
2. All actions regarding child safeguarding must be taken in the best interest of children. This includes an understanding that in all our pro-programmes and activities we must ensure that we respect children's rights and **do not cause harm**.
3. Everybody has a responsibility for safeguarding.  
**This policy is mandatory for all those who work for or on behalf of RDF**, including staff, volunteers and partners. Although training, advice and support will be provided, everyone should actively participate so that they can carry out their responsibilities towards safeguarding children.
4. We work in a **transparent and open way** where child safeguarding is made a priority, recognizing that situations of abuse and harm are able to flourish when staff, volunteers, partners, children, families and community members do not feel able to raise their concerns.
5. **All reports** of concern regarding the safety and protection of a child **will be taken seriously**. Where necessary, appropriate steps will be taken to protect the child and to take action against the alleged perpetrator. This may include referrals to law enforcement and child protection agencies. In relation to allegations against staff, volunteers and partners, action may also include the suspension or termination of engagement or any type of cooperation.
6. We maintain **confidentiality** and do not disclose personal details of those involved in child protection concerns, including the names of those raising concerns unless it is necessary to pass on information to ensure that a child is protected (for example where a child may need specialist services or where a criminal offence may have been committed).
7. We work within the **framework of international and national laws and policies** regarding safeguarding.



## 1. Preventative Action: Putting the policy into practice:

**This section of the Policy identifies specific steps and concepts which translate the vision of safeguarding children into action.**

Child safeguarding runs across the whole organization and is not just associated with programmes and projects or Human Resources. The concept of thinking about safeguarding - and reducing risk - should be embedded in everything that we do, from recruiting a staff member or volunteer, to selecting a partner, through to running an activity and designing and implementing a program or other institutional activity (such as promotion and fundraising).

It should be remembered that although we normally think of safeguarding issues when an adult is mistreating a child, children can also be the perpetrators of abuse. This normally occurs where one child is in a position of power or influence (for example because the child is older, or the child being abused comes from a marginalized group) and is often referred to as 'bullying'.

In such cases while action is necessary to support the child being bullied, it is critical to remember that the perpetrator is also a child, and therefore interventions should be in the best interests of both children in terms of how to support the abused child and what response is required for the abusive child.

### 1.1. Human Resources

#### a. All Adults (including Board Members, staff, interns, volunteers and consultants)

*This section sets out the specific obligations and responsibilities for all adults working with/for Resource Development Foundation (RDF), whether paid or unpaid or full or part time.*

- The Safeguarding Policy applies to all those working with or on behalf of RDF. By agreeing to work with/for the organization, it is implied that the terms and conditions of the Safeguarding Policy have been accepted as a condition of involvement.
- All staff (including consultants and standing volunteers) are required to sign and abide by the **Code of Conduct** (a separate document) as a condition of their involvement with Resource Development Foundation (RDF). This sets out specific expectations of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- While orientation on the policy together with any necessary additional training regarding responsibilities and duty of care (particular to specific roles) will be provided, all adults have a



personal responsibility to seek further clarification and advice where they are not clear about what is expected of them.

- Breaching the Code of Conduct, Guide for Occasional Volunteers and Visitors or contravening the Child Safeguarding Policy may lead to suspension and termination of any type of engagement. This will be determined on a case by case basis, ensuring that applicable employment conditions and legislation are observed and with regard for the privacy and confidentiality of those concerned while any internal investigation is carried out. In addition, after a thorough consideration of the facts, we will decide whether the case needs to be reported to law enforcement authorities in full conformity with the law.

#### **b. Education, Advice & Support**

*This section sets out the efforts that will be undertaken to support the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy.*

- Within their probationary period, and no longer than three (3) months after appointment, all staff must be given guidance as to the Child Safeguarding Policy, and their responsibilities towards safeguarding children. Standing volunteers should also be included in such training.
- Depending upon the nature of the work being undertaken, the role of the staff and their background and experience, additional specialist training regarding child wellbeing, protection and safety should be provided.
- Records must be kept in HR files of all training/guidance meetings conducted with the date and list of attendees.

The **Child Safeguarding Focal Point** based at Field Level (e.g. based in Barguna) within Resource Development Foundation (RDF) is the primary source of advice and support in relation to child safeguarding concerns and the implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policy. The Child Safeguarding Focal Points are in turn supported by the Child Safeguarding Focal Point/Advisor at HQ in Dhaka.

#### **c. Awareness Raising**

- Staff and standing volunteers, as well as partners, communities, families, children and other stakeholders and all those working with/for RDF should be made aware of the Child Safeguarding Policy, and how to report a concern. This should be done in ways that are appropriate and accessible given the context.
- A copy of the Child Safeguarding Policy – including local adaptations – should be translated and made available in Bengali. Depending on the context, this should be provided in a variety of suitable formats, and could include posters or booklets etc.



#### **d. Child Safeguarding Focal Point**

The role of this person is to provide a point of contact, and to advise, support and assist country teams in the implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policies. Any senior official should be assigned as the Child Safeguarding Focal Point at HQ/Central level.

Ideally the role of the Focal Point should be assigned to someone with child protection/safeguarding knowledge and experience. However the role can be given to anyone who is committed and has the respect of the team.

**RDF respects the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the following five principles:**

- **Children's rights:** all RDF staff must respect and promote children's rights. Above all, they must protect the right of each child to live in safety, without risk of abuse or exploitation and must act, at all times, in the child's *best interests*.
- **Zero tolerance:** RDF will not tolerate any form of abuse and will take all necessary measures to implement the Child Safeguarding Policy.
- **Risk management:** RDF ensures that risks are identified and minimized from the planning stage through to the implementation stage of activities.
- **Everyone's responsibility:** the successful implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policy is based on the individual and shared responsibility of all RDF representatives including staff. RDF will seek to ensure that partner organizations' programmes also comply with international safe-guarding standards.
- **The duty of notification:** any suspected violation or any actual violation of the current Code of Conduct must be reported immediately to the supervisor or the RDF Country Child Safeguarding Focal Point. Confidentiality will be maintained through-out the entire procedure.



## Appendix 1 : Code of Conduct.

*The Code of Conduct must be signed by all staff and standing volunteers BEFORE commencing duties.*

Resource Development Foundation (RDF) considers all forms of abuse towards children to be unacceptable, and recognizes that it has a duty to safeguard children – that is to keep them safe, promote their wellbeing and protect them from abuse and harm. Neglect, physical, psychological/emotional and sexual violence are the main forms of abuse.

Our **Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures** set out the measures we will take to safeguard children. This includes proactive actions to prevent situations of abuse and harm occurring and reactive actions to respond to situations where a child is, or may be, suffering abuse.

**A child is any human under the age of 18 as stipulated by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989.**

As part of our Child Safeguarding Policy, it is a requirement that all staff (including paid employees, consultants and interns), whether full or part time, agree to abide by the Child Safeguarding Policy and specifically to agree to work in accordance with this **Code of Conduct** which sets out responsibilities for safeguarding children and expected behaviour of staff. **THIS IS A MANDATORY REQUIREMENT.**

Any form of unacceptable behaviour which breaches this Code of Conduct must be reported. In the case of situations which are not covered by the Code of Conduct, RDF expects its representatives to apply common sense whilst focusing on the “*child’s best interests*”.

**BY SIGNING THE CODE OF CONDUCT, I explicitly agree that:**

**I will always:**

- **Treat children with respect and equally**, regard-less of their age, sex, language, religion, opinion or nationality, ethnic or social origin, status, class, caste, sexual orientation, or any other personal characteristics.
- **Help children to take part in decisions** which concern them according to their age and their level of maturity.
- **Maintain a culture of communication** and create trust with the children and their families, communities, other staff and volunteers and representatives of partner organizations (if any) so that concerns may be shared and discussed.
- Use **non-violent and positive behaviour** methods when supervising children.





- Encourage children and communities to **speak openly about their interactions** with adults and with each other.
- **Inform** children and communities of their right to report any worrying situations and how they can raise a concern.
- **Empower children** so that they are in a position to better protect themselves.
- Make sure that another adult is present or **try to be visible** when I am in contact with a child.
- Try to **preserve the child's autonomy** and make sure that I do not do things that a child can do for herself/himself.
- Ensure that information concerning children, families and communities **remains confidential**.
- **Obtain permission** from the child and their parents before taking a photograph, recording or using the child's image, what they have said or their history. This includes explaining to children and their parents how the photos or messages will be used.
- Ensure that the child does **not pose in a degrading manner** or in a way that may be interpreted by others as having sexual connotations.
- Raise any **concerns and queries** concerning the Child Safeguarding Policy with my manager/supervisor or the Child Safeguarding Focal Point.
- Immediately report any suspicions or allegations to the Child Safeguarding Focal Point of behaviour which goes against the principles of the Child Safe-guarding Policy and Code of Conduct including any form of child abuse ; even if the information or allegation is vague.

**Declaration:**

**I will never:**

- **Engage in any form of sexual relations** with any-one under 18 years old, regardless of the legal age of sexual consent, the law and local customs.
- **Exchange money, job, goods or services or humanitarian aid** for sexual favours or subject the child to any other kind of humiliating, degrading or abusive behaviour.
- **Touch children or use language or make suggestions** in an inappropriate manner, to provoke, ha-rass or degrade the child or show disrespect for cultural practices. This includes acting in a manner which is




likely to have a negative impact on the child's confidence and feelings of self-worth.

- **Exploit a child** for labour (for example through domestic work).
- **Discriminate** against, treat children unequally or unfairly for example by favouritism and excluding others.
- Invite a child or their relatives to **my home** or develop a relationship with a child and/or their family which may be considered outside normal professional boundaries.
- **Work with or transport a child alone** without the prior authorization of my manager, unless absolutely necessary for the safety of the child.
- Be under the influence of **drugs or alcohol** while working with children.
- Take photos or videos of beneficiaries for **use that is not strictly professional** unless the Field level (regional) CP Focal Persons gives permission.
- Watch, publish, produce, or share **pornography** showing children, and/or show pornographic material to children.
- **Show the faces** of children who are exploited sexually, victims of trafficking, abuse, in conflict with the law, linked to armed groups or who can easily be located even if their identity has been modified.
- Take or publish photos of children entirely **naked or dressed in a manner which is not adapted** to the situation in which they are represented.
- Represent children as **victims** (weak, powerless, unassisted, desperate, etc.).
- Publish a story or image which may **endanger** the child, their family or community.
- Use photos which have **not been checked and approved** by my manager and/or the Focal Person at HQ or post unofficial pictures or information about children on personal websites or social networks (such as Facebook).
- Maintain contact with children and their families via **social networks**, unless a specific RDF project requires me to do so and I have been given permission.
- Close my eyes to, ignore or fail to report any concern, suspected violation or violation of the Child Safeguarding Policy and the Code of Conduct to the Child Safeguarding Focal Point.

**I understand that, in the event of suspicions or allegations of my violation of the Code of Conduct:**

RDF will take any action they deem necessary, which may include, but is not limited to :

- Providing **assistance for the victim** and taking immediate steps to protect and support the child.
- Attempting to **establish the facts** in the most objective manner possible (the presumption of innocence prevails) while protecting the reputation and confidentiality of the adults involved.
- Undertaking **disciplinary actions**, which may result in my suspension or termination of contract.
- Initiating **judicial proceedings and/or reporting** to the competent authorities any violation of the Code of Conduct which may breach national legislation.
- Taking **appropriate measures** in order to ensure that such incidents do not occur again, for example, informing other organizations which may apply for professional references regarding the termination of contract due to violation of the principles of the protection of children (within the legislative framework applicable to the protection of information).



## Declaration of commitment

I, the undersigned,

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Declare I have received, read and understood the RDF's Child Safeguarding Policy and I commit to know and agree to work in accordance with it.

I understand that any failure to uphold the Code of Conduct may result in the termination of my engagement with RDF, or further disciplinary or judicial proceedings as mentioned above.

Furthermore, I declare that I have no criminal records regarding an offence towards a child (which I have not previously declared) and nor do I know of any reason why anyone would deem me unsuitable to work with children. RDF shall reserve the right to inform other institutions which may apply for professional references of the termination of contract for serious violation of the principles of the protection of children within the legislative framework applicable to the protection of information.

Date.....at.....

Signature

.....



## **Appendix 2: Child Safeguarding Focal Point.**

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Child Safeguarding Focal Point:**

To support the country operations with the day to day implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policy – with the technical support of the Regional Child Protection Advisor and the Center CP Focal Person based in Dhaka.

### **Specific duties include:**

- To act as the main point of contact within the delegation for child safeguarding
- To ensure that staff and partners are aware of the Child Safeguarding Policy and their responsibilities under it (for example by providing training and guidance)
- To advise and support staff and partners with the implementation of the safeguarding policy – including risk assessments
- Establish links with local specialist child welfare, health and law enforcement contacts in order to have information available if an incident occurs and/or external advice is needed
- Ensure that the safeguarding policy and our commitment to children's rights is made known to children, families and communities who work with RDF and that the policy is accessible.
- Ensure that the name and contact details of the Child Safeguarding Focal Point are made available so that people know how to raise a concern/where to seek advice
- To act as first point of contact for concerns regarding child protection incidents and to raise those concerns to the Senior Manager/Regional Child Protection Advisor as appropriate.
- Keep an accurate record of any incidents
- To support the implementation and monitoring of the Child Safeguarding Policy by providing an annual progress report to the Risk Management Advisor in Lausanne (as requested) together with a plan for further action required to implement the Child Safeguarding Policy at local level



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