

Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults

1. Introduction/Background

As a right based organization, COAST Foundation believes that each and every child as well as vulnerable and disadvantaged people have right to live safe with dignity. It is, therefore, the responsibility of COAST to take necessary initiatives within the organization and communities. Every place under the organization will be safe and secured for children as well as all vulnerable and disadvantaged people. Every personnel of COAST are supposed to be the pathfinder to build a safe and secured society for them. COAST does believe that every staff's moral and professional responsibilities are to protect them with ensuring dignity for the vulnerable groups in every tire of the society.

2. Principles

This Safeguarding Policy is prepared based on Keeping Children Safe International Safeguarding Standards; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and its related UN conventions; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (and it's optional protocols); the UN Statement for the Elimination of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation and all child-related UN conventions; the national child protection and vulnerable adults legislation of Bangladesh and international good humanitarian practice.

3. Methodology of preparation:

The policy has been prepared taking participation through representation of all level staff

4. COAST believes that

- 4.1 All children and vulnerable adults have equal rights to protection from harm.
- 4.2 It is the organizational duty to take care of children, vulnerable adults with whom it works, is in contact with, or who are affected by its works and operations.

5. Objectives of the policy

- 5.1 To protect the children and vulnerable from any physical, mental and other types of harassments at all levels of the organization.
- 5.2 To create awareness and inspiration among the staff of the organization on the safety, security and dignity of children and vulnerable groups of the society.
- 5.3 To create awareness and inspiration among all the participants of different programs about this.

6. Definitions and Terms

- 6.1 **Child:** according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, any person below the age of 18, will be treated as child.
- 6.2 **Safeguarding:** Safeguarding is the responsibility that organization has to make sure their staff, operations, and programs do no harm to children and vulnerable adults in any way for now and in future.
- 6.3 **Vulnerable Adult/Adult at risk:** Any person aged 18 or over, and if the adult has particular care, support or special needs and as a result abuse occurs when a vulnerable adult/adult at risk is mistreated, neglected or harmed by another person who holds a position of the Foundation.
- 6.4 **Sexual abuse:** Forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This may include, but is not limited to, rape, oral sex, penetration, or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching. It may also include involving children in looking at, or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.


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- 6.5 **Sexual exploitation:** A form of sexual abuse that involves children or vulnerable adults being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family needs.
- 6.6 **Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conducts of a sexual nature.
- 6.7 **Neglect and negligent treatment:** Allowing for context, resources and circumstances to show neglect and negligent treatment to a child and vulnerable adults.
- 6.8 **Emotional abuse:** Persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on mental wellbeing and mental health. Emotionally abusive acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, bullying (including cyber bullying), and threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.
- 6.9 **Commercial exploitation:** Exploiting a child or a vulnerable adult in work or other activities for the benefit of others. It includes cheating, exploitation and forced labor.
- 6.10 **Employee:** All staff from local, national, internal levels, volunteers and interns.
- 6.11 **Associates:** all contractors, e.g., consultants, EC/GC members, stakeholders including local community based stakeholders as well as guests and visitors.
- 6.12 **Emotional misconduct:** It won't be considered as emotional misconduct if the supervisor needs to deliver sharp talk to any staff for neglecting his/her duty.
- 6.13 **Defamation /humiliation/satire:** It includes delivering sharp talk in front of other people to any child/vulnerable adult or staff or program participants, that hits on his/her dignity. But it doesn't include if the supervisor needs to speak such in private to any staff for neglecting of his/her duty.
- 6.14 **Forcing to do (including cyber bullying):** It includes forcing someone to take part in sexual activities or making public of his/her any private picture or inappropriate thing in the social media.
- 6.15 **Bullying:** If supervisor warns any staff for neglecting of his/her duty first time by giving advice, second time by giving verbal warning, third time by written warning and next time warning by saying that s/he could lose her/his job—this type of actions would not be treated within the purview of bullying.
- 6.16 **Discrimination:** Supervisor praises staff for performing their duty well, sometimes uses hard talk for less performance. It is because the employee can improve and perform well. If it happens so, using of hard talk to the staff for his/her improvement will not be treated as discrimination. Discrimination will not be included the race, religions, color etc.
- 6.17 **Mental torture:** If any employee gives pressure to any other employee or member to complete their duty or task on time that is aligned with the organization e.g. shouting or setting a dateline etc. that type of pressure or gesture of supervisor would not be treated as mental torture.

7. Prevention

- 7.1 **Risk assessment/risk mitigation:** A risk assessment of all operations, programs and project activities of the COAST Foundation will be conducted (e.g. health risk, security risk, negative impact, etc.). Risk mitigation strategies will be developed, which minimize the risk to children, and vulnerable adults and incorporated into the design, delivery and evaluation of programs, operations and activities which involve or impact upon children.
- 7.2 **Safe recruitment:** COAST will ensure that it applies the highest standards in its recruitment and vetting policies across the organization. Candidates are checked for their suitability for working with children and their understanding of safeguarding.
- 7.3 **Safety check:** Protection checks, such as disclosure of previous convictions or police checks (if disclosure is unavailable), forms an important part of the organizational recruitment policy and covers all those representatives that there have an employment relationship with. If police checks are impossible, other checks are put into practice and noted. Checking evidence of identity and the authenticity of qualifications, requesting self- declarations about previous convictions, and a minimum requirement of at least two references are carried out in all cases.
- 7.4 **Education/training:** All staff and associates receive safeguarding policy and training to help them understand why it is necessary to safeguard and protect children and vulnerable adults. Children and families will be informed on COAST's commitment to safeguarding and what to do if they have concerns about a child.
- 7.5 **Safe program design:** Organization will design its program keeping in mind that the


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programs/projects/activities will not put the children and vulnerable adults at risk. The aims of the organization will make the safe guard of the children and vulnerable adults. The policy will be as the cross-cutting issue of all the programs/projects.

7.6 **Communications – use of images and children’s information:** To use of information and visual images, both photographic stills and video, then the overriding principle is to maintain respect and dignity in the portrayal of children, families and communities. The communication policy/guidelines details will be mentioned in the procedures.

7.7 **Social media (if applicable):** The organization has its own social media policy and there is clearly mentioned about not to post any status which is undignified others.

8. Partners

Agreements with partners will include a statement that partners who do not have a safeguarding policy will either abide by COAST policy or develop their own as a condition of the partnership.

9. Protection and confidentiality

Here it is noted that the organization shall ensure full protection of the whistle blower. By no means the name of the whistle blower shall be disclosed but could do it only taking the approval from the whistle blower. While discuss, never squeeze the complainant in a way that pretend to defame or harass him/her.

10. Reporting/responding to concerns

COAST Foundation will receive disclosures from children and adults with sensitivity and will strive not to re- traumatize children in their handling of complaints. If a child or adult persons tells that they are being, or have been, abused:

10.1 Listen to and accept what the child or vulnerable adult says but do not press for information.

10.2 Let the child or vulnerable adult know what there will be going to do next and that it will be known to them what happens.

10.3 Do not investigate and do not inform, question or confront the alleged abuser.

10.4 Record carefully what is mentioned on the reporting form.

10.5 Identifying information about children or vulnerable adults will be shared on a ‘need to know’ basis only. Deliberate false allegations are a serious disciplinary offence and will be investigated.

11. Duties and responsibilities of staff/volunteers

a. All staff must read this policy, they should have a clear understanding of this. They have to abide by this.

b. Management action can be taken against those who violate this.

12. Scope:

The policy will be applicable to all staff, members of EC/GC, volunteers, vendors/suppliers, consultants, and program-participants.


13. Approved by the General Council and effective date:

The review of this policy has been approved unanimously in the 6th Annual General Meeting which was held on 6 July 2024 at COAST Principal Office, Dhaka, and be effective with no delay.

14. Review of this policy:

This policy will be reviewed by 2027 or earlier, if necessary, incorporating significant changes in national and international laws, policies, and human rights declarations.


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