

# Humanitarian Response & Development Foundation (HRDF)

## Child Protection Policy

**Humanitarian Response & Development Foundation (HRDF)**

*Protecting Every Child. Preserving Every Dream.*

### 1. Purpose and Commitment

Children are the heart of our communities and the foundation of Pakistan's future. In rural villages, urban settlements, disaster-affected areas, and underserved districts where HRDF works, children often face risks stemming from poverty, unsafe environments, harmful social practices, weak protection systems, and limited access to services.

HRDF recognizes that every child has the right to grow up safe, respected, and protected from harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. This Child Protection Policy demonstrates HRDF's strong commitment to safeguarding children in all our programmes, workplaces, and community engagements.

**This policy is developed in alignment with:**

- UNICEF Child Safeguarding Standards
- FCDO compliance requirements
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Pakistani legal and cultural context

For HRDF, child protection is not just a legal obligation — it is a moral, cultural, and humanitarian duty.

### 2. Policy Objectives

This policy aims to:

- Prevent harm and abuse of children in HRDF programmes and activities
- Create safe spaces for children's learning, participation, and development
- Ensure staff and partners understand their responsibilities
- Provide clear reporting and response mechanisms
- Strengthen community-based child protection systems
- Align HRDF practices with donor and international safeguarding standards

### 3. Definition of a Child

For the purpose of this policy, a **child** is any person under the age of 18, as recognized by Pakistani law and international conventions.

Child protection refers to safeguarding children from:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation (including child labour, early marriage, trafficking)
- Harmful traditional practices

#### 4. Understanding Child Protection Challenges in Pakistan

HRDF operates in areas where children may be exposed to:

- Child labour due to poverty
- Early and forced marriages
- Physical punishment at home or school
- Lack of birth registration
- Unsafe access to water and sanitation
- Exposure to disasters and displacement
- Limited access to education, especially for girls

We acknowledge that cultural norms, poverty, and lack of awareness often prevent reporting of abuse. HRDF approaches child protection with sensitivity, respect for local traditions, and a focus on awareness rather than blame.

#### 5. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All HRDF staff and management
- Board members and volunteers
- Interns and consultants
- Community mobilisers and facilitators
- Partners, contractors, and vendors
- Anyone representing HRDF in any capacity
- Community committees and groups linked to HRDF projects

No individual or partner is exempt from this policy.

#### 6. HRDF Child Protection Principles

1. **Best Interest of the Child**  
All decisions must prioritize the child's safety and wellbeing.
2. **Do No Harm**  
HRDF shall avoid any action that may place children at further risk.
3. **Zero Tolerance for Abuse**  
Any form of abuse or exploitation will not be tolerated.
4. **Cultural Sensitivity**  
Protection measures will respect local norms while upholding children's rights.
5. **Child Participation**  
Children's voices will be heard respectfully, according to their age and maturity.
6. **Confidentiality and Dignity**  
Children's privacy will be respected at all times.

## 7. Roles and Responsibilities

### **HRDF Staff and Representatives Must:**

- Treat all children with respect and care
- Create safe and supportive environments
- Never hit, threaten, humiliate, or emotionally harm a child
- Never engage in any inappropriate physical contact
- Never develop personal or private relationships with beneficiaries under 18
- Report any concern or suspicion immediately

### **Managers and Supervisors Must:**

- Ensure staff understand this policy
- Monitor field activities for compliance
- Respond promptly to reported concerns
- Support victims and ensure confidentiality

### **Partners Must:**

- Sign and comply with this policy
- Train their teams on child protection
- Cooperate in investigations where required

## 8. Prohibited Behaviors

The following behaviors are strictly prohibited:

- Physical punishment or verbal abuse
- Sexual contact or inappropriate touching
- Use of children for labour within projects
- Taking photos or videos without consent
- Sharing children's personal information publicly
- Discriminatory or degrading behavior
- Favoritism or gifts in exchange for compliance

## 9. Safe Programming Guidelines

HRDF commits to:

- Conducting child protection risk assessments
- Designing child-friendly spaces
- Ensuring safe transportation and supervision
- Using age-appropriate communication
- Ensuring female staff presence in girls' activities
- Creating safe complaint and feedback channels for children

## 10. Reporting Mechanism

Any concern regarding child abuse can be reported through:

- Child Protection Focal Person
- HR Manager
- Project Manager
- Community elders or teachers (where appropriate)
- Anonymous complaint boxes
- Confidential phone reporting

Email: [aap@hrdf.org.pk](mailto:aap@hrdf.org.pk)

Reports must include:

- Description of incident
- Date and location
- Child's basic details (if safe)
- Observations without assumptions

## 11. Response and Action Procedure

HRDF will:

- Take all reports seriously
- Ensure immediate safety of the child
- Conduct confidential investigation
- Refer cases to relevant authorities where necessary
- Provide psychosocial support and guidance
- Cooperate with government child protection services

Retaliation against reporters is strictly prohibited.

## 12. Working with Communities

HRDF will:

- Conduct awareness sessions for parents and elders
- Promote safe parenting practices
- Engage religious leaders and influencers
- Encourage school-based child protection committees
- Create dialogue on early marriages and child rights

## 13. Monitoring and Compliance

HRDF will regularly:

- Train staff on child safeguarding
- Review field practices
- Update systems based on lessons learned
- Conduct audits and safeguarding assessments

## 14. Breaches and Disciplinary Action

Violations may result in:

- Immediate suspension
- Termination of contract
- Legal action where applicable
- Reporting to donor agencies (FCDO/UNICEF)

## 15. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Every 12 months
- After serious incidents
- When updated by donor or legal standards

## 16. HRDF Commitment Statement

At HRDF, we believe:

- Every child deserves safety and love
- Every child has the right to learn and dream
- Every child must be protected from harm

Our responsibility is to protect, guide, and support children with compassion and care. We commit to creating environments where children feel safe, respected, and empowered to build a brighter future.

**Protecting children is not an option, it is our duty, our faith, and our promise to the next generation.**